

# *THE* **STANDARD BEARER**

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*A Reformed  
Semi-Monthly  
Magazine*

The attitude that the church has towards doctrine, the zeal and devotion with which she maintains that doctrine, reveals her love and devotion to the glory of God. The church of Jesus Christ ... is ordained by God to be the "pillar and ground of the truth."

See "Maintaining Sound Doctrine" — page 57

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November 1, 1991*

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## Special request ...

May we have back a few of your old *Standard Bearers*?

We print about 200 extra copies of each issue of the *SB* — mainly in order to have sufficient numbers on hand at the end of the volume-year, so that we can arrange to have bound volumes made up for all those who desire to have them. For a good number of years we found that 150 extra copies were more than enough to satisfy those requests. However, when we tallied up the requests which had come in throughout the year which has just past, we discovered that this time the demand had outstripped our supply.

So, what to do. Two solutions come immediately to mind.

It happens that there are really only four issues the supply of which requires replenishing. Those are the following: October 15, 1990; and April 15, May 15, and September 1, 1991. If 40 or 50 of our good friends would bring or send their copies of those four issues to the *Standard Bearer*, 4949 Ivanrest Ave., Grandville, MI 49418, we would have our need nicely filled. An alternative is that some of you (particularly those living in the G.R. area, since our need is an immediate one), who have ordered a bound volume, would bring us an entire set of the issues for volume 67, we could arrange to have those copies bound for you, at a cost of \$8.00, rather than \$12.00 if we provide the unused copies. There would thus be something in it for both of us.

The first of the two solutions would be the easier on our end; but we'll be pleased with either one, because we want very much to be able to fill our obligations. Right now we can't. Any way you can help us therefore will be much appreciated. And remember, please, that time is of the essence. We hope to have all of the issues collated and at the binders by the 10th of November.

D.D.

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## Meditation

Rev. Jason Kortering

# Take the Sword of the Spirit

*And take the sword of the Spirit,  
which is the word of God.*

Ephesians 6:17b.

We have a sword!

Thank God, while the arrows of the wicked assail us and while Satan hurls his fiery darts at us, we do not have to sit by helplessly and question the outcome.

We have a sword!

That makes our armor complete.

We are covered from head to toe. Our spiritual loins are protected by the girdle of truth, our breast is secure with the breastplate of the righteousness of Jesus, our feet are shod with the readiness of the gospel of peace. With the helmet of salvation our minds are secure, and with the shield of faith we have additional security against the fiery darts of the enemy.

We also have a sword.

With that sword we are able to be aggressive. We can attack the enemy ourselves, we can begin our own assault, we can "resist the devil and he will flee from you" (James 4:7,8) and, "put to flight the armies of the aliens" (Heb. 11:34).

A soldier without a sword would be in a most precarious position. Imagine that the enemy had begun the battle by shooting his fiery arrows and hurling his incendiary darts. In the midst of such a holocaust, the Roman soldier could make out the approaching army. Quickly, he would take his shield, pull on his helmet, grab his sword, and face the foe. The

text refers to the short sword used in close combat. There were also long swords, three or four feet in length, with which they could jab and kill from a greater distance. (Such a sword is referred to in Revelation 1:16: "Out of his mouth went a sharp two-edged sword (great sword).") Here however the word used refers to the shorter one of about 12-15 inches in length. There was no other way to victory than for the soldier to unsheath his sword and face the enemy. He had to kill, to wound, to strike fear in the heart of the enemy. Only then would the enemy ever flee for his life or be defeated by death.

Our faithful God has given to us a sword, a weapon for the battle of faith.

It is appropriately called, "The sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God."

The "word of God" is the Holy Bible, God's written Word, which is further described as a sword which the Holy Spirit provides. We do well to emphasize that this belongs together. The Bible without the Spirit is just another book. To imagine that the Spirit speaks apart from the Bible leads to mysticism and all sorts of abomination. Here, the two are identified as one, our sword is the Word of God which was produced by the Holy Spirit. What God wants us to know as soldiers is graciously provided for us by the Spirit on the pages of Holy Writ.

The word translated "word" of God is the Greek word which emphasizes speech, the act of communicating. God spoke His Word, and it was in turn written, so that we can know His speech. All the books of the Bible,

written over a period of some 1,600 years with as many as forty authors, contribute to the one message which God communicates to mankind. He is God, and salvation is necessary and provided in none other name than that of Jesus. It comes to us in the form of history, poetry, prophecy, etc. No passage contradicts any other; each complements the other.

How can that be explained?

There is only one author, the Eternal Spirit of God.

This is what Scripture claims for itself.

"All Scripture is given by inspiration of God and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto every good work" (II Tim. 3:16). "For prophecy came not in old time by the will of man, but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Spirit" (II Pet. 1:21).

The Word of God is here called the sword of the Spirit. The Spirit is the One who produced it. He prepared the authors so that they could write. David, for example, was a shepherd as preparation for the writing of Psalm 23. The Spirit gave them the desire to write. According to Luke 1:1-4, for example, it seemed good to Luke to add to the collected writings his own account of the ministry of Jesus. The same Spirit revealed to the writers what to write, He guided their hands to write accurately, and He finally led the church to include in the canon of Scripture all the books which He willed to include.

The written Word of God forms the basis for the spoken word. When

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the Bible is used as the sword of the Spirit, it includes its written form. God is able to work through the Bible as He wills. Just the reading of the Bible can be a powerful influence on the lives of people. There is more. The Bible forms the basis for the preaching of the gospel and the witness of the believers. The Holy Spirit works effectively through such speaking to accomplish His purpose. When the Word is preached, the Holy Spirit exposes error and convicts souls. He frees from the dominion of sin and turns men over to the power of the lie. The same is true for the admonition of the elders, and the comfort of the deacons. We bring this Word to our children and to one another. It is like a sword. It destroys the enemy and brings to the feet of Jesus all those for whom He died.

We do well to remind ourselves what a precious gift this sword of the Spirit really is.

If we use anything else, we must be warned by this word of God and take heed as Christian soldiers. Are you confronted by someone who wants to argue with you about your faith? Does anyone call into question your walk of obedience? Are you having difficulty with the behavior or belief of your husband or wife? What about your children — are they unruly, are they walking in sin, do they raise questions and ask why certain things are the way you say they are? How do you deal with these situations? Do you just shrug it off and say, "Well, that's the way it is"? Do you say, "Believe me because I said so"? Do you try to reason with your children only from the point of view of their own good? Do we resort to human science and philosophy? If so, we fail to use the sword of the Spirit. We need to open our Bibles. We must show to them what God has to say. This is critical to our effective warfare.

