

THE **STANDARD BEARER**

**A Reformed
Semi-Monthly
Magazine**



“... according to the demands of the covenant.”

*Vol. 68, No. 1
October 1, 1991*

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In This Issue ...

During the course of the year we try to publish a couple of "Special Issues," devoted to a single topic. Coming up next time (October 15) is our second annual Reformation issue, all of which will be devoted to the Reformed faith's continuing conflict with Anabaptism.

The issue you're holding in your hand is a sort of semi-special issue. It seemed to us that, at the beginning of another school year, we might do well to include some articles which pertain in one way or another to Christian education. Accordingly, Rev. Slopsema prepared his meditation on "Teaching Children the Covenant"; Prof. Engelsma wrote an editorial on the Christian school legacy which is ours; Dr. Eldersveld submitted an article dealing with the ever-growing problem of financing Christian schools; and Mr. Hanko submitted the first of what will be several articles during the course of the year, in "In His Fear," on various aspects of education.

As a special treat we've included also a reprint of an article which appeared in the *SB* nearly 60 years ago. The editor, Rev. Herman Hoeksema, had given a lecture on "The Place of Doctrine in the Christian School," and chose to print it later in the December 15, 1935 issue of the *SB*. The reader today will note, with gratitude, that the "vision" of Rev. Hoeksema way back then, the principles laid down with a view to the beginning of our schools, have remained ours some 45 years after their establishment. "The principle of the fear of the Lord," wrote Rev. Hoeksema, "must permeate all the instruction and discipline and life of the school that is really Christian. A Christian school must be Christian as a school!" How thankful we should be that that has not changed. And how ready we should be, generously and enthusiastically, to labor to support and preserve those schools. The covenant, writes Dr. Eldersveld, demands it.

D.D.

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Meditation

Rev. James Slopsema

Teaching Children the Covenant

And these words, which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart:

And thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up.

Deuteronomy 6:6, 7

Moses is addressing the people of Israel in the plains of Moab. Soon Israel will enter into the land of promise.

Moses reminds Israel of the covenant which God established with them at Mount Sinai through the giving of the law. In that connection Moses recites the Ten Commandments in the ears of Israel. He also mentions the other laws given at Mount Sinai.

Moses then proceeds to charge Israel to observe all these commandments in the land they are about to possess, that it may be well with them.

These commandments must be in their hearts, so that they teach them diligently to their children. How important this is! God's covenant is also with Israel's children. These children, therefore, must be instructed in the law of the covenant, that they may learn to keep God's covenant.

The same is true of our children. God's covenant is with believing parents and their children. For that reason, covenant parents must instruct their children in the glorious realities of the covenant.

Christian schools have been formed and maintained to assist parents in this all-important work.

With another school year upon us and with all the sacrifices necessary to maintain our Christian schools, it is well that we are reminded of the command of God to instruct children in the law of His covenant.

* * * * *

"And these words, which I command thee this day...."

These words were the words of the law God gave to Israel at Mount Sinai. "These words" included the Ten Commandments inscribed by God's finger on tables of stone, often called the moral law. "These words" included also the civil laws that organized Israel into a nation and regulated its life as a nation. Included in these words were also the ceremonial laws which instructed Israel how to worship God around the tabernacle with the priests, the offerings, and the various feast days.

These laws were God's covenant with Israel.

According to the promise which God made before this to Abraham and his seed, God's covenant was with Israel. This covenant was a relationship of friendship and fellowship between Jehovah and Israel in which Jehovah was Israel's God and Israel was His people.

At the heart of this covenant were the multitude of laws given at Mount

Sinai. So essential were these laws to the covenant, that Moses indicates in the previous chapter that God made His covenant with Israel through the giving of these laws. Consequently, when Israel kept these laws they kept God's covenant; when they transgressed these laws they transgressed the covenant.

These laws were essential to God's covenant because they showed Israel the way of salvation. The tabernacle worship required by the ceremonial laws portrayed very graphically to Israel the great salvation that was to come through the promised Savior. The kingdom into which Israel was formed through the civil laws served as a picture of the kingdom of heaven that was to come. The moral laws (Ten Commandments) served a two-fold purpose. First, they showed Israel her sin and her need for God's Savior. But, secondly, when Israel found salvation at the house of God through the priests and sacrifices, the moral law served as the rule of gratitude, pointing out to Israel how she must show her thankfulness for her salvation.

And so it was that, through the laws of Mount Sinai, Old Testament Israel was instructed in the salvation of God's covenant, was able to enjoy that salvation, and thus lived a covenant life of friendship with God.

In these great realities of the law and God's covenant, Israel's children must be taught. And these words, which I command thee this day ... thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children.

The children in Israel must not merely be taught the laws given at

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

Mount Sinai. They must also be taught the realities of salvation and of the covenant which these laws revealed.

This was the solemn obligation of every parent in Israel.

The same command is laid at the feet of believing parents today.

The same covenant which God had with Israel continues today with believing parents and their children. The form the covenant takes today is much different from what it was in Israel's day. So much is this true that the Bible speaks of a new covenant in distinction from the old. Yet the essence of these two covenants is the same.

The difference between the old and new covenants is to be explained primarily by the fact that Christ has come and brought into being the great realities of the covenant which were only pictured in the law of the old covenant. Through His atoning death on the cross, His resurrection, exaltation on God's right hand and sending forth of the Spirit of Pentecost, Jesus has obtained the salvation of the church and established the great kingdom of heaven. Hence, the civil and ceremonial laws of Mount Sinai, which only pictured these realities, fall away.

Besides, God's covenant is no more limited to the natural descendants of Abraham, the nation of Israel. With the coming of Jesus Christ, God's covenant and its salvation is brought to the nations. God's covenant is with believers and their seed of every race.

Yet the essence of the old covenant with Israel still remains. The covenant which God has with the church today is a most wonderful relationship of friendship and fellowship between God and the church in Jesus Christ, in which relationship He is their God and they are His people. In this covenant the church finds a most blessed salvation in Jesus Christ, a salvation which manifests itself in a life of loving service to God according to the Ten Commandments.

In these glorious realities of the covenant, as revealed in the whole of Scripture, parents are to instruct their

children, even as the parents of Old Testament Israel were to instruct their children in these same realities pictured in the Old Testament law.

* * * * *

Moses has something to say about how these things are to be taught to the children of the covenant.

They are to be taught diligently.

The meaning is that this instruction must be constant and thorough. Parents must daily instruct their children in the realities of God's covenant and salvation. And this instruction must be in every aspect of God's covenant.

This idea is reinforced by the command to talk of these things with our children when we sit in our house, and when we walk by the way, and when we lie down, and when we rise up.

This describes a situation in which parents are with their children all day. They sit with them at meal time. They walk with them to the fields to work. They lie down next to them at night and rise with them in the morning. This was the kind of family life Israel enjoyed in Canaan. Sorry to say, much of this is lost in our modern society. It is important nevertheless that as parents we strive to be with our children as much as possible.

During all these activities with our children, we as parents are to instruct our children in the realities of the covenant. We are to instruct them when they work as well as when they play; when they rise in the morning as well as when they retire in the evening; when they sit down to eat as well as when they get up to do the dishes. At all times they are to be instructed in the realities of the covenant.

This instruction must not be divorced from the activity at hand but must be applied to whatever parents find their children doing. The Word of God has something to say about every area of our life and how it relates to our covenant relationship to God. The Word of God has something to say about our work, our recreation, our eating, our counting, our spelling, our reading. It has something to say about history, the origin

of the universe, the stars in the heaven. The command to parents is to bring the light of God's covenant word to bear on every activity of their children, so that their children understand how the whole of their life and all their learning relates to God's covenant of grace.

Christian schools have been formed to assist parents in this all-important task.

We live in a day when parents are ordinarily not qualified to instruct their children in every area of learning necessary to make their way in life and live on the earth as responsible citizens of the kingdom of heaven. Consequently, covenant parents (as well as grandparents and other members of God's covenant) have established and maintained Christian schools in which children of the covenant are taught various disciplines from the viewpoint of God's covenant. These schools are not designed to take the place of covenantal instruction in the home, but only to assist covenant parents in these areas where parents are ordinarily not qualified to teach their children.

What a great blessing the Christian schools have been for the covenant home!

Let us thank God for our Christian schools!

Let us support them financially and in our prayers!

Let us as covenant parents also send our children to them!

* * * * *

For parents to be faithful to this requirement of God's covenant, the word of the covenant must be in their heart.

What a great deal of time and energy is required on the part of parents to instruct their children in the realities of the covenant as it touches on every aspect of life!

What a great financial sacrifice is often required on the part of parents to send their children to the Christian school to have their children instructed in areas where the parents are not qualified to teach!

Such an effort and sacrifice will be made only by those who have the

word of the covenant in their hearts.

To have the word of the covenant in your heart means that the Word of God concerning the covenant is very dear to you. You love and cherish it. It is that which you treasure most of all.

The word of God's covenant is in the heart of every true covenant parent. God's covenant grace places that word in his heart.

However, this is something in which we all must grow and develop. We do this by spending much time

with God's covenant word and prayer.

May God lead us in these things and bless our precious children as they begin again another year of covenant instruction in the Christian school! □

Editorially Speaking ...

The October 1 issue of our magazine always represents the beginning of a new volume-year. In this issue, therefore, we inform our readers as to what they can expect in the *Standard Bearer* in the coming year, as this has been decided at the staff meeting held in June.

Changes from the past year are few. Rev. Barry Gritters and Rev. Gise VanBaren asked to be relieved from writing for a year. We express our thanks to them for past contributions to the magazine and entertain the hope that they will be back on the staff soon. Replacing Rev. Gritters as a writer for the rubric, "Strength of Youth," will be Rev. Steven Key. Mr.

Fred Hanko, veteran teacher in the Protestant Reformed Christian Schools, will share with Rev. Arie den Hartog the responsibility of producing articles for "In His Fear." Mr. Hanko will write on Christian education. We welcome these brothers to the staff, appreciative of their willingness to make room in their busy schedules for the hard work of writing.

Although articles are assigned for the coming year, the editorial committee is on the lookout for worthwhile contributions arising from speeches and lectures. Those who wish to submit an article for publication are encouraged to do so. Not every contribution will be published.

But all will be acknowledged.

We remind our readers that the "Letters" column is open to them. We welcome reflection on articles that appear in the *SB*.

The staff reappointed all functionaries of the magazine as is indicated on the masthead. The exception is that Rev. Jay Kortering was appointed general adjunct since the incumbent is no longer on the staff.

We ask the continuing cooperation of all our writers in meeting deadlines. We covet the prayers of our readers on behalf of the *SB*'s faithful testimony to the Word of God as confessed by the Reformed faith. □

— DJE

Editorial

The Legacy of Good Christian Schools

One of the most precious aspects of the inheritance of the Reformed faith and life that has come down to us in the Protestant Reformed Churches is the Christian school. Our fathers in the faith have handed over to us the priceless legacy of a solidly established system of good Christian schools. Where such schools are not yet possible, because the number of cooperating parents is too small,

there is still the legacy of the idea of Christian education as a goal to be prayed and striven for.

For many of us, it is true in the most literal sense that we have received the legacy of our schools from our fathers. In the mid-1940s, as a boy of seven or eight, I watched my father, my future father-in-law, and the other men of Hope PRC in what is now Walker, Michigan build the Prot-

estant Reformed Christian School building with their own hands after work and on Saturdays. Adams St. Christian School in Grand Rapids, Michigan came into existence in 1950. Both were preceded in 1934 by the Protestant Reformed Christian School of Redlands, California. Since then many others have been established throughout the United States.

But when I speak of Christian

education as a legacy bequeathed to us by our fathers in the faith, I refer to Christian education as part of the Reformed tradition. Our Christian schools have their roots in a long and noble history. They differ significantly in this respect from the Christian schools of the evangelicals and fundamentalists who suddenly became "Christian school minded" in the late 1960s and 1970s when the state schools took a nosedive morally. It is amusing to the heirs of Christian education in the Reformed tradition to see these "johnnys-come-lately" to Christian education congratulating themselves in the religious press on being the source and standard of Christian education in the United States.

Our own Christian schools carry on the commitment to Christian education that was found in the Christian Reformed Church from the late 1800s on. This commitment motivated Reformed parents to maintain the Christian schools during the depression of the 1930s by sacrifice that was nothing less than heroic. Our fathers in the faith — and the Christian schools — lived then by the principle, "The schools first."

The tradition extends back into the life of the Reformed saints in The Netherlands. Way back. One of the articles of the church order adopted by the Synod of Dordt of 1618/1619 read: "Everywhere consistories shall see to it, that there are good schoolmasters who shall not only instruct the children in reading, writing, languages and the liberal arts, but likewise in godliness and in the (Heidelberg) Catechism."

At the very beginning of the Reformation, Martin Luther himself called for the establishment of Christian schools as an essential element of the Reformation. In 1524, he wrote the tract, "To the Councilmen of All Cities in Germany That They Establish and Maintain Christian Schools." This plea for the establishing of Christian schools was followed in 1530 by a powerful appeal to the parents to use the schools, "A Sermon on Keeping Children in School." Replace

"councilmen" by "parents with the encouragement of their consistories" and you have the two main parts of Article 21 of the church order of the PRC: "The consistories shall see to it that there are good Christian schools in which the parents have their children instructed according to the demands of the covenant."

The foresight of our fathers in their advocacy of good Christian schools was unerring, and of the greatest practical benefit to us their heirs. Today's newspaper announces the trial of a longtime teacher in the state's schools for the murder of a prostitute; the conviction of another teacher in a local state school for the homosexual seduction of a teenage student; and the continuing strike by a teachers' union in the area for higher wages that shuts the doors of the schools to any education of the children. These things have become everyday occurrences. They are the fulfillment of Luther's warning to parents who reject Christian teachers in good Christian schools:

Because they are not now willing to support and keep the honest, upright, virtuous schoolmasters and teachers offered them by God to raise their children in the fear of God, and in virtue, knowledge, learning, and honor by dint of hard work, diligence, and industry, and at small cost and expense, they will get in their place incompetent substitutes, ignorant louts such as they have had before, who at great cost and expense will teach the children nothing but how to be utter asses, and beyond that will dishonor men's wives and daughters and maidservants, taking over their homes and property, as has happened before. This will be the reward of the great and shameful ingratitude into which the devil is so craftily leading them ("A Sermon on Keeping Children in School," in *Luther's Works*, Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1967, p. 218).

Our more immediate fathers foresaw the certain destruction of distinctively Reformed education by the secularizing doctrine of common grace. Writing in 1932, Herman Hoeksema prophesied:

I assure you, that this principle of

common grace, wiping out the antithesis between the Christian and the world in regard to civil matters, will bear fruit, will obliterate the practical difference between Christian and public instruction, and thus will prove to be the real cause of the failure of the Christian School movement. *That we dare no longer to be distinctive as a Reformed people in the declaration of the truth certainly implies that we do not want to be really distinctive in the practical life* ("The Christian School Movement: Why a Failure? VI," in *The Standard Bearer*, Vol. 8, p. 319).

This warning is now being realized with a vengeance in the crumbling of the Christian schools based on the notion of the goodness of the unregenerate world under the favor of God.

We have a precious legacy in our Protestant Reformed Christian schools.

They are covenant schools.

They are not mere reactions to the godlessness, utter this-worldliness, profanity, immorality, and disorder of the state schools. They are not merely islands of academic excellence in a sea of mediocrity. They are not fertile fields for child-evangelism, as though the Christian teachers work for the regeneration of the unsaved children of church members, counting the "decisions for Christ" or first-time conversions as the best fruits of their labor.

*Opening up the schools
to the children
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is the subversion
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Neither are good Christian schools agencies for the improvement of society or for the help of the disadvantaged in the neighborhood. Opening up the schools to the children of unbelievers, whether poverty-stricken minorities or rich whites, is the subversion of the very idea of the

Christian school, the destruction of truly Christian education, and the ruin of the children of the covenant who now are thrust into friendship with the heathen with all the peril that this entails.

Our schools — good Christian schools — are institutions of the covenant. Article 21 of the Reformed church order of Dordt describes them as “demands of the covenant.” Their origin is the covenant of gracious friendship in Jesus Christ by the Holy Spirit that God establishes with believers and their children. The reason for their existence is God’s demand that believing parents rear His little people, their children, in the truth of Jesus Christ, their Lord and Saviour. The pupils are our children, our dear children, doubly dear as our own blood, bought with God’s blood. The subjects are two great books written by God about Himself: Holy Scripture and the elegant book of creation. The basis and standard of all the instruction is the Bible, the book of the covenant, as expressed in the Reformed confessions. The rule of all behavior in the schools is the law of God, the guide of covenant-life. The purpose of the schools is the enabling of the children to carry out their part in the covenant in the service of God as mature men and women in all areas of life now and eternally. For the children, this is life, peace, and honor. For God, it is glory.

We ought to receive the legacy

*In the covenant-nature
of the schools
lies the solution
to the financial problem.*

thankfully, maintaining it and, where possible, building it up. Since the Lord Jesus gives it to us to be used, to be invested in the children, we parents are to use the schools, sending our children with the obedience that a demand of the covenant requires.

In the covenant-nature of the schools lies the solution to the financial problem. The financial problem is especially twofold. There is the inadequacy of the wages for teachers. Married men with families are forced out of teaching into other work in order to supply their needs. Others are required to supplement their salaries by taking on other jobs, not only during the summer months but also throughout the school year. This should be intolerable to the covenant community that is responsible for the schools.

The other aspect of the problem, working against the remedy of the first, is the high tuition, threatening to overburden many parents. Parents are oppressed by tuition bills that they cannot pay. Others may consider taking their children out of the schools. Or mothers go out to work to make ends meet.

We look in vain, no doubt, to the state to reduce our taxes as would be just since we ourselves provide the education of our own children.

The solution is to be found in the covenantal nature of the schools. Parents bring up the tuition, as best they can, with the willingness that the covenant of God alone can compel. Teachers are willing to make sacrifices for the cause of the covenant. But all members of the churches, old and young, whether they have children in school or not, have reason to contribute liberally to the schools. In the covenant, schools and children are the schools and children of all. In the covenant, the friends of God work together with each other.

Widows should give their mites. The rich — and we have them — should give their thousands or millions. The schools should be named in wills. The plates passed regularly in the worship services for the Christian schools should be filled, especially by those not paying tuition — the young people with good jobs; the single people; the couples whose children are out of school; the grandparents.

Not to relieve the parents of their responsibility.

But to make their responsibility manageable.

For the sake of the children of the covenant.

God forbid that we despise, and lose, the legacy. □

— DJE

Guest Article

Dr. James Eldersveld

Train up a child in the way that he should go; and when he is old, he will not depart from it.

Proverbs 22:6

Dr. Eldersveld is a member of Southeast Protestant Reformed Church.

Financing Our Christian Schools

Our Christian schools are a most precious heritage. Their preservation depends on God’s grace and our obedience to God’s demand that we educate our children in His fear. This is accomplished by our diligent use of the means that God provides, while we heed the sometimes subtle evi-

dence that Satan is at work to destroy our schools.

In late 1988, the Board of Hope Protestant Reformed Christian School appointed a special committee to study gross income and tuition costs since 1957 and to “recommend guidelines for ... a broader base of support

for Protestant Reformed Education." Their findings may surprise you.

First of all, they found that tuition costs are rising faster than income. In 30 years, tuition costs for three children increased by a factor of more than 13, while gross income increased by a factor of less than 5. In other words, for every \$1.00 of increased income, tuition increased by more than \$2.50! In 1957, tuition costs were only 7.6% of gross income, but had increased to 20.8% by 1987.

The Hope committee also reviewed the history of non-tuition contributions (gifts, fund drives, church collections, etc.) received by the school and found that their percentage of the cost of education has been steadily declining. For the same 30-year period, gift increases were nearly identical to salary increases but did not keep pace with increases in the cost of education. In 1957, gifts financed almost 50% of the school's budget, but they financed less than 13% by 1987.

...our schools may be financially threatened unless we take action in the present.

These records indicate that increased tuition costs since 1957 were not due to the increased cost of education alone but were due, in large part, to a significant drop in the level of contributions. If the level of contributions had remained at 50% of the school's budget, tuition costs would have increased only to 12% of gross income by 1987 rather than to 20.8%.

I believe that the records of Hope Protestant Reformed Christian School are representative of our other Christian schools. At least, they carry a warning that the future of our schools may be financially threatened unless we take action in the present. We must be more diligent in using the means that God has given us to ensure that Christian school education remains affordable.

First of all, it is important that we reaffirm our commitment to Christian education. Because understanding the necessity of Christian education is basic to committing to it, I recommend that you read Prof. Engelsma's booklet, *Reformed Education*, for a full explanation of the necessity of Christian education as revealed in the Word of God. I will simply say, that the Christian education of our children is not merely a parental privilege; it is a divine mandate, an essential aspect of the covenant that God has established with His people. Because our Christian schools complement the Christian education given in part by the home and by the church, it follows that the covenant demands that we labor to support and preserve our Christian schools.