Thus it has been throughout the entire history of Christ's church. Micaiah could do nothing but speak the word of the Lord to Ahab, even though it brought him the bread of affliction (I Kings 22). Jesus used this

sword when He contended with Satan (Matthew 4:1-11). Each time He said, "It is written." To the lawyer who tempted Him with subtle words, Jesus said, "What is written in the law?" (Luke 10:25,26). Jesus opened up the prophets to the two travelers to Emmaus (Luke 24:13ff.). Wherever the apostles preached the gospel, they demonstrated that Jesus was the fulfillment of the law and prophets (Acts 8:26ff.), as Philip did to the Ethiopian eunuch. This is the great lesson of the Reformation. The influence of the church in her ministry is not to be found in tradition, or in the words of men, but in the Holy Scriptures. Luther and Calvin both answered the charges of the apostate church by requiring of them that they demonstrate their beliefs from the Word of God. The only thing binding their conscience was the sword of the Spirit which is the Word of God. In all that controversy, they used that sword in battle. They exposed error, defied false accusation, and taught the people the great comfort of the gospel, justification by faith in Jesus Christ.

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*One does not need to know  
Hebrew and Greek  
in order to know  
the mind of the Spirit.  
He needs but read  
his Authorized Version.*

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Why is this so? Why is the only effective offensive weapon against all of Satan's assaults the Word of God? It is because of what the Bible really is. It is the last word regarding doctrine and life. It carries the authority of the sovereign God. Again and again the saints of old cried out, "Thus saith the Lord." That settles all disputes, it exposes all error, it asserts truth. In addition, the Word of God is clear. Its message is so simple a child can grasp it. One does not need to know Hebrew and Greek in order to know the mind of the Spirit. He needs but read his Authorized Version. Even archaic language need not stand in the way,

for with a little effort the message can easily be discerned. The Bible is sufficient. Other books may be helpful, but they are not necessary. You don't need to believe a certain system of theology or to embrace a certain philosophy in order to know what God says in the Bible. If the only book a person ever studied all His life were the Bible, it would be adequate. Finally, the Bible is necessary, for there is salvation in no other name given among men than that of Jesus, and He is set forth in the Bible and nowhere else.

Little wonder, then, that in the midst of the battle of faith, Satan designs to grab that sword out of the hands of the Christian soldier. This is why the battle for the Bible is so crucial for the victory today. Satan tries to distort truth by introducing so many new translations that he can subtly insert distortions (e.g., denials of the divinity of Christ or the atonement). He would like us to use many different translations in our homes, schools, churches, so that we can't even quote the Bible anymore. The new method of interpreting the Bible is an attempt to take our Bibles away and to destroy their effectiveness. More than anything, however, if we are so busy that we can't even read our Bibles and are ignorant of their contents, we won't use them anyway.

Use your sword, dear reader.

That's the only way to victory.

It is guaranteed; for the same Spirit who gave us the Bible is the Spirit who gives us understanding, helps us to explain it, motivates us to quote it, and ultimately applies it in the hearts of His dear people.

The Word of God is still powerful and sharper than any two-edged sword (Heb. 4:12).

As soldiers we may be wounded and scarred in battle, but when we fight with the sword of the Spirit in hand, we die victorious.

The mouths of liars shall be stopped. Those who confess truth shall rejoice. God's Word never returns to Him void.

This is victory! □



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# The Standard Bearer: Holding the Traditions\*

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It is an honor to address the annual meeting of the honorable Reformed Free Publishing Association (RFPA).

I am deeply conscious of the tradition of the RFPA and of its publication, the *Standard Bearer*. As I was making this speech, I looked up more than once at the 64 imposing volumes of the *SB*, bristling with Reformed doctrine, uncompromising in their defense of creedal orthodoxy, eloquent in their testimony to the cause of God and truth in the Protestant Reformed Churches. I confess that this tradition can be frightening. I had to say to myself, "David, God does not require the men of this generation to attain the lofty heights of the heroes who have gone before, but only that they be faithful."

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\* In the fall of 1989, I gave the address to the annual meeting of the Reformed Free Publishing Association, publisher of the *Standard Bearer*. This was my first address to the parent body as editor of the magazine — my "inaugural address." The group instructed me to publish the speech in the *SB*. Belatedly, I now obey the order. I have, however, taken the liberty to revise the speech, significantly so in places, as those who heard the speech will discover when they read especially the last two installments. There will be four installments in this series of editorials. We will do our utmost to run them successively. I have purposely refrained from obliterating all evidences that the original mode of this message was that of speaking. The speaking-style has its own force.

—DJE

We men (and women, I am bound to add, although I see none of the female sex in attendance at this meeting, and cannot understand why not) — we men and women who support and read *The SB* stand in a certain tradition. I am convinced that this is a glorious tradition. It is the tradition of the Reformed faith as it has come out of the 16th century Reformation of the church; as it is systematically expressed in the Reformed creeds; as it is worked with and witnessed to by the writings of a multitude of Reformed theologians; as it has been lived by Reformed churches worldwide for nearly 500 years; and as it has been held and shaped in the PRC for the past 65 years.

The RFPA has played an important part in the maintenance of this tradition over the past 65 years, largely through the publication of its periodical, the *SB*. It is this function and responsibility of the RFPA that I intend to explore with you, as I speak on "The *SB*: Holding the Traditions."

I have chosen this topic with some deliberation. It is, of course, a biblical topic. In II Thessalonians 2:15, the apostle charges the saints, "Therefore, brethren, stand fast, and hold the traditions which ye have been taught, whether by word, or our epistle." But my choice of the topic, particularly the use of the word *tradition*, takes into account that the present time is characterized by the abandonment of tradition, both in the churches and in the world. I do not think it an exaggeration to say that "tradition" is a dirty word — an obscene word — both in the ecclesiastical sphere and in all of Western society.

"Tradition" has to do with the

past, with what is old. It refers to a valuing, even a prizing, of those old things. Therefore, it concerns working to make those old things your own, preserving them, and allowing them to direct your life. This last is very definitely an aspect of holding the traditions as I intend it.