Secondly, providing Christian education is not only the responsibility of parents; it is the duty of all members of God's church. We are reminded of this each time an infant is baptized: "Whether you promise and intend to see these children when come to the years of discretion (whereof you are either parent or witness) instructed and brought up in the aforesaid doctrine, or help or cause them to be instructed, to the utmost of your power." All (parents and witnesses) must labor to support and preserve the Christian school because it complements the instruction of these children. Single people, young and old, you are included. Couples without children, you are included. Young parents with preschool children, you are included. Parents educating your own children at home, you are included. Parents with school-aged children, though you are currently paying for the Christian education of your own children, you are included. Older parents, though you have paid dearly for the education of your own children, you are included.

Thirdly, God calls us to be good stewards of the gifts that He has given us. Our human nature fights against the truth that the fruits of our labor belong to God and tempts us to be selfish when putting this money to

use. Our calling to educate God's covenant children in His fear, and our calling to return to God a portion of His gifts, leave us with a profound responsibility to give generously to the Christian schools. Having been a deacon and a school board member, I have witnessed firsthand the tremendous response of God's people to an immediate financial need. Such a response is needed now by our schools and it must be sustained. This may involve giving up something that we desire but don't need. Think of something unnecessary that you regularly spend money on and resolve to do without it, giving the money instead to the Christian school.

Finally, if God has blessed us in excess of our needs in this life, good stewardship requires that we properly allocate that surplus in a last-will-and-testament to ensure that it is not wasted. Others must not be making these decisions for us — God has made us overseer of these gifts. Serious consideration must be given to including the Christian school(s) in our wills. We should have a will even if we feel that the value of our estate will not be significant. Expensive and unnecessary fees and taxes are incurred when an estate must be settled without a will. This is wasteful. Think of what it would mean to the Christian school(s) to have that money instead. The professional advice of a lawyer and/or accountant may result in significant additional tax savings that could be allocated to the Christian school(s).

After careful study, each school must determine the extent of its need and determine the specific action required to fulfill that need.

Hope Protestant Reformed Christian School has decreased the percentage of its budget that is to be paid by tuition, effectively doubling the amount of non-tuition contributions that must be raised to meet all expenses. The tuition percentage will be decreased by 1% each year until a ratio of 70% tuition to 30% gifts is reached.

Adams Street Protestant Reformed Christian School has focused

on establishing a new source of income for the school — a special type of endowment fund. The Adams Street Christian School Foundation, as it is called, will provide supplemental, long-term financial support for the school. The Foundation is legally incorporated in the State of Michigan and is recognized by the Internal Revenue Service as a charitable organization. Therefore, the Foundation can solicit tax-deductible gifts which, rather than being spent by the school, are retained for investment purposes. Investment earnings are the new source of income for the school. Gifts to the Foundation are not merely contributions, but are permanent investments in Christian education.

In addition to cash, the Foundation can accept other types of gifts such as stocks, bonds, mutual funds, land, buildings, personal property, and virtually any other thing of value. Gifts may be immediate or deferred

(that is, promised but delivered at some future date) and may be given directly or through special vehicles such as wills, trusts, life insurance policies, annuities, etc. So as not to interfere with other fundraising efforts for the school (which the school's budget is currently dependent upon), the Foundation is presently concentrating its efforts toward non-cash gifts and deferred gifts. The business of the Foundation (including control of disbursements to the school) is governed by a seven-member Board of Trustees, separate from the School Board. An exception to the control exercised by the Board of Trustees is that contributors to the Foundation may designate how their gifts are to be used.

Though operating independently, the Foundation and its Trustees are accountable for their actions at several different levels: to the Internal Revenue Service by virtue of the Foundation's tax-exempt status, to

the Adams Street Christian School Board via reports of annual audits by an outside party, and to its constituency by means of regular newsletters.

The Foundation works personally with prospective contributors and gives general assistance in the way of suggesting possible methods of giving. When necessary, the Foundation makes referrals to Christian attorneys and accountants who have experience with charitable foundations.

South Holland Protestant Reformed Christian School has established an Endowment Fund to control tuition costs. Though still in its infancy, this Fund has demonstrated the potential of the Foundation/Endowment Fund concept: it disbursed \$7,500 of income from investments to the school this year, and the principal is still earning income for next year.

With foresight, commitment, stewardship, and God's blessing, the heritage of our Christian schools will be preserved for our posterity. □

In His Fear

Mr. Fred Hanko

Maintaining Our Christian Schools

These are interesting times in the field of education. Once again there are reports that the American system of education is not doing its job. SAT test scores that measure students' readiness for college are declining. Employers are complaining that graduates of high schools are not able to perform basic reading and computation that are required for them to hold jobs. Once again horror stories are being circulated about students who graduate from high school and

are unable to read or write.

Since this kind of thing has happened several times in recent years, we can predict the results of all this publicity. First, there will be vigorous denials from many that the tests are valid. The kind of students tested is different from the kinds that were tested previously: there are more of them and they come from different social and economic levels and so on. Then there will be some who will say that the tests are accurate, but we don't care. The tests don't measure the things that we consider important. It's more important that our children be able to think and make decisions than that they be able to perform these mechanical functions

such as reading and mathematical computation. Therefore, we can ignore the test results.

After this initial phase, most people will agree that there is indeed a crisis in our schools. It is important that people agree on this point because that will lend urgency to the obvious solution which will then be promoted with great fanfare: spend more money. Somehow it seems that money is the solution to all educational problems.

That seems to make sense, also. Money will make possible new research in the ways that children learn. This research will presumably result in new educational methods that will solve learning problems and make

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teaching more efficient and effective. Universities throughout the country will conduct new experiments and studies that will produce solutions to our problems. That's how programs involving "cooperative learning" and "critical thinking" became part of the educational process.

The results of the research, of course, will require new textbooks and other teaching and learning materials. Textbook companies then will hasten to produce a multitude of new learning materials, outdating all previous textbooks, workbooks, and other educational devices. Schools throughout the country will spend vast amounts of money to purchase the new materials and to train teachers in the use of new materials and methods.

Now the politicians will be happy because they have money to spend, and money means votes. Educational publishers will be happy because they will sell all these new materials. Schools will be happy because they will have new buildings and materials. Even the taxpayers might be happy because they will feel that they have contributed to the welfare of the children.

Now everything will be fine for several years until someone notices that the SAT scores have not, in fact, improved. Then we will begin again the familiar cycle of denial, recrimination, vast expenditure, smug satisfaction, and neglect.

My purpose, though, in this article is not to find satisfaction in the failures of public education, but rather to observe some of the reasons for those failures so that we might, perhaps, avoid having our Christian schools follow the same path.

Why do all the new facilities, the new methods, the marvelous materials and equipment fail to improve the SAT scores? The fact is that none of these address the real problems. Why don't they deal with the real problems? Attacking the real problems would involve making some changes in our society and in the American way of life that most are unwilling and possibly unable to make.

The first and most important reason for the decline of the schools is that the homes are declining. Single parent homes, breaking or broken homes, working mothers, parents that are too busy to attend to their children, and all of the other problems in the homes is probably the single greatest cause for the weakness in American education.

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As a teacher in a Protestant Reformed Christian School I thank God every day for the support that I have from stable, godly homes. I can feel their support in the obedience of the children, in their readiness to learn, and in their response to discipline. As long as we work together, we are successful. Our schools have outstanding attendance at parent-teacher conferences. Many parents become actively involved in their children's education by helping their children with their school work, and by showing interest in their children's performance and encouraging them, showing that they consider education important. A sound Christian home is the foundation of a sound and effective school. To the extent that the stability of our homes is threatened, our schools are immediately weakened.

Another problem that afflicts public education is the lack of clearly defined and agreed-upon goals. What do they want the schools to do? Must they produce socially adapted people? Are they interested primarily in training students to get and hold jobs and perhaps even make lots of money? Do they want to offer students the opportunity to develop every ability or interest they might have? At this time learning facts is frowned upon, but critical thinking skills are considered very important.

Generally, we have agreed about the goals of our Protestant Reformed schools. We want to train our covenant children so that they will function as Christians in their jobs, their families, and their churches. We want our children to learn facts — as we find them in the Word of God and as we find them in the world and interpret them by the Word of God. We want our children to learn skills. That will help them function in the particular calling God has given to each one. We want our children to be able to make judgments and decisions as citizens of the kingdom of heaven first.

We are, however, influenced by our society, and are sometimes attracted by its goals. I'm afraid sometimes that we are too much attracted by the development of athletic skill as a goal in itself or for the fame that it brings. There seems to be increasing support for getting the schools more involved in developing social skills. In moments of discouragement I wonder whether student happiness is not a sufficient goal for some. Perhaps the means for amassing great wealth is enough of a goal, at least for some of our students. I have detected at times among our children and young people a contempt for the idea that their education should prepare them for a life of Christian service.

One of the strongest features of our schools in the past has been that we were agreed upon what we wanted our schools to do and how we wanted them to do it. I think that is still true, but I see increasing signs of disagreement about priorities in our educational goals. We need a common purpose if our schools are to continue to survive and prosper.

Until now our schools have prospered under the blessing of God. Considering the threats to education today, our schools have continued so far to provide sound Christian instruction. In our country today it's becoming increasingly difficult to maintain sound Christian schools, but at the same time it is becoming more and more vital that we do so. May God give us both the will and the means to do so in this year. □

Special Article

Herman Hoeksema

The Place of Doctrine in the Christian School*

The home, the school, and the church have sometimes been called the triple alliance for the purpose of instructing and training the children of the covenant. And not improperly so. For, it cannot be denied that all three are of great importance in the education of our children. None of them can be missed, none of them can afford to be negligent in performing its part in this significant task, without causing a gap in the training of the child. Nor can it be gainsaid that there should be unity and co-operation between these different agencies as each accomplishes its own part in this work. The training of the child should be systematic, must be one in principle, especially from a religious viewpoint. And as each of the different agencies accomplishes its part the instruction of the child should be one whole, preparing him for life in all its different departments in a general and elementary way. For this reason it is not improper to designate home, school, and church as a triple alliance with a view to the education of the covenant children.

The question arises: in this important work of instructing our children, what particular part must be assigned to each? It may be admitted that to a certain extent, their several callings are quite similar. All three aim, not only at instructing but also at training the child. The principle of instruction is the same, whether the home, the school, or the church is the agency; it must always be the fear of the Lord. Yet, it can easily be seen that although their calling is in general the

same and the several parts, the home, the school, and the church perform similar tasks, yet they are also distinct. They are related, but they are not identical. They may inevitably overlap somewhat, but they are not mere repetitions and reduplications of one another. Hence, the question: what is the calling of each of these agencies to educate the covenant-child?

It is not the purpose of this present article to answer this question in all its implications. Yet, my subject is related to it. In order to answer the question, what may be the proper place of doctrine in the Christian school, we must needs deal somewhat with the relation of the school to the church as agencies for the training of our children. And I will try to develop especially three aspects of my subject: the school and its calling, the proper place of doctrine in it, and the way to afford doctrine its proper place.

The School and Its Calling

The school is, no doubt, to be considered as an extension of the home as an agency for the training of its child. We are all agreed that the duty of bringing up the children rests primarily and principally upon the shoulders of the parents. To them, Scripture assigns the task. They are the most natural educators of their own children. They are in a position to know them in their different characters and dispositions better than anyone else. They, especially the mother, are with their children from their very entrance into the world. And they love them as no others can possibly love them. They are the exclusive instructors of their children during

the first few years of their life, and long before they go to school they have laid the foundation for their future training. And if we make a distinction between the task of the home and that of the school and the church, we may probably say, that the part of training the children, of bringing them up, of doing what is called in the Holland, very suggestive term, "opvoeding," belongs especially to the home, while both school and church emphasize rather the part of instruction. The two cannot be separated, to be sure. All instruction must needs also be training. And training cannot be divorced from instruction. But if a distinction is made, we may surely say that the home is especially the institution for training; the school and the church are agencies for instructing the children of the covenant.

The school is, undoubtedly, born out of practical necessity. It is not an institution that is given with creation as is the home; neither is it a specially instituted body as is the church; it is man-made. Yet, although this is true, it cannot be said that it was quite mechanically imposed on life. It rather arose quite spontaneously from the development of life in general. Time was, especially among Israel, when the parents shouldered the task of instructing and training their children alone. Life was still simple. And because of this fact few demands were made of the instruction of the young. And these demands could readily be met by the parents. But as life developed, became more complicated in its various departments, more was demanded of that training that was supposed to prepare the child to take his place in life. And the parents had neither the time nor the ability to

*Reprint from the *SB*, December 15, 1935.

finish the task of educating their children. It is out of such conditions that the school arose. Parents banded together, employed someone of ability and character to educate their children in the knowledge of those subjects which they could not possibly teach themselves, and which must nevertheless be taught to prepare the child for its place in society.

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From which it follows, in the first place, that the school is an extension of the home, an institution properly controlled by the parents. The state may be interested that its citizens do not remain illiterate but are properly instructed; the church may have the calling to watch that her children receive such instruction as is in harmony with the pledge made by the parents at the occasion of baptism; both may, therefore, have a certain interest in the school; but they do not control the school. The school is not an institution of the church, nor of the state, but of the parents. And the latter are primarily responsible before God for the instruction given even though it is not given by them personally. And, in the second place, it follows that the purpose of school-instruction is chiefly to instruct the children in those subjects the knowledge of which is essential to prepare them for their place in society in general. In this respect the calling and purpose of the school differs from those of the church. The church has its origin in grace, the school in nature; the church is heavenly, the school is earthly; the church is the guardian of spiritual things, the school is the custodian of temporal matters; the church aims at the growth in the knowledge and grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the school at the development in the knowledge of earthly relations;

the church purposes to prepare its seed for their place in the Kingdom of God, the school has the calling to prepare its pupils for their place in this present world.

If this distinction is correct, we will also be ready to define what is really a Christian school in the true, Reformed sense of the word. Indeed, the proper conception of the idea of the Christian school depends upon our view of life in general. If it is our view that things natural and spiritual, things heavenly and earthly, things of the kingdom of heaven and the affairs of this present world have nothing to do with each other, if we separate them, it is quite impossible to see the necessity of Christian instruction in the school; and if we still prefer the Christian school to the public school it must be from the practical principle that our children can never receive too much instruction in the Scriptures and that the time which the church is able to devote to the education of its seed is necessarily limited. In that case we will look upon the school, if not as an institution of the church, nevertheless as an institution that can be very helpful to the church in indoctrinating the children of the covenant. And the school will naturally be an institution which is in every respect like the school of the state, except for the Christian atmosphere that is created by the opening and closing with prayer, the singing of a Christian hymn, and the instruction in biblical history, perhaps even in the catechism. The Christian school in that case is a school that has assumed part of the task that properly belongs to the church.

Quite different, however, will be our conception of what a Christian school ought to be if we understand that the natural and the spiritual cannot and may never be separated, but that in every department of his life in the world the Christian has the calling of living from the subjective principle of the life of regeneration and according to the objective standard of the Word of God. Religion, the Christian religion, is not something that is added to life; but it is a power, a living

power, a living power that purposes to permeate all of life. The Christian is called to be a Christian always and everywhere. It is his confession that with body and soul and in life and in death he is not his own, but belongs to his faithful Savior Jesus Christ. And, therefore, with body and soul, with mind and will, in society and the state, as well as in the church, he serves the Lord. Personally and in the home, in the relation of parent and child, of man and wife, in business and industry, as servant or as master, as magistrate or as subject, it is his calling to serve the Lord Christ. But if this be true, it must also be evident that a Christian school is not merely a copy of the public school except for the addition of some biblical instruction, and religious exercises, but that it purposes to be Christian throughout, Christian in all its instruction and training of the child. The principle of the fear of the Lord must permeate all the instruction and discipline and life of the school that is really Christian. A Christian school must be Christian as a school!

The Proper Place of Doctrine in the School

If this view of the Christian school is correct, it should not be difficult to arrive at a correct conception of the proper place of doctrine in such a school. When I speak of doctrine I mean Reformed doctrine, because I am speaking of our own Christian schools. It is sometimes emphatically advocated that the Christian character of our schools must be made as general as possible. We should not really speak of Reformed schools, but rather emphasize that our schools purpose to be generally Christian. But this is a mistake. It is quite impossible to be generally Christian, without sacrificing all the salient doctrines of Christianity. One cannot be an Arminian and a Reformed believer at the same time. He cannot be Reformed, Lutheran, Baptist, and Methodist all at once. If he would, nevertheless, be generally Christian in his teaching in the sense that he would avoid all such points of doctrine that

causes the different branches of the Christian church to differ from one another, so that his Christian instruction would be the largest common denominator of all Christian beliefs, education would necessarily become quite vague and colorless. And, therefore, I cannot conceive of Christian doctrine that is not specific. And in the concrete a Christian school must be Christian in the specific sense of the word. Its Christian character must be representative of the specific belief of the parents that support and sponsor the school, that is, in our case, Reformed. When, therefore, I speak of doctrine in this connection I mean specifically Reformed doctrine.

And, then, I wish to say, first of all, that it cannot be conceived of as the proper task of the school, even of the Christian school, to teach Reformed doctrine, to include Reformed doctrine as one of the branches of its curriculum. This certainly is the task of the church. To watch over the flock, to preserve soundness of doctrine, to develop the truth as it is revealed in Scripture, to establish what is to be considered as accepted truth, to express this in her confessions, to maintain it in opposition to all error, and to instruct all her members, believers and their children, in the truth as it is in Jesus—that is the proper task of the church as instituted, that is, through her office-bearers, particularly through the ministry of the Word. For this purpose Christ instituted the offices, for the well-being of the church, for the upbuilding of the saints, for their growth in the knowledge of the truth, that they might not be tossed to and fro by every wind of doctrine. This calling, therefore, is inseparably connected with the office. It cannot be delegated to the school, for our Christian school is no Church-school. The teacher is no officebearer, nor does he labor under the direct supervision of and as appointee of the Consistory. And not only is this calling connected with the office and, therefore, with the church institute, but the latter is also the proper agency for instruction in doctrine from the

viewpoint of ability to teach it. We believe in a thoroughly trained ministry, in order that our ministers may be able to instruct in all the counsel of God. Instruction in doctrine is the proper domain of the ministers of the Word. For they are specifically prepared. This is not true of the teacher in the school.

And, therefore, I maintain that the place of doctrine in the Christian school cannot be that of a subject in the curriculum. This, the church does in preaching and teaching, from the pulpit and in catechism classes. And never can the Christian school take the place of catechetical instruction. There may be no objection to the subject of biblical history; there is surely no objection to the direct reading of Scripture in the Christian school. But its task cannot be, and should never be delegated to it, to instruct in doctrine directly. And if the church offers proper catechetical instruction and the coming generation is nevertheless ignorant of the Reformed truth, the blame ought not to be laid at the door of the Christian school, but the accusing finger must be pointed at children or parents, at young men and women that have been negligent in attendance and in properly preparing for catechism-work.

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However, this does not mean that doctrine, Reformed doctrine, has no place in the Christian school. On the contrary, it has properly a very important place. Its place is basic to all its instruction and training, to all its school-life and discipline. The school must not teach Reformed doctrine, but it must apply the principles of Reformed doctrine to all its teaching. All its instruction must be Reformed instruction. The school, therefore,

receives its doctrinal principles, upon which all its instruction must be based, in harmony with which all its teaching must be offered, from the church. It applies them. It stands to reason that there is a difference of degree in which these principles can be applied to different subjects. But in the greater or smaller degree these principles must be manifest in all the instruction given. How important this place of doctrine is will be evident if I only draw a few general lines and show with respect to some of the subjects taught what this application of Reformed principles would mean.

Let us take the subject of history. In the first place it will be very evident that it will make a world of difference whether this subject is taught according to the philosophy of evolution or in harmony with the biblical doctrines of creation and the fall of man. The same historic facts appear in each instance in a wholly different light. But, further, it will also be evident that there is a wide difference between the Arminian view that man is the maker of his own destiny and the Reformed view that all things are but the unfolding of the eternal counsel of God, and that all creatures, even the rational moral beings, must certainly execute that counsel. It will make a world of difference whether the one or the other principle is applied to and permeates all the teaching of history.

Take another example, the subject of civics. It will be seen, that it makes an important difference, whether the subject of magistrates, the state and its power and calling, is taught from the viewpoint of revolutionary unbelief or from the Christian viewpoint of authority and obedience for God's sake. But even apart from this general difference, it can easily be discerned that it is by no means indifferent, whether the subject is taught from the viewpoint of common grace or from the viewpoint of the antithesis. In the one case, one would consider a government consisting of godless magistrates Christian because they rule by the common grace of God; in the other, one would

maintain that we must strive for Christian rule over us.