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*Our age ...  
is virulently anti-tradition.  
It is madly in love  
with novelty.*

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There is also a certain prizing and preserving of old things for the sake of their financial worth, or their aesthetic value, or just because one has a highly developed historical sense. People collect antiques. They have old dishes on the shelf. They visit museums to gaze on old documents. The churches that abandon tradition today have this kind of cultured regard for the past and its relics. They have an old copy of the Westminster Confession of Faith in their archives or an original edition of Calvin's *Institutes* in their library. On occasion, they bring the artifacts to the attention of the public with fanfare. But of the influencing of their lives by the old things, they must have nothing. Much less will they allow the things from the past to rule their "modern" lives.

Our age, I repeat, is virulently anti-tradition. It is madly in love with novelty.

There are reasons for this, to which I can only allude. There is the influence of evolution, which judges history to be meaningless chance and



accident. There is the pervasive influence of existential philosophy, which contends that only the present moment is real. There is the breakdown of the family, which is always the means by which tradition is passed on to the following generation. There is the stupid arrogance of "modern man," who sincerely supposes that wisdom was born with him. At bottom, there is the rejection of the triune God revealed in the Scriptures, without whom there is nothing of ultimate value, nothing worthy of being prized, preserved, and passed on.

My particular concern is Protestantism, and then chiefly Reformed Protestantism. Here is seen the same disregard and even contempt for tradition. There is deliberate, systematic rejection of the tradition of Reformed doctrine; of the tradition of Reformed worship; of the tradition of Reformed church government; and of the tradition of Reformed life. They call this rejection "liberation."

In this hostile environment, I make bold to remind us of the duty and privilege that have come down to us: "Hold the traditions!" And if anything of the attitude of our rootless generation has rubbed off on us, I want to do my part to rehabilitate tradition among us.

\* \* \* \* \*

My thesis is this: We must hold the traditions, because they are precious.

The thesis suffers from the outset by being burdened with an inherent Reformed suspicion of any advocacy of tradition. This is due, first, to the Reformed rejection of the Roman Catholic position on tradition and on the place of tradition in the church. According to Rome, there is in the Roman Catholic Church, altogether apart from the Scriptures and even in contradiction of the Scriptures, a body of truth which the pope can teach and which the people must believe and obey for the salvation of their souls. This body of truth, which is of equal value and authority with the Bible, Rome calls tradition. An example of tradition in the Roman Church is the belief and practice concerning Mary.

The Roman Catholic council, Vatican II (1962-1965), maintained this critically important position on tradition:

Consequently, it is not from sacred Scripture alone that the Church draws her certainty about everything which has been revealed. Therefore both sacred tradition and sacred Scripture are to be accepted and venerated with the same sense of devotion and reverence ("Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation" in *The Documents of Vatican II*, Walter M. Abbott, S.J., General Editor).

To tradition in this sense, the Reformed believer says "no." The Scriptures alone are the rule of faith and life, as the sufficient Word of God. The Reformed believer is the sworn foe of extra-biblical tradition as held by Rome. Nor is the threat only from Rome. Always it is a danger to be guarded against that churchmen impose their private theological speculations and their list of "do's and don'ts" upon the consciences of the saints. Although in the time of the Thessalonians the traditions were taught the congregation both by word and by writing, today, after the completion of the New Testament canon, the traditions are the content of the Scriptures, and nothing besides.

The Reformed suspicion of tradition is due, in the second place, to the condemnation of a certain "tradition," and a certain "holding" of tradition, by the Scriptures themselves. There is this sharp criticism of tradition in the ministry of Jesus. Jesus' controversy with tradition is highlighted in Mark 7 and the parallel Matthew 15. The occasion is the Pharisees' criticism of Jesus' disciples for not walking according to "the tradition of the elders" inasmuch as the disciples were eating bread without ceremonially washing, or baptizing, their hands. The sect of the Nazarene broke with the tradition of the covenant community!

There was a strong tradition within the covenant community of that day that consisted of man-made commandments by which the people were to serve God. There was a holding of the traditions that esteemed

these laws with the most intense, religious zeal. The Jews were fanatical about tradition. This enthusiasm for tradition was rooted in a passion for ritual and for external obedience to trivial rules. It was fostered by an extremism that desired to out-do the holiness of God, which, of course, is fully revealed in the Ten Commandments.

Jesus pitilessly condemned this holding of traditions as hypocrisy. It is externalism in the stead of heartfelt love for God and the neighbor. It is a putting of the premium on human commandments to the neglect of, and even opposition to, God's commandments. At the heart of this tradition is the intent to merit salvation by one's own superior righteousness and scrupulous behavior.

Two things must be noted about this controversy of Jesus with tradition. First, it was the basic controversy of His ministry. At stake was the gospel. Second, the error is a constant threat to the church. As Paul teaches in Colossians 2, it has the appearance of wisdom in will worship, and humility, and neglecting of the body (v. 23). The threat is raised in the church, not by the weak and liberal, but by the strong and ultra-conservative — the majestic, exemplary Pharisee. □

— DJE

Reminder:  
The *Standard Bearer*  
is also available  
on tape.

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Southeast Evangelism  
Committee  
1535 Cambridge Ave.  
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Grand Rapids, MI  
49506  
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to be sent to you.



# Letters

## ■ Recommended Works on Eschatology

I thank you for your good work in producing *The Standard Bearer*. I look forward to each issue and read it cover to cover. Could you send me a copy of the Belgic Confession? In addition, could you advise me as to the best books, publications, etc. that you would recommend on defining and defending the amillennial position in eschatology?

(Mr.) Jim Pierson  
Maryville, TN

### Response:

Receive with our compliments a copy of the Belgic Confession, as well as a copy of the Heidelberg Catechism and of the Canons of Dordt — the confessions of the Reformed churches.

The following are recommended works on the amillennial doctrine of the last things.

♦ Herman Hoeksema's commentary on Revelation, *Behold, He Cometh!*; Herman Hoeksema's chapter on "The Millennium" in his *Reformed Dogmatics* and Herman Hoeksema's short pamphlet, "The Millennium Period." These are available from The Reformed Book Outlet, 3505 Kelly St., Hudsonville, MI 49426.

♦ George C. Lubbers, *The Bible versus Millennial Teaching: An Exegetical Critique* (privately published, 1989). This book is also available from The Reformed Book Outlet.