Take the subject, social science. What a difference the application of Reformed doctrine makes for such important subjects as the relation of man and wife; parent and child; authority and obedience; divorce; birth control; employer and employee; labor conditions and relations; strikes and uprisings; and similar subjects. And thus it is with every subject taught in the school, physiology and geography, yea, even reading and writing and arithmetic.

And not only is this true of the subjects that are being taught in the Christian school, it is equally true of the life and discipline in the schoolroom. The opening and closing prayers certainly must be Reformed. The songs that are sung and learned by heart may never be in conflict with the principles of the Reformed faith, but ought to be expressive of it. The teacher must certainly consider his children as covenant children and in all his instruction, attitude, and discipline it must become evident that he bears this in mind and that he aims at the development of the perfect man of God, thoroughly furnished unto all good works as far as his life in this world is concerned. And even in its programs, given outside of the schoolroom proper, the school must become manifest as based upon the Reformed truth. In one word, the place of doctrine, of Reformed doctrine, in the Christian school is basic. It determines the religious character of all the instruction and life and discipline in the school!

The Way to Afford Doctrine its Proper Place

If such is the ideal of Christian school, if that should be the place of doctrine in it, it is very evident that we have not reached the ideal as yet. Yet, that is not the saddest aspect of the whole situation. It is far worse, that it cannot be said that there is a serious strife after the realization of that ideal. The present situation is that we have schools that offer some biblical instruction, instruction in bib-

lical history that is largely doctrinal and belongs to the task of the church. Special textbooks in mimeographed form have recently seen the light, guides for teachers and pupils that are based upon the common grace conception throughout. We have schools that open and close with prayer and that are given to the singing of hymns, by no means always Reformed in contents. But we do not have schools that are based upon Reformed principles. There is room for the question: what ought to be done, what is necessary in order to strive for the ideal?

*...the doctrinal level
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I will begin with the people that sponsor and control and support the school. They must first of all be Reformed, not only in name, but according to their deepest conviction. After all, the school is the institution of the parents. Its standard can hardly be expected to be higher than that of the parents themselves. If we do not remain a Reformed people, we shall not attain to the ideal of truly Christian schools in which Reformed doctrine lies at the basis of all instruction. In that case the cause of Christian instruction is a hopeless one. And, therefore, we must have a truly Reformed people that support and control the school, a people that clearly understand what a Christian school ought to be and that want it, and wanting it, will not rest until the ideal is attained. This truly Reformed people must form the school society and must elect from its midst a school board that is in harmony with the principles and ideals of the society. This I consider the strength of the Christian school, its very backbone.

In the second place, we must have thoroughly Reformed teachers. The teacher is the heart of the school. It is he, not only, that must give the instruction, it is also he that must chiefly

be instrumental in making the school what it ought to be, in causing us to reach the ideal. He must not merely be an able scholar and an accomplished teacher, so that he is thoroughly acquainted with the subjects he is required to teach, but he must also be able to apply Reformed truth to all the different subjects in which he instructs. He above all must be thoroughly convinced of its truth, must carry the truth in his heart and love it. Only love of the Reformed truth will inspire him not to be satisfied with conditions as they are but to strive for the ideal.

In the third place we are in need of teachers that will make it their life's task not only to teach, but to bring the Christian school to its proper level. Teaching has too often been looked upon as a stepping stone. Comparatively few have given their life to their profession thus far. Yet this is necessary. In the first place because the experienced teacher is certainly the best. Experience trains him for the task and all the while makes him more fit for the work. In the second place, because experience will cause him to become more thoroughly acquainted with the real needs of a truly Christian school. In the third place, because it is not merely the work of a Christian school teacher to teach, but also to supply the school gradually with textbooks that can be used in the schoolroom, in which the principles of Reformed truth are applied to the subjects to be taught. One who gives himself to teaching for a few years has neither the experience nor the ambition to accomplish this work. We are in need of men and women that will make teaching their life's work.

But once more, we must have a thoroughly Reformed people to strive for this ideal. Without them all the other factors cannot be had. And the doctrinal level of the school will not be higher than that of the people that support it. If, then, we are a truly Reformed people, it is possible to strive in the direction of the ideal Christian school; if not, the cause of Christian instruction is utterly hopeless! □

A Cloud Of Witnesses

Prof. Herman Hanko

Catherine of Siena: Mystic

It is not possible to understand the strange times which we call the Middle Ages without understanding mysticism. Mysticism was a current which ran through the church of Christ throughout her history, beginning already in the third century, and it continues to the present.

That this should be so is not surprising. The pendulum in the spiritual life of the people of God swings from one extreme to the other. On the one extreme lies a cold and lifeless dead orthodoxy which is often characterized by rationalism; on the other extreme lies the fervency of mysticism. Between these two extremes the life of the church swings. It is difficult for the church to keep a proper spiritual balance. The swing is to be explained by the fact that neither extreme satisfies.

When the church falls into the spiritual graveyard of dead orthodoxy, the people of God want more from religion. They desire a spiritual life which is warm and fervent, filled with the personal experience of union with Christ, characterized by piety and godliness. If this desire is not kept in proper balance, the pendulum swings towards mysticism with all its emphasis on feeling, subjective experience, evidences of conversion, inner union with God, and genuine piety. But because mysticism tends to denigrate the *knowledge* of faith, this too

cannot long satisfy, and the life of the church swings back again on its weary course towards rationalism and an exclusive emphasis on knowledge for knowledge's sake.

In the Middle Ages, the Romish Church developed rapidly towards outward forms of worship. The worship of the church was filled with liturgy; the mass was said in Latin; the life of the people was regulated by law upon law and precept upon precept. And the worst was that the salvation of the people of God was placed in the hands of the clergy and the church so that nothing was required of the saints but outward conformity to the regulations of the establishment. It is not surprising that mysticism should flourish. It was an understandable reaction to the external form of religion.

Mystics abounded. They were present in every decade of Medieval times. They were present also at the time the Reformation burst over Europe.

As an example of mysticism, Catherine of Siena stands high above all the others. Of her such eulogies as these have been spoken: "She is the most eminent of the holy women of the Middle Ages whom the Church has canonized. Her fame depends upon her single-hearted piety and her efforts to advance the interests of the Church and her nation.... Although the hysterical element may not be altogether wanting from her piety, she yet deserves and will have the admiration of all men who are moved by the sight of a noble enthusiasm...."

"She is one of the most wonderful women that have ever lived." "Catherine's figure flits like that of an angel: through the darkness of her

time, over which her gracious genius sheds a soft radiance."¹

Catherine Benincasa was born in Siena, Italy around 1347. She was the 23rd child and a twin in a family of 25 children. Her father, Jacobo, was a dyer and belonged to the lower middle class. Her mother, Lapa, was, quite obviously, a housewife. She received no schooling at all and learned to read and write only in later life.

She was born in a time of upheaval in Europe, but especially in Italy. The Renaissance, that great pagan revival of learning, was sweeping Europe and clashing with the darkness of preceding centuries. National, economic, social, and educational changes were in the wind. Under the influence of French cardinals in Rome, the papacy had been moved to Avignon, France and had come completely under the domination of the French. This so-called Babylonian captivity of the church had resulted in the secularization and moral decay of the papacy. No longer was the church trusted — it had lost the prestige of its apostolic seat in Rome, and a general dissatisfaction with the church prevailed throughout Europe.

Catherine's mystical life began early. At the age of 7, she claimed to have seen a vision of Jesus with Peter, Paul, and John, which led her to the resolve to devote her life to religion. While first her parents objected on the grounds that she suffered from delusions, they were persuaded at last of her claims and set aside a part of the

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¹Quoted from Philip Schaff, *The History of the Christian Church*, Vol. VI, p. 194.

house for her in which to pray, meditate, and receive visions and trances. In her own corner of the house she became something of a recluse: she refused to sleep, ate almost nothing, and beat herself three times a day with a whip or a chain. When at 14 her parents arranged a marriage for her, she cut off her beautiful hair to dissuade her intended husband. When her face was pock-marked from an attack of smallpox, she accepted it as a special gift of God which would make her unattractive to men. Her biographer describes her vividly.

Nature had not given her a face over fair, and her personal appearance was marred by the marks of smallpox. And yet she had a winning expression, a fund of good spirits, and sang and laughed heartily. Once devoted to a religious life, she practiced great austerities, flagellating herself three times a day, — once for herself, once for the living and once for the dead. She wore a hair undergarment and an iron chain (bound about her waist). During one Lenten season she lived on the bread taken in communion. These asceticisms were performed in a chamber in her father's house. She was never an inmate of a convent. Such extreme asceticisms as she practiced upon herself she disparaged at a later period.²

At about the age of 20, in obedience to what she considered a vision, she joined the Sisters of Penitences, a Dominican Order, although she refused to become a part of a convent, disdaining the restrictions which convent-life required. Her life was an active involvement in the daily affairs of the people in Siena and in the problems of the church.

Her reputation is based in large measure on her many charitable works. She went among the poor to alleviate their suffering. She nursed the incurably ill, especially those with cancer and leprosy. She worked with prisoners, staying with them during their trials and executions. When a young nobleman was condemned to die for words of disrespect of the

magistrates, she comforted him in his despair, taught him to be joyful in the face of death, and was present with him on the block when he was beheaded. She caught his head in her hands and was pleased to be splattered with his blood. She is said to have performed miracles of healing and raising the dead during a plague which ravaged the city. At every opportunity she preached to the people and soon gained a large following of men and women who were mostly from the laity and who wanted to imitate her piety.

It is not surprising that the fame of such a selfless woman spread rapidly and she soon found herself involved in the affairs of the church at large. It was at this time that she began writing her famous *Letters*, 400 of which are extant. They were written to family members, poor and distressed, sick and dying, princes and rulers, popes and cardinals, foreign kings and soldiers. They were filled with admonition, sharp reproof, comfort, advice, and details of her own mystical experiences.

Because she operated so freely outside the church's official authority, she was tried for heresy by a Dominican tribunal, but was cleared of all charges. The court did, however, appoint for her a spiritual adviser, Raymond of Capua, who became her friend, secretary, biographer, and confessor.

Her participation in church affairs involved her in efforts to organize another crusade, which she intended to be used to bring the gospel to the Moslem Turks. She worked hard in getting the papacy out of Avignon and finally succeeded in restoring it to the ancient papal see in Rome. Her first trip to Avignon to speak with the pope resulted in bitter disappointment, for she found the papacy to be "a stench of infernal vices" rather than "a paradise of heavenly virtues," as she expected. But the return of the papacy to Rome resulted in graver problems — the great Papal Schism in which two rival popes claimed the papal chair. To her despair she failed in settling this prob-

lem — a problem which was not resolved until the Council of Constance — the same Council which burned John Huss at the stake.

Her efforts were not always welcomed. At Avignon the cardinals treated her with coolness, the influential women with disdain, and the bureaucrats with hatred. The niece of the pope, while kneeling at her side in prayer, ran a sharp knife through Catherine's foot, which gave her a permanent limp.

She died before reaching her 33rd birthday, with final words to her companions: "Dear children, let not my death sadden you, rather rejoice to think that I am leaving a place of many sufferings to go to rest in the quiet sea, the eternal God, and to be united forever with my most sweet and loving bridegroom."

The mysticism of Catherine is typical of many in the Medieval Period. Dreams, visions, and trances continued throughout her life. She claimed to have drunk the blood of Christ which flowed from His side and the milk of Mary, Christ's mother. At an early age she said that she had been married to Christ and that she wore His ring on her finger — although no one else could ever see it. Because she meditated too often and so intensely on the sufferings of Christ, she professed to have Christ's "stigmata" (the wounds of the nails and the spear-thrust) in her body — although these too were invisible to everyone but herself. Many of her "Letters" were written in a trance-like state.

The goal of Medieval mysticism (as with all mysticism as it has appeared throughout the ages) was "union with God." This was the highest ideal of the saints. But such union with God could come about only through rigorous spiritual and physical exercises. It required of one that he (or she) meditate unceasingly on the suffering Christ; that the world with all its attractions be forsaken; that sin be rigorously suppressed by fierce ascetic practices, for only in this way could one escape from what was called "the dark night of the soul."

²Quoted from Schaff, p. 195.

Emerging from this dark night, one awoke to glorious, unearthly, supremely blessed union with God Himself. This is what Catherine meant by her marriage to Christ.

Union with Christ is taught by Scripture as the blessedness of salvation. The joy and comfort of the assurance of salvation is the experience of God's people. Meditation and study of God's Word are held before us as obligatory for a godly life. Genuine piety and a life of fellowship with

God is the portion of the righteous even here in the world.

Where the mystics went wrong was that they reduced all religion to experience and feeling. Mediated by dreams and visions, trances and appearances of saints and angels, the Christian life is defined in terms of subjective and indefinable inner states of feeling. Knowledge is spurned and true knowledge is considered unessential. But this is terribly wrong. It is the knowledge of the truth that sets

us free. And to know God and His Son Jesus Christ is to have eternal life. After all, faith — the faith that unites us to Christ in the mystical union of His blessed body — is first of all knowledge. It is more than knowledge, but it is knowledge for all that. The spiritual experience of the child of God may and does ebb and flow; but we know whom we have believed. And that is salvation. □

Go Ye Into All the World

Rev. Ronald Van Overloop

Mission Principles (VI) The Encouragements

In the Puritan classic by Richard Baxter, *The Saint's Everlasting Rest*, Mr. Baxter speaks of the duty of the people of God to excite others to obtain the saint's rest, but he gives a caution about the manner of performing this duty.

But because the manner of performing this work is of great moment, observe, therefore these rules: Enter upon it with right intentions. Aim at the glory of God in the person's salvation. Do it not to get a name, or esteem to thyself, or to bring men to depend upon thee, or to get thee followers, but in obedience to Christ, in imitation of Him, and tender love to men's souls.

These "right intentions" of obeying and imitating Christ serve to emphasize the greatness of this noble calling.

The task of missions is great — too great. What missionary believes himself capable for the task of teaching all the things God has com-

manded? What local congregation or even denominational mission committee feels itself sufficient for the task of going into all the world and teaching all nations?

* * * * *

Take a look at that group of men who received the "great" commission. Their number was very small. Most of them had not received any formal education. The profession most of them formerly had was the rather ignoble one of fishermen from Galilee. These men who were untrained in the ways of the world were to go into all the world. They were sent to accomplish the impossible, namely, demand of people that they submit themselves to Christ as Savior and Master. They were to demand that people turn from sins which were as dear to them as their right eye. They were sent to tell all religious people that they should consider as dung all former and present efforts to please God. In addition, as they sought to carry out the commission Christ gave them they would be facing all the opposition of the powers of hell. To make matters even more difficult they were given this great

commission just seconds before their Master left them on their own. They were therefore to do the task without the help of His presence.

The missionary enters into a field of labor knowing that he has the supervisory care and support of the elders and congregation which were God's instruments to call him to his field of labor. However, that care and support is often far away from the day-to-day labors which are his as missionary. There are many times when he is very conscious of the fact that he is the point man, well ahead of the front line of troops and in enemy territory. He preaches and teaches faithfully, but alone. He is without the presence of a body of elders who can affirm to others the biblical nature of what he is preaching and teaching. No one is there to lend the emotional support often needed. The Scriptures record a time when the apostle Paul experienced discouragement (Acts 18:5ff.), and it is worthy of note that at that time he was alone, without the assistance of those helpers who usually accompanied him on his missionary journeys.

An individual congregation also

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can experience discouragements. In size it is usually considered to be insignificant, a nothing. The truth which it presents in its witness is ridiculed as being restrictive, and its worship is characterized as being ancient and prohibitive. Often there are periods of time when there seems to be absolutely no fruit given to their labors. Discouragement can easily settle upon all, bringing the hands down to the knees, doing nothing.

The denomination, expressing the unity of faith and striving to do together what cannot be done by individual congregations, faces an overwhelming task of going "into all the world" and preaching to "every creature." Often the denomination sees many opportunities to work, but finds itself handicapped by limited finances and manpower. The laborers are few while the harvest appears to be plentiful.

Who is sufficient for so great a task!?

How can we maintain our zeal and enthusiasm for the work? How can we hold back the fog of discouragement? How can we develop and maintain an evangelistic zeal, which is according to knowledge?

* * * * *

I propose that our Lord Jesus Christ gave all the encouragement we will ever need in order to maintain a proper zeal for missions and in order to avoid discouragements. Jesus gave this two-part encouragement at the very time that He gave the Great Commission. In Matthew 28:18 He said, "All power is given unto Me in heaven and in earth." And in the last part of verse 20 He said, "Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world." These two statements of our Lord are specifically given in connection with the Great Commission. They should never be separated from it. I am sure that our Savior, knowing well His little flock of weak sheep, anticipated their needs perfectly, and purposefully bracketed His Great Commission with these two encouragements.

* * * * *

The first encouragement arises

from the realization that we do evangelism and mission work in the context of Christ's exaltation to power.

As the fruit of Christ's work of humiliation, God highly exalted Him to the position of all authority, giving Him a name above every name. Christ is invested with all this authority in order to carry out His work as Mediator. A motley group of unschooled men had to do a world-encompassing task in a hostile world. They must face the great Roman empire, other hostile governments, and the devil himself. Therefore, Jesus tells the disciples not to forget the context in which they evangelize. As soon as they forget that all authority has been delivered to Christ, their task becomes burdensome. If they do not remember that all authority belongs to their Lord, they will fold under the pressure, or will deviate from the goals or think them unattainable.

*We will not be careless
with the goals of our mission work,
if we remember that
the One who defines the goals
has all power.*

The fact that all authority is Christ's makes His church very confident that His (and theirs) is the ultimate triumph. From a certain perspective the evangelism efforts of the church are impossible. The church must demand of men that they deny themselves and submit to Christ as their Savior and Master. The church faces all the opposition of the powers of hell. Our hope for "success" is not that we can scare the devil away with our clever schemes, nor is it that we can make the message of the gospel palatable to unregenerate man. Rather our confidence of triumph arises from the fact that all authority has been given to Christ. Remember that one is made a disciple of Christ only through the gracious exercise of Christ's sovereign power in his heart. When He puts forth the arm of His strength, then sinners repent and are brought unto Him.

In addition, the fact that all authority has been given to Christ has implications for the manner in which the message of Christ is presented. We are not selling Christ like a piece of merchandise, hoping that men will accommodate the Son of God and vote for Jesus. Notice that modern evangelism usually speaks about the man of Galilee, while the apostles always preached the exalted Christ, the Sovereign Lord. Peter on Pentecost began this kind of presentation of Jesus, declaring that He was "both Lord and Christ" (Acts 2:32-36). Later, before the Sanhedrin, Peter was quick to point out that God exalted Christ "to be a Prince and a Saviour" (Acts 5:31). Quickly scan the preaching of the apostles in the book of Acts and in the epistles and see how Jesus is presented. We must be careful not to say that Christ is waiting and pleading, but to declare that He is enthroned. We must preach that man can be saved only at the foot of a throne—a throne of grace and mercy.

The fact that Jesus is exalted with all authority makes us careful to adhere to the Word of Christ in the totality of our endeavor. We will not be careless with the goals of our mission work, if we remember that the One who defines the goals has all power. Nor will we be indifferent to the work, for the mandate is of our sovereign Lord. He gives it as a command. He assumes that we are going and teaching. And we will stick carefully to the method Jesus has given, namely, *preach* and *teach*, not music, drama, etc. King Jesus has spoken about our mission and evangelism work, and He is worthy of being obeyed.

* * * * *

The second encouragement Jesus gives us in our work of missions and evangelism is that He is the ever-present Christ. He is present with us always, even to the consummation of this age.

Though in His Person He was going back to the Father, He promised to send the Spirit, with whom He is one. In the presence of the Spirit Christ, the One whom the disciples

knew so well, would be with them. He is present with us always (literally, "all the days") — on those days when many are added to the church, and on those days when there is no response to the proclamation of the gospel, and on those days when we are persecuted for the sake of preaching His Word. The extent of Christ's presence with us is the consummation of this Gospel age. During this age the door of God's mercy is open and the command of men to come is present. As soon as this age ends, God's command ceases and the door is shut — and no man opens.

Christ's constant presence with us has several implications for the carrying out of our mission and evangelism work.

First, we can have great consolation over against much apparent failure and many reasons for discouragement. We can constantly preach the Gospel, just as though Jesus, who can do the greatest wonders, were at our side. In the face of repeated rejections we can keep on teaching and preaching and striving to make disciples. When discouraged, then we should read of that time when Paul was discouraged (Acts 18:5-14), and consider that God encouraged him in part with the words, "I am with thee" (v. 10).