♦ William Hendriksen, *More than Conquerors: An Interpretation of the Book of Revelation* (1939).

♦ O.T. Allis, *Prophecy and the Church* (Presbyterian and Reformed, 1964).

♦ Anthony A. Hoekema, "Amillennialism," in *The Meaning of the Millennium: Four Views*, ed. Robert G. Clouse (Intervarsity Press, 1977).

A careful study of the Reformed

creeds that we are sending you will show that amillennialism is the official teaching of the Reformed churches, and why.

— Ed.

## ■ An "Election Theology" of Covenant: Beautiful and Comforting

Let me express how much I enjoy your editorials, "An 'Election Theology' of Covenant," in its six installments (thus far). Who could ask for anything more beautiful and comforting than a covenant with us and our children that is controlled by God's sovereign election? You have proved this biblically beyond all doubt. Canons I:9 speaks of "men being chosen to faith, and to the obedience of faith, holiness, etc., therefore election is the fountain of every saving good." A view of the covenant that does not proceed upon unconditional election as to its surety and scope is not a biblical or Reformed view of the covenant.

Let us continue to be insistent, yet patient, with those who cannot distinguish between faith as "a condition" and as "the way," between "seed" and "in their generations" (Gen. 17:7), between the children of believers in general and "as many as the Lord our God shall call" (Acts 2:39), and with those who are content with an unkept, general promise of God rather than a particular promise sworn to with God's own oath (Heb. 6:13-18). And how can one make these biblical distinctions without using such a term as "sphere of the covenant"?

Have no fear that these articles have wearied the reader. They are instructive and refreshing, and give great comfort to covenant parents.

(Rev.) D.H. Kuiper  
Lacombe, AB, Canada

## ■ The Covenant, Election, and Article 31 of the Church Order

We want to respond briefly to two articles recently published in *The Standard Bearer*. We do not want to interfere in the discussion between Prof. Engelsma and Dr. DeJong which is carried on in *The Standard Bearer* and *Clarion*, but it seems good to set the record straight on two matters.

1. In Volume 67, no. 20 (Sept. 1, 1991), Prof. Engelsma spoke of "the 'Liberated' problem with election," and "the 'Liberated' hostility to election" (p. 462). These statements are wrong. Rejection of what is seen as a wrong view on the relation between election and the covenant is not the same as hostility to the doctrine of election itself. From his viewpoint Prof. Engelsma could think that an inconsistency exists between the doctrine of election and that of the covenant in "Liberated" (if you insist on this word) theology. But he cannot say that the "Liberated" are hostile to the doctrine of election. These churches maintain this doctrine as it is confessed in Article 16 of the Belgic Confession, Lord's Day 21 of the Heidelberg Catechism, and the Canons of Dort.

2. In the next issue (Sept. 15, 1991), Engelsma mentions that Schilder wrote to all the consistories that he would not be bound by certain dogmatic decisions of Synod 1942-1944, and would write against them. The article continues: "This violated Article 31 of the Church Order of Dordt. The 'Liberated' Churches have incessantly referred to synodical authority as 'synodocracy,' as though there is no legitimate authority of synod over the consistory" (p. 487). But a) Article 31 of the Church Order gives the right to reject decisions of a Synod, if they are proven to be in conflict with the Word of God or with



the Church Order. Thus Schilder did not violate the Church Order when he wrote the consistories. b) Schilder did not refer to synodical authority as "synodocracy." He called it "synodocracy" when Synods went beyond their mandate. c) Schilder's articles in which he stated that Christ had shed his blood also for the church federation again disprove Engelsma's allegation. Schilder wrote these articles to oppose an independentistic tendency within the "Liberated" churches.

(Prof.) N.H. Gootjes  
Theological College  
of the  
Canadian Reformed Churches  
Hamilton, ON Canada

#### Response:

I charged that "imbedded deeply in the very heart of 'Liberated' covenant doctrine is a fatal weakness regarding God's eternal election" (see my editorial in the September 1, 1991 issue of the *Standard Bearer*). Whether I proved this charge must be determined from the series of editorials ("An 'Election Theology' of Covenant") that I wrote in response to the letter from Prof. Dr. J. DeJong that appeared in the March 15, 1991 issue of the *SB*. In weighing Prof. Gootjes' denial of this charge, the reader is directed to the six editorials in the March 15, April 1, April 15, May 15, August 1, and September 1, 1991 issues of the *SB*.

The second point in Prof. Gootjes' letter is his defense of the "Liberated" interpretation of Article 31 of the church order of Dordt. I questioned the "Liberated" position on the authority of the synod as their position is described by Rudolf vanReest in the recent book, *Schilder's Struggle for the Unity of the Church* (Neerlandia, Alberta, Canada: Inheritance Publications, 1990). I wrote this:

But if vanReest is correct, that it is the church polity of the "Liberated" Churches that for a decision of synod to be considered settled and binding the decision must first be ratified by the consistory, the "Liberated" have abandoned Reformed church gov-

ernment for independency (see my editorial in the Sept. 15, 1991 issue of the *SB*, "A Belated Contribution to the Schilder Commemoration").

I now quote in full the paragraph in which vanReest gives the "Liberated" view of the authority of the synod and by implication the "Liberated" explanation of Article 31 of the church order of Dordt ("... whatever may be agreed upon by a majority vote shall be considered settled and binding," etc.):

I have already indicated that when Schilder took this step (namely, "not submitting to the synodical decisions and ... advising the churches not to do so either" — DJE), he was only doing his duty. According to Reformed (*Gereformeerde*) church order, the synod is not some sort of "supreme college" of church leaders but a gathering of *delegated* representatives of the consistories. In the nature of the case, the delegating bodies must stand above those whom they have delegated. The delegates are responsible to the consistories that have issued them their credentials. And so the consistories would have to *ratify* what was done (*Schilder's Struggle for the Unity of the Church*, p. 330).

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### Article 36 of the church order of Dordt ascribes (real) jurisdiction over the consistory to the major assemblies.

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Against this, it seems to me, Reformed church government raises three, grave concerns. First, even if it be true that a consistory is permitted to resist and oppose synodical decisions throughout the denomination (which I deny), surely this is not permitted to the individual member, including the individual theologian. Defending the action of Dr. Schilder, vanReest appeals to the alleged rights of *consistories*.