If the Lord of the harvest is pleased

to give us success, we will have great humility. When the devil cannot distract us from obedience to the Great Commission through depression and discouragements, he often succeeds in tripping up God's people by giving them success, so they forget that it comes from the Lord. He delights in convincing the messengers that they are the reason for the message and its "success." However, "who then is Paul, and who is Apollos, but ministers... I have planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase" (I Cor. 3:5-7). If the hard heart of any child of Adam repents and believes, it is only because God gave the increase. The ever-present Christ is alone able to bring positive fruit to our feeble labors.

Because Jesus is ever present with us, every agent of missions will be very careful not to offend Christ by tampering with His message. He has given us the message to preach, and it is a most terrible thing to manipulate it. Paul was conscious of this when he told the church at Corinth that he was not like many who corrupted the Word of God, but "as of sincerity, but as of God, in the sight of God speak we in Christ" (II Cor. 2:17). His constant presence makes us conscious that we must give an account to Him. It is exactly His presence which makes it impossible for us to cooperate in our

mission work with those who are theological liberals.

Finally, the ever-present Christ makes us careful to carry out His goals. We are not to stop the work just because we may be discouraged. We have not the right to cease our efforts just because we may have limited finances or manpower. Nor may we let the eschatology of a-millennialism make us pessimistic or hesitant in our mission and evangelism labors. We do not have to carry out God's plan for history. But we do have the calling to be obedient to His command to go and teach. And the promise of His presence makes us not only active to be obedient but also optimistic concerning the possibility of fruit.

We are told that we must make disciples of all the nations, which may be a back- and heart-breaking activity; but we have the consciousness of Christ's presence. Problems begin when we become smug and content, without any burden to make disciples. Christ withdraws from that church which has no burden to disciple the nations!

* * * * *

The spiritual context for true mission and evangelistic work is twofold: the exalted and ever-present Christ. May God be pleased to increase our understanding and our zeal. □

When Thou Sittest in Thine House

Mrs. MaryBeth Lubbers

But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another...

I John 1:7.

Mrs. Lubbers is a wife and mother in the Protestant Reformed Church of South Holland, Illinois.

The Reformed Family: The Communion of Saints

The family — husband, wife, and children — constitutes the very closest relationship on this earth that is possible. In contrast to the trouble and turmoil of our age, the family unit is a little, tightly-sealed kingdom. Within its walls there is fellowship and nourishment as each member serves the welfare of the other. And

although Satan launches fierce attack at this fortress, and sin always manages to cross the drawbridge, nevertheless here there is peace and pleasure.

There is, however, another family, a larger family, which also makes up the Christian's kingdom. This larger family is the great company of

believers of all ages, past, present, and future. This is my family, too.

Each Sunday evening I confess with the church in South Holland and with the church of all ages in the Apostles Creed: I believe the communion of saints.

I don't merely enjoy the communion of saints, although I do that too; I don't only appreciate the fact that there are other saints standing with me and out there in other lands who are one in Jesus Christ. But I believe that. It is a credo with me. It is a tenet of my faith. It is of equal importance with my apostolic confession: I believe the forgiveness of sins.

I believe this.

I believe the communion of saints. The communion of ALL saints. Those whom I do not even know, and as yet have never met, as well as those who balance the pew in which I sit Sunday after Sunday.

I believe this.

I believe the fellowship of the church gone on before, long now in glory — a Daniel, a Paul, a Polycarp, an Augustine. Truth to tell, it's rather easy for me to confess a oneness with the saints with whom I've never had to brush elbows — or exchange differences — rather than to confess a unity with the crusty old parishioner who harrumphs past me, or the spiteful woman, chin in air, who chooses to ignore me, or the mischievous youngster who treads on my ankles on his mad dash through the foyer.

I believe this.

The communion which I share with all my fellow believers is a oneness that is mine through the blessed atonement of my elder brother, Jesus Christ. He condescends to commune with me, and so I enjoy sweet communion with Him and with all those for whom He has spilled drop after drop of His precious blood.

I believe this.

And I have such a love for these fellow saints, poor sinners such as I, that I promote their advantage even at great cost to my own pleasure and personal satisfaction. One has only to think of Prince Jonathan, who will-

ingly stripped himself of fame and fortune for the sake of friend David. One need only be reminded of John the Baptist, the popular, fiery preacher along the Jordan who encouraged his disciples to leave him and follow after the One whom he deemed greater.

I believe this.

I am so closely knit to my fellow saints that their sorrows become my sorrows. I help my fellow saints in distress; I assist them when they are down and out. I hold the hand of my dear brother as he awaits the doctor's ominous report. I frequent hospitals, jails, and old peoples' homes. With heavy heart I attend their funerals, believing that "It is better to go to the house of mourning, than to go to the house of feasting..." (Eccl. 7: 2).

I believe this.

And what is even more difficult, I joy when my fellow saint joys. The honors which are conferred upon him are, as it were, laurels on my own head. I am happy for his job promotion, pay raises, exotic vacations, and successful children — even though my life is seemingly swollen with disappointment.

I believe this.

*I do not wait
for someone else
to extend the right hand
of fellowship.*

And I never talk or gossip maliciously about my brother or sister in Christ, for I am keenly aware that my indiscriminate talking reflects poorly on Christ. Whenever my brother errs or slips on the treacherous path of life, I'm there to steady him and help him stand erect again. And when there is a sin of such magnitude that my Savior's name is dishonored, I go to my brother all by myself. And, oh, the trip to his home is long, and my feet are slow and reluctant to walk up his sidewalk because no one understands better than I that my own sidewalk would be worn thin should the sins which I've committed be revealed.

And when my brother confesses his sin to me ALONE, the sin is forever buried in the great sea of God's forgetfulness...and mine.

I believe this.

And I believe that as much as is possible I must seek tangible fellowship with all God's saints, but especially with those in the church which I attend. Following the worship service, I form no group so rigidly defined that others walking past are intimidated. There may not be "a north-side-of-church group" and "a south-side group." Sometimes young children like to make camps, and the purpose of the camp is not so much to include members, but to exclude certain children. This may never be true in the church. No cliques, no elitism, in the sanctuary. And the stranger who attends my church receives hospitality from me; I do not wait for someone else to extend the right hand of fellowship.

I believe this.

Today, more than ever before, our lives are full and busy. Fathers are occupied with making a living; mothers are busy with the home, children, and school-related activities. Often days go by when one cannot see beyond his immediate family situation. Yet, there must be some little way that one can show his love for the larger extended Reformed family.

I believe this.

In my own church, there are women who regularly take the widows out for lunch; they pick up those who cannot drive a car; they include them in their plans. In one of our Grand Rapids churches, there is a business man, who, while wheeling from job to job, carries with him a copy of a booklet which is handed out each month in his church, a booklet listing everyone's birthday for that month. On his truck phone he calls each of these people just to wish them a happy birthday. The thoughtful gesture, the simple kindness—primer lessons for fellow Christians.

I believe the communion of saints.

Lord, now grace me so that I may live my belief. □

Decency and Order

Rev. Ronald Cammenga

Term of Office

The elders and deacons shall serve two or more years according to local regulations, and a proportionate number shall retire each year. The retiring officers shall be succeeded by others, unless the circumstances and the profit of any church, in the execution of articles 22 and 24, render a re-election advisable.

Church Order, Article 27

Historical Background

This article establishes the policy of limited tenure for elders and deacons. Article 12 set forth the Reformed view that those who are called to the office of the ministry are called for life. In distinction from ministers who are permanently in office, the elders and deacons serve for a limited term of office, usually between two and five years.

It was especially Calvin who introduced the practice of limited tenure into the Reformed Churches. In Geneva the elders were appointed by the government and were retired each year. The elders who performed their duties well might be recommended by the ministers for reappointment. Calvin's main motivation for introducing limited tenure was the prevention of the tyranny that had been prevalent in the Roman Catholic Church due, at least in part, to the fact

that office in the Roman Catholic Church was for life.

Early on, the Reformed Church in The Netherlands adopted the practice of limited tenure.

Apart now from every day problems, it goes without saying that the elders and deacons who have faithfully served for a certain period of time have not done this except at great disadvantage to their family affairs. Therefore we consider it profitable that every year new elders be elected ... (Synod of Wezel, 1568).

The elected elders and deacons shall serve two years of which half the number shall be changed each year and others chosen in the prescribed way shall be installed in their place under the same condition. But as far as the secret congregations are concerned, or those which cannot maintain this order, they are given the freedom to shorten or lengthen the time according to their need and circumstances, concerning which if any difficulty arises the classis shall judge (Synod of Dordrecht, 1578).

Elders and deacons shall serve two years, and every year one half shall retire and other installed in their place, unless the circumstances and welfare of any church demand otherwise (Synod of Middelburg, 1581).

To this general practice of the Dutch Reformed Churches there were a few exceptions. The Dutch Refugee Congregation of London chose their elders for life, although their deacons served one-year terms. Also some of the Dutch provinces retained permanent tenure: Groningen, Leyden, and North Holland. However, the Synod of Alkmaar, 1587 compelled these provinces to conform to the practice of the others.

In distinction from the Reformed churches, the Presbyterian tradition

followed the practice of permanent or life tenure. In the Presbyterian tradition, he who is once put into office, whether minister, elder, or deacon, ordinarily remains in office for life. Even removal of membership from the church in which he was ordained, or old age, or debilitating illness does not force one to relinquish the office, only active service in the office.

Arguments for and against limited tenure

Several arguments can be put forward in support of life tenure for officebearers. The following are the principal ones.

▲ It seems inconsistent with the principle of equality of the offices that the ministers serve for life, while the term of the elders and deacons is limited.

▲ In the Old Testament all three offices of prophet, priest, and king were for life. So should their counterparts be in the New Testament.

▲ This was the practice of the early church until the time of the Reformation, and therefore is the historical precedent.

▲ Since these men possess the gifts for office in Christ's church, the church should not be denied the use of their gifts by forcing them into retirement, even if only for a time.

▲ Limited tenure adversely affects the continuity of the labors of the consistory.

▲ The benefits of experience in the work of the officebearers favors permanent tenure.

At the same time, strong arguments in favor of limited tenure can also be put forward.

Rev. Cammenga is pastor of the Protestant Reformed Church of Loveland, Colorado.

▲ The Scriptures do not stipulate the term of office. There is no express command that requires elders and deacons to serve for life. Scripture's silence on the matter indicates that the church is at liberty to regulate this matter according to her own discretion, taking circumstances and the best edification of the church into consideration.