Second, if decisions of the synod have authority in the denomination only when and inasmuch as the individual consistory ratifies these deci-

sions, the synod has no real authority over the consistories whatever. Such a view of the authority of the synod does not differ from the view of the independent churches. They too will observe the decisions of their broader associations, *if the local congregation decides that it approves of these decisions*. Otherwise not. This is not Reformed (Presbyterian) church polity. Article 36 of the church order of Dordt ascribes (real) jurisdiction over the consistory to the major assemblies.

Third, the implicit explanation of Article 31 is that decisions of major assemblies "shall be considered settled and binding" by each local consistory (if not by each individual member) only on the condition that each consistory (if not each member) ratifies the decisions. This is not what Article 31 says. This is not what Article 31 means. Indeed, this explanation of Article 31 has the dubious distinction of standing the article exactly on its head. It contradicts the spirit and letter of the article. Now no decision of a major assembly is considered settled and binding in the denomination. Only if the consistories ratify the decisions are they considered settled and binding, and then because of the consistorial action. The only decisions that are, in fact, considered settled and binding are those of the consistory (or, very possibly, those of the individual member of the congregation). No Reformed denomination can live and work, as a denomination, if this interpretation of Article 31 is actually implemented. I dare say that the "Liberated" Churches themselves do not live and work this way either. □

— Ed.

Sample copies of the *SB*  
will be sent free  
to anyone  
recommended to us  
by our readership.



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*In His Fear*  
Rev. Arie denHartog

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# Maintaining Sound Doctrine

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In our two previous articles we have considered the importance of doctrine for our Christian faith. True Christianity is based on sound doctrine. Christianity is more than merely living by several vaguely defined principles of ethics taught by Jesus which have little more than human and earthly good as their object. Christianity without doctrine leads to humanism and modernism. True Christianity is knowing and believing, confessing and living by the true doctrine of God. Doctrine, according to Scripture, is nothing more than sound teaching. It is the careful understanding of the truth of God and of His Son Jesus Christ. It is a correct knowledge of the only way of salvation through Jesus Christ the Lord and by the grace of God. Sound doctrine is the truth of God clearly distinguished from the lie of the devil taught by false teachers. Sound doctrine glorifies God, His truth and His salvation. The attitude that the church has towards doctrine, the zeal and devotion with which she maintains that doctrine, reveals her love and devotion to the glory of God. The church of Jesus Christ has the calling to maintain sound doctrine. She is ordained by God to be the "pillar and ground of the truth."

The church and her members maintain sound doctrine by knowing that doctrine. That doctrine can be known only through careful and diligent study of the Scriptures. It is hard

work to learn the doctrine of the Scriptures. It takes much effort and application. It requires a lot of study of the whole of Scripture and not merely isolated verses. We believe that the Scriptures are clear and plain. They can be understood by every Spirit-filled child of God. This is not however the same as saying that the Scriptures can be understood with little or no effort. The Christian learns the doctrine of the Scriptures by a comparison of Scripture with Scripture, through the careful consideration of the meaning of words and phrases in Scripture, and by the serious study of the great and central concepts of Scripture. We need to know the precise meaning of such great biblical truths as the sovereignty of God, predestination, regeneration, justification, reconciliation, sanctification, etc.

How many of those who are reading this article could give a careful, biblical definition of these concepts? The work of maintaining sound doctrine is the responsibility of every child of God. It is true that God has called ministers "to give themselves to the word and doctrine." They must devote their whole lives to the study of doctrine. They must be teachers of sound doctrine in the church. But this must also to a lesser degree be the concern of every Christian. He needs to be equipped with sound doctrine for his own personal spiritual welfare as a Christian and for his calling as member of the church. It is an irony of our age that in spite of the fact that on the average the members of the church today have much more formal education than in former ages, many are sadly ignorant of the doctrines of the Word of God.

There were great saints of God

in the past who had very little formal education and yet far surpassed many in our day in their knowledge and understanding of the doctrines of Scripture. The reason for this is often spiritual laziness and carelessness on the part of many Christians. Every Christian must grow up unto a mature understanding of the doctrine of God according to the grace and abilities that God gives to each. If he is not concerned about this he will, according to the words of the apostle of the Lord, be like a child, "tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive" (Eph. 4:14). To be doctrinally ignorant is spiritually dangerous. It leaves one open to the attacks of the devil and of evil men whose purpose is to lead professing Christians astray, away from God and His Son Jesus Christ and to spiritual ruin.

The church maintains sound doctrine by maintaining a spiritual attitude toward that doctrine. The church must guard against the danger of dead orthodoxy. There is a danger that the business of maintaining sound doctrine is reduced to heartless, formal, intellectual debate that is of no profit and causes spiritual death in the church. Such spiritual death is loathsome in God's sight. This death does not, however, come because of some inherent evil in the study of doctrine, from which we are best delivered by abandoning altogether the study of doctrine. But rather such coldness and deadness comes because of the lack of a spiritual attitude towards the doctrine of God. The Lord will severely judge those who study the doctrine of His Word in such a

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manner. Doctrine can be rightly known only through the Spirit of God and in living communion with God. As the church maintains sound doctrine she must walk in the Spirit and be filled with the Spirit. We have not yet rightly understood the doctrine of God until we understand this doctrine to be the personal and living, blessed truth of the God of our salvation. The doctrine of God revealed in the Scriptures must fill the heart of the child of God and not only his mind. It must cause him to rejoice in, hope in, and glory in the wonderful and blessed God of his salvation.

Sound doctrine is maintained in the church of Jesus Christ through the preaching of the Word. That preaching must teach God's people sound doctrine. God's people must not become weary of that or complain about doctrinal preaching. But they must know that they need this for their own spiritual welfare. The church must insist on doctrinal preaching by its ministers. Elders must not only guard the preaching of the ministers to keep false doctrine out of the church, but they must also positively require of ministers of the Word that they preach doctrine that builds up the members of the congregation to maturity in the faith. They may not allow the preaching to be reduced to moralisms and little stories which might excite the interest of the congregation but do not build them up in the faith.

We must have systematic doctrinal preaching in the church. All the doctrines of God's Word must be preached, with none of them left out. God's people must have a sense of the glorious unity and harmony of all of the truth of God's Word. We know no better way to do that than regular preaching with the Heidelberg Catechism as our guide.

We learn doctrine through the preaching of the Word when we listen carefully and earnestly to the preaching of the Word. Listening to a sermon is not a form of entertainment and relaxation. It requires great spiritual application.

We learn doctrine as children and young people in the catechism

class. We can be thankful to the Lord for the strong catechism programs which we maintain in our churches. These classes have done much to keep our churches strong from generation to generation. Children and young people ought to appreciate what a blessing of God it is to be so instructed in the faith over a period of many years. This will equip them for life in this ungodly world in an age of great apostasy. Children should be encouraged to learn their lessons well and to take a very serious attitude towards catechism.

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Sound doctrine is maintained in the church when she takes a clear and unequivocal stand on the truth of Scripture. The church must stand on the foundation of the historic faith of the church that God through the ages has given to her and maintained in her. It is rather common in our day for churches to refuse to take a stand. To avoid doctrinal controversy, churches like to make their positions as ambiguous as possible, so that there is room for all sorts of interpretation and differences. The historic creeds of the church are by the grace of God careful and precise statements of the doctrine of God's Word. Today it is said that these creeds must be changed and replaced. Truth must not be stated so absolutely. It is the mark of piety, according to many in our day, to suggest that we cannot know truth absolutely. We are not to imagine that we can know the truth absolutely but must understand that the truth of God is an indefinite thing that we can never be sure about. Everything is in a state of flux and change. Each age

must have new creeds to remain relevant in the world. How wrong this way of thinking is and how destructive to the doctrinal foundation of the church. The church must stand upon the unchangeable foundation of the doctrine of Scripture. Indeed, she must also grow in a richer understanding of that doctrine. She is not to become stagnant or proud or self-confident in her knowledge of the truth of God.

The church does not however grow richer by abandoning the historic faith of the true church of all ages. Rather she does this by receiving the great historic creeds of the true church of the ages and comparing these creeds again and again with the Scriptures. She studies the Scriptures with the help of these creeds, and by the grace and Spirit of God gains a richer and more blessed knowledge of the Word of God. She then takes a firmer and clearer stand. From that stand she refuses to be moved.

Sound doctrine is maintained in the church by distinguishing that doctrine from false teaching. That is absolutely necessary. False teaching must be exposed and condemned. Our modern age has little stomach for this. Ours is a day of "tolerance," and let everyone believe what he will. It is imagined that the greatest evil is to judge what someone else believes. When false doctrine is tolerated, then truth is trampled in the streets. There are abundant examples, in Scripture, of the need for exposing and condemning false doctrine. The prophets of the Old Testament were constantly engaged in condemning false doctrine. Our Lord condemned the false doctrine of the Scribes and Pharisees in the strongest language. The apostle Paul said concerning those who brought any other gospel than the gospel that he as the apostle of the Lord preached, "let him be accursed." Paul was on the one hand very magnanimous in tolerating those in Philippi who were preaching the gospel out of evil motives. As long as Christ was preached he rejoiced. On the other hand, he severely condemned false teachers in no uncertain



terms. Much of the epistles of that apostle of our Lord are polemics against false teachers who were troubling the church. We stand for the glory of God when we condemn doctrines that deny God and His salvation. We love God when we hate false doctrine. The apostles of the Lord exhort the church to separate herself from those who do not receive sound doctrine, to discipline and reject heretics, and not to receive into her fellowship anyone who does not receive the truth.

Doctrine and true Christian living are inseparably related. It is a big lie to suggest that in order to have genuine spirituality you must at least minimize the emphasis on doctrine. Christian living is based on sound doctrine. It flows forth from it. Without such sound doctrine we will end up with a life of mysticism and humanism and not genuine Christian-

ity. The most profound and sincere Christian living comes from the living spiritual knowledge of the greatest doctrines of God's Word. It has repeatedly happened in the history of the church that when spiritual death has come to the church there have been movements to revive the church by mere emphasis on "the Spirit," without doctrine. There have been those who have equated revival with mere emotional arousal and the feeling of enthusiasm. True revival comes only when the church through the Spirit of God returns to the study of the doctrine of the Word of God. The greatest demonstration of that was the great Protestant Reformation. In the Protestant Reformation the church was formed again on the basis of the great doctrines of the Word of God. Sincere Christian living followed when God's people by the Spirit of

God returned to the true doctrine of the Word of God. The same will happen today by the grace of God when God's people return to an earnest study of the doctrines of Scripture.

Maintaining sound doctrine in the church involves a great spiritual battle. The devil and the wicked world always go about to destroy the church by seeking to lead her to compromise her doctrinal foundation. Through all the history of the Christian churches thousands of valiant men of God have fought great spiritual battles to maintain sound doctrine. Thousands have suffered and died for the cause of sound doctrine. We must continue in that great spiritual battle as churches unto the end of time. We fight for the glory of God. God Himself is our help and strength. □

## A Cloud Of Witnesses

*Prof. Herman Hanko*

## Thomas Becket

The problem of the relation between the church of Jesus Christ in the world and the secular state has always been a vexing one, but never more so than in the Middle Ages. Beginning with the fall of Rome and the destruction of the Roman Empire in the West, the Roman Catholic Church began to gather to itself power and authority not only in ecclesiastical affairs, but also in affairs of the state. And as the pope of Rome increasingly set himself up as the head of the church, so he began to promote himself also as the head of the secular state. It was increasingly the teachings of popes that Christ had given

them *all* authority on earth in every sphere of life. In the church, the lower clergy, such as cardinals, archbishops, bishops, and priests, were the men through whom popes exercised their authority; but in the state, kings and princes were the men through whom the pope ruled. All owed their allegiance to him; all were responsible to him; all were subject to his control. The pope could crown kings and depose kings as he saw fit.

For a while this sort of view was made to stick in Europe and many powerful monarchs bowed in obedience to papal claims. But as the nations developed in power and national independence, Europe's kings were not all that willing always to do what the popes said. And so conflict arose over these questions.

While these conflicts were realities in many different lands, they came

to a head in Great Britain; and Thomas Becket, strange man that he was, stood in the very center of these struggles and was an example of how fierce and bitter these struggles were.

Although both popes and kings wanted power, there were several key issues which again and again became occasions for controversy. One of these issues was whether or not clergy who were guilty of civil crimes could be tried in civil courts. The pope said, No; the kings said, Yes. The kings argued that even clergy were subject to the law of the land; the popes said that as members of the clergy they were exempt from such laws.