▲ The office does not cleave to the person, but to the church. It is the church who puts a man into office. The church, therefore, may determine how long a man shall have the office.

▲ Uninterrupted labor in the consistory places a hardship on men who have other personal, family, and vocational responsibilities. It cannot be denied that often a man's temporal and family life suffers when he is in consistory. Justice demands that the work of the consistory be shared by more than just a very few.

▲ Limited tenure is a necessary preventative to hierarchy, which can easily creep in when a very few men serve for an extended length of time. Experience and the history of the church bear this out. With the Reformers this was the compelling reason for introducing limited tenure.

▲ Definite retirement also provides the church with a way of replacing less qualified men with those who are more qualified.

Taking all the arguments into consideration, it is not difficult to see why our *Church Order* favors limited tenure. However, this is a matter of preference, more for practical considerations than for reasons of principle.

Definite Retirement

The rule laid down in Article 27 is that elders and deacons shall serve a definite length of time, followed by retirement from office and replacement by others.

The article leaves the exact length of term to "local regulations." Each consistory is at liberty to determine what the length of term shall be for its

elders and deacons. Length of term must be stipulated at the time that the election of officebearers takes place. That there should be "local regulations" means that each consistory should have an adopted policy.

The article does lay down a minimum length of term of two years. Anything less than two years would be detrimental to the continuity and stability of the consistory. It usually takes several months for new consistory members to become acclimated. The general practice in our churches is three-year terms of office.

Article 27 prescribes that "a proportionate number shall retire each year." Strictly speaking, proportionate retirement means that, when serving two-year terms, half of the officebearers retire each year; when serving three-year terms, one-third retire each year; and when serving four-year terms, one-fourth retire each year.

Proportionate retirement assures that not more than half of the consistory will retire in a given year. There will never be an entirely new consistory. Continuity of labor from one consistory to the next is thus safeguarded.

Varia

Our Protestant Reformed Churches have appended the following decision to Article 27:

In case of difficulties in the congregation, the officebearers then serving shall continue to function until their chosen successors can be installed.

This provides for continuation in office because of difficulties within the congregation, as, for example, a serious discipline case, or a case involving one of the officebearers. Continuation in office is a decision of the consistory.

Besides continuation in office, there is also the possibility of the immediate re-election of an officebearer. This is an exception that Article 27 allows, if such immediate re-election can be justified on the basis of "the circumstances and the profit" of a particular congregation. In the case

of re-election, a man is included in the slate of nominees put before the congregation who would otherwise be retiring from office.

Article 27 does not prescribe the number of years a man must be retired from office before he is again eligible to serve in the consistory. There is, of course, ordinarily a one-year minimum. Some consistories have the policy of two or three years of retirement before a man can be again nominated for office. This is feasible in larger congregations where the necessary number of qualified men to serve in office is more readily available. In determining the length of retirement, consistories must be careful not to exclude competent men from serving in the consistory for too long a period of time.

Sometimes it is asked how long a retiring officebearer continues to function officially. The answer to this question is that he retains his office until his chosen replacement is ordained into office.

May a retiring deacon be nominated for the office of elder? The answer to this question is yes. Article 27 calls for retirement from the office in which a man is presently serving. A retiring elder may also be nominated for the office of deacon.

May a non-retiring deacon be nominated for the office of elder? The answer to this question is also yes. The office of elder and deacon are two different offices. A non-retiring elder may also be nominated for the office of deacon.

Should the number of elders and deacons always be equal? This is not necessary, but should be determined by the needs and circumstances within the congregation. However, in smaller congregations where the deacons are joined to the elders in the consistory, there should be at least as many elders as deacons. □

News From Our Churches

Mr. Benjamin Wigger

Evangelism Activities

Rev. W. Bekkering of the Pella, IA PRC was in Boise, ID during the month of August preaching for the Sovereign Redeemer Fellowship. Rev. Bekkering's visit to Boise completed the six-month preaching schedule the Council of the South Holland, IL PRC had set up in February.

It will interest our readers to know that the group there has requested further help in terms of preaching, and they are organizing a Reformed Conference for this Fall with one of our pastors or professors as the speaker. It will also interest you to know that in response to the request from Sovereign Redeemer Fellowship, and because the work in Boise has gone very well, the Council of South Holland decided to continue to supply them with preaching and teaching for another six months.

While in Boise, Rev. Bekkering also had plans to make a visit to Spokane, WA to meet with Rev. Robert Hargrove, pastor of the Sovereign Grace Presbyterian Church, who has been in contact with the Evangelism Committee of South Holland and has a real interest in our churches.

We are happy to report that, beginning August 25, the Reformed Witness Hour can be heard over radio station KFCV AM 1090, a Christian radio station in Ft. Wayne, IN. This is sponsored by South Holland, but paid for by the Bible Study group in Fort Wayne.

On August 22, a public lecture sponsored by the Reformed Witness Committee of the Doon, Edgerton, and Hull PR Churches of Iowa and

Minnesota was held in the First Christian Reformed Church of Edgerton, MN. Rev. Michael DeVries, pastor of our Edgerton PRC, spoke on the topic, "Lovers of Pleasure — the Christian and Entertainment." A topic very relevant this is, especially for today's children and young people.

The Evangelism Committee of our Redlands, CA PRC informed their congregation not very long ago, that the new brochures they have been working on for a long time are now ready. These brochures were made especially to invite people to their church. (I mention this here because one of these brochures came along with bulletins from California, and I just had to say what a nice job they did. I would encourage any of our church evangelism committees who may be looking for just such a brochure, to send for a copy. It could be just what you are looking for.)

Congregational Highlights

On September 6, the congregation of our Lynden, WA PRC celebrated their 40th Anniversary. The occasion was marked with a program that evening.

Rev. B. Woudenberg, one of Lynden's former pastors, was present for the occasion. While in Lynden he was also able to show a slide presentation of his visit to the Reformed Churches of Romania and Hungary.

At a Congregational Meeting in early August, the congregation of the Hull, IA PRC approved two proposals. First, they approved plans submitted by their Council for a new church building. And second, they approved a financial plan to pay for it. The Lord willing, building will begin in 1992.

Following suggestions for their young people, the Council of the Randolph, WI PRC decided to have two Bible Study societies for their

youth. Those yet in high school will continue to meet every Sunday evening during the society season. All those young adults who are past high school age will meet on alternate Thursday evenings. In addition, one Sunday night each month the two groups will meet together for discussion and fellowship.

Mission Activities

Rev. Joostens wrote to his congregation at First Church in Grand Rapids midway through his and Rev. den Hartog's visit to Jamaica that "twelve men have attended from six of our churches. The sessions have been enjoyable and the men are again eagerly receiving the Reformed truth presented to them. Each session gives rise to many questions and teaching opportunities. The saints on the island are very appreciative of the clothing that has been sent to them, especially the shoes."

Ministerial Calls

Rev. and Mrs. Kortering have left to work with our two sister-churches in Singapore, where they will be for at least four months, the Lord willing.

The Hope PRC of Isabel, SD has formed a new trio from which to call a pastor. This trio includes the Revs. M. DeVries and R. Moore, and Candidate M. Dick.

Rev. R. Hanko declined the call he was considering to serve as missionary pastor to the group in Larne, Northern Ireland.

Due to Rev. Hanko's decline, our Hudsonville, MI PRC has formed a new trio consisting of the Revs. R. Cammenga, B. Gritters, and C. Terpstra. The congregation was to call on September 22.

And on September 12 the congregation of our Southeast PRC in Grand Rapids, MI called Rev. Ronald VanOverloop to be their pastor. □

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

RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The Consistory and congregation of the Randolph Protestant Reformed Church expresses sincere sympathy to the family of

MRS. CLARA (DeVries) GRIFFIOEN, who went to be with her Lord on August 31, 1991.

"From the end of the earth will I cry unto thee, when my heart is overwhelmed: lead me to the rock that is higher than I" (Psalm 61:2).

G. Buteyn, Clerk

RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The Council of the Hope Protestant Reformed Church (Walker, MI) extends its Christian sympathy to its fellow officebearer, Elder John DeVries, and his family in the death of his mother and their grandmother,

CLARA (DeVries) GRIFFIOEN, on August 31, 1991, at the age of 84. "For we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved we have a building of God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens" (II Corinthians 5:1).

President, Rev. James Slopsema
Clerk, P. Koole

The Fear of the Lord

The fear of the Lord our days will prolong;
In trouble afford a confidence strong;
Will keep us from sinning, will prosper our ways,
And is the beginning of wisdom and grace.

The fear of the Lord preserves us from death,
Enforces His Word, enlivens our faith;
It regulates passion, and helps us to quell
The dread of damnation and terrors of hell.

The fear of the Lord is soundness and health;
A treasure well stored with heavenly wealth;
A fence against evil, by which we resist
World, flesh, and the devil, and imitate Christ.

The fear of the Lord is clean and approved;
Makes Satan abhorr'd and Jesus beloved;
It conquers in weakness, is proof against strife,
A cordial in sickness, a fountain of life.

The fear of the Lord is lowly and meek,
The happy reward of all that Him seek;
They only that fear Him the truth can discern,
For, living so near Him, His secrets they learn.

The fear of the Lord His mercy makes dear,
His judgment adored, His righteousness clear,
Without its fresh flavor, in knowledge there's fault;
In doctrines no savor, in duties no salt.

The fear of the Lord confirms a good hope;
By this are restored the senses that droop;
The deeper it reaches, the more the soul thrives;
It gives what it teaches, and guards what it gives.

The fear of the Lord forbids us to yield,
It sharpens our sword and strengthens our shield.
Then cry we to heaven with one loud accord,
That to us be given the fear of the Lord.

INTERDENOMINATIONAL CONFERENCE

Oct. 30-Nov. 1, 1991

"The Reformed Doctrine of Holy Scripture"

Topics

"The Inspiration of Holy Scripture"

Prof. Robert D. Decker,
Prot. Ref. Seminary

"A Reformed Hermeneutic"

Prof. Herman C. Hanko,
Prot. Ref. Seminary

"Holy Scripture and Ethics"

Dr. Nelson D. Kloosterman,
Mid-America Reformed Seminary

"Genesis Chapters 1-11: Myth or History?"

Prof. David J. Engelsma
Prot. Ref. Seminary

to be held at

The Protestant Reformed Seminary

4949 Ivanrest Ave.
Grandville, MI 49418

\$25 cost includes conference
and 3 meals.

Lodging — Single \$25, Dbl \$30

Write/Fax (616) 531-3033/ or
Phone (616) 531-1490
for further information.

SB, October 15, 1992