Another issue was the "investiture" of bishops and archbishops: Who had the right to ordain into office? One would think that here at least the church was right when it

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insisted that only the church could ordain men into church office. But the question was not all that simple, for many of the bishoprics and archbishoprics were also secular realms where these higher clergymen of the church owned vast tracts of land, ruled over vast areas as secular rulers, raised armies, fought battles, and collected taxes. At the time when these things were happening, one half of England was owned by the church. So the kings argued with considerable justification that if these clergymen wanted to be secular rulers, they ought to be subject to the king, and the king ought to have the right to appoint them to office. But the matter of taxes was after all the bottom line—as it always is. While the kings wanted the revenues from these feudal estates over which clerics ruled to go into the royal treasury to finance the king's wars and extravagant living, the popes wanted the revenues to flow out of the countries into the coffers in Rome where the popes could spend these vast fortunes for their own ends.

Against this background Thomas Becket rose to prominence in England.

England was at this time under the rule of the powerful Plantagenet kings who ruled not only over most of Great Britain, but also over huge sections of France. The king on the throne at the time of Thomas was Henry II, a typical member of the Plantagenet dynasty, a huge man of great strength, who hardly ever was off his horse; a man of shrewdness and ability, an able administrator, a fierce warrior, a gifted ruler; but also a man of violent temper and burning lusts for money, power, and the pleasures of the flesh.

Thomas' early life was rather normal and of little interest. He was born in London, but of Norman parents (i.e., parents from Normandy in France) on the 21st of December in 1118. They were of the upper middle class and were able to provide him with an excellent legal education in schools in London and on the continent. He studied in the great universities of Paris, Bologna, and Auxerre.

What was to thrust Thomas into prominence was his many gifts. He was an extremely handsome man, tall and vigorous, athletically inclined, and skilled in the arts of war. His education, coupled with natural intelligence, gave him proficiency in law and made him an accomplished courtier who could associate freely and easily with people from the highest levels of society. He was brilliant and affable, cheerful and eloquent, accomplished and polished. He was an expert swordsman and brilliant strategist. He had few, if any, faults—other than a towering pride.

Such a man quite naturally came to the king's attention, and Henry II soon made Thomas one of the most powerful men in the kingdom. He was given the royal chancellorship, in which office he led military campaigns, travelled about dispensing justice in the king's name, supervised the collection of taxes, engaged in diplomatic ventures, and handed out royal patronage. He was totally loyal to the king, a close friend and confidant, one who spent more time with Henry than did anyone else, not only in matters of state, but also in drinking, hunting, and carousing. When Henry was absent to France on royal business, Thomas reigned in his place. The king had no more loyal subject. Thomas became extremely wealthy in this high position so that he took with him on a mission to France "two hundred knights, priests, standard-bearers, all festively arrayed in new attire, twenty-four changes of raiment, all kinds of dogs and birds for field sports, with wagons, each drawn by five horses, each horse in charge of a stout young man dressed in a new tunic. Coffers and chests contained the chancellor's money and present. One horse, which preceded all the rest, carried the holy vessels of his chapel, the holy books, and the ornaments of the altar."<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Quoted from Schaff, *The History of the Christian Church*, Vol. V, pp. 126, 127.

Because the king was having such great problems with maintaining an independent rule over his domains against papal encroachments, and because so much of the money of the realm was flowing out of the country to Rome, bleeding the country white, Henry decided to appoint Thomas Becket to the highest post in the church, the archbishopric of Canterbury. Henry was confident that with a friend in this highest of all ecclesiastical posts, he could successfully thumb his nose at the pope.

It must have come as a shock beyond bearing that Thomas, immediately upon being appointed to this prestigious and powerful position, underwent a complete transformation and shifted his loyalty totally from Henry to the pope. It appeared almost as if Thomas' conduct was an act of treachery, and so Henry interpreted it.

Thomas gave up all his possessions, exchanged his beautiful robes for a haircloth shirt filled with vermin, ate nothing but roots, drank nauseous water, washed the filthy feet of 13 beggars every day and gave them each four pieces of silver, whipped himself repeatedly and on schedule, and went about bemoaning his many sins. From henceforth he became the bitterest enemy that Henry had in the entire kingdom. Thomas was not concerned about the sins and excesses in the church; all that he fought for was the total supremacy of the pope in all the affairs of the church and kingdom in England and her realms.

It is not difficult to understand that Henry was infuriated and that the two were soon to come into conflict. The matter came to an issue with the adoption of the Clarendon Constitutions, a document which really did nothing else but reiterate old English laws, put England soundly under the rule of the king, and separated England from the rule of the pope in secular affairs. In a moment of weakness, Thomas agreed to this document, but almost immediately repented of it, engaged in penance, sought absolution from the pope, and fled to France to escape royal wrath.



He spent about six years in France in exile and proceeded from that distant pulpit to excommunicate every one in England whom he thought to be in violation of any papal wish. At the end of six years things were somewhat straightened out between him and the king, and he returned to his position in Canterbury. But rather than letting well enough alone, he seized every opportunity from his pulpit to denounce the king, excommunicate various clergy who seemed to side with the king, and used his position as a bully pulpit to promote papal interests.

The king was in France during one of Thomas' exceptionally strident blasts. Upon hearing the report, the king, in towering rage, said, "A fellow that has eaten my bread, has lifted up his heel against me; a fellow that I loaded with benefits, dares insult the king; a fellow that came to court on a lame horse, with a cloak for a saddle, sits without hindrance on the throne itself. By the eyes of God, is there none of my thankless and cowardly courtiers who will deliver me from the insults of this low-born

and turbulent priest?" And with that he rushed from the room.

Four of his high-ranking knights took him more literally than he evidently intended to be taken, for they immediately left his presence, took ship to England, made careful plans, and attacked Thomas while he was saying vespers in the cathedral at Canterbury. The date was 1173. The spot is still marked today.

It would seem as if Henry had his wish and his most bitter enemy was now gone forever, unable to plague him again. But it was a hollow victory and finally turned out precisely the opposite of what Henry thought. The Romish Church knew how to make capital of it all.

For one thing, the people were stunned by the murder. It was not only a cold-blooded murder of England's highest ecclesiastic, but it had taken place in the sanctuary itself, a sacred place in which no blood should have been spilled. The people turned bitterly against Henry who they were convinced was implicated in the plot. For another thing, the pope, within four years of Thomas' death, canonized Thomas and thus

enshrined him as a saint worthy of worship. Henry did everything he could to blunt the impact of Thomas' death, but nothing helped. His confessions, his acts of penance, his pleadings for forgiveness only underscored in the minds of the people his guilt and the cruelty of his crime. In the end he was forced to capitulate almost entirely, abrogate the Clarendon Constitutions, submit to papal rule, and acknowledge that the pope was sovereign over all.

Canterbury and Thomas' grave became one of the most popular shrines in all Europe, where thousands of pilgrimages were made every year by pilgrims from every land. Chaucer's famous poem, *Canterbury Tales*, which almost every college student is required to read at some time or other, describes such a pilgrimage to the shrine of Thomas Becket.

In the meanwhile, although times have changed, Rome has never formally backed away from her position that she has the right to rule the earth also in the secular realm. One wonders whether this ancient dream of the popes will be finally realized in the kingdom of Antichrist. □

## *Taking Heed to the Doctrine*

*Rev. Bernard Woudenberg*

*For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call.*

Acts 2:39

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# Some Reflections on "Presupposed Regeneration"

The recent studies which Prof. Engelsma has been providing us in the *Standard Bearer* on the subject of the Covenant of Grace are to be appreciated. It has been a needed study, and helpful to many. To it I have little to add. Nevertheless, in working with some problems regarding the covenant, especially earlier this year in Australia, I gained an insight into one of the side issues of this subject

which I would like to share. It had to do with that view of the covenant which has come to be known as "presupposed regeneration," particularly as it was set forth by Abraham Kuyper and his followers.

With this position we, as Protestant Reformed people, are often identified, in spite of the fact that we have repeatedly rejected the identification. And yet the claim persists.



The problem seems to arise from two basic principles which we teach and defend.

The first of these is the principle that, according to the Bible, God can and often does regenerate children from infancy. This we find clearly set forth in the Scriptures, as when David wrote in Psalm 22:9,10, "But thou art he that took me out of the womb: thou didst make me hope when I was upon my mother's breasts. I was cast upon thee from the womb: thou art my God from my mother's belly." And other passages reflect much the same thought [Is. 49:1,5; Jer. 1:5, Lk. 1:15,41,44; 2 Tim. 3:15, etc.]. These Scriptures are fundamental to the doctrine of infant baptism and are held to tenaciously by those who maintain the baptism of infants to be a true means of grace. They clearly imply, and the experience of many substantiates it to be so, that God often gives the regenerating work of the Holy Spirit to *elect* children born in the covenant from their earliest youth. The result is that there are goodly numbers of godly people who have been raised in faithful covenant homes and cannot remember a day when they did not know themselves to be sinners saved by grace. It is not as though a covenant rearing earns for them the grace of God; but rather that, when God gives the grace of covenant faithfulness to parents, He also often continues that grace in the generations which follow [Ex. 20:6]. In fact, it is this that infant baptism sacramentally designates.

In the second place, we consider it our covenant duty to deal with all our children as though they are true covenant children even while we know from Scripture that some may well be unregenerate, and some indeed reprobate in the end. The reasons are two. In the first place, it is not for us to try to judge which are true children of God and which are simply children following their natural inclination to conform to the desires of their parents. It is a judgment which only God can make [1 Sam. 16:7]. And this must be brought out individually as each develops under the Word of

God. Some will continue in it and some will not. For that we must wait. And, secondly, this is the way in which the Scriptures lead. While God warns often that not all of Israel are saved [Rom. 9:6], nevertheless, He always treated the nation as a whole as belonging to him. And so in the New Testament, while many warnings were given against insincerity and hypocrisy, Paul always addressed the church as saints in Christ [Rom. 1:7; 1 Cor. 1:2, etc.]. And so we, until individuals show themselves in their lives to be unbelievers, are to deal with them as part of the church of God, even while warning that none can presume his salvation, but each must live in daily conversion of life to God.

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It is, however, in regards to this latter point that the problem arises. For many it seems that when we deal with all of our children as covenant children, we are presuming their regeneration, and holding to a latent Kuyperianism whether we wish to admit it or not. But that is not where the difficulty lies. It is not with our view, but with the failure of many to understand what the true implications of Kuyper's "presupposed regeneration" are. It is actually quite a different thing.

This was the point that was brought home to me earlier this year while visiting in the home of a young couple in Australia. The mother in this home, who had immigrated to Australia while still a young child, was explaining to me how that she had recently been back to The Netherlands to visit her relatives. While there she had discovered something about family life in The Netherlands, particularly in the days before the

Second World War, which she had never understood before.

In these families, it seems, it had been customary for the father to rule with a kind of autocratic authority. When he came home from work, the wife was expected to be waiting, ready to do his bidding whatever it might be. At a moment's notice the children were to disappear and cause him no inconvenience. In turn, as the children grew, it was understood that, regardless what they did otherwise, they—and this was true especially of the sons, who would remain within the family clan—were to follow any instructions their father might give. If he told them to learn their catechism, they learned their catechism. If he told them to go to young men's society, they went. He chose their occupation and determined whom they might marry, and what church they were to go to, and when. If a young man submitted to this, he remained a member of the family with all of the advantages that that might involve. But should he think to rebel and go his own way, he could expect to be cut off and be counted a member of the family no more.

Moreover, within the structure of Kuyperian society, this well disciplined family was important. It was part of what Dr. Van Belle of Redeemer College has called "religious pluralism," that peculiarity of pre-war Dutch society according to which each religious community in The Netherlands provided its own people with a complete social structure in church and school, labor and politics, that was distinct and separate from all others. For the small, but extremely ambitious and active Reformed party, their strong family discipline carried through to the political polls, giving them, in spite of their size, a remarkable advantage for many years. The autocratic family lay at the heart of their strength, while providing for each individual an identity and a place within the whole.

But that was also where the problem lay. It was not uncommon within this structure to find young members, and even adults, who, while



dutifully attending church and functioning as part of this Reformed social structure, showed little sign of true spiritual concern. Their confession was far from personal, and their lives for the most part little different from that of the world. But their place in the Reformed community was important; and accordingly the principle of "presupposed regeneration" was introduced. It was explained, according to Kuyper, that often regeneration, while taking place at birth, might lie dormant for years. To be sure, lack of spirituality was to be deplored; but it was to be understood that such people were not necessarily unregenerate. As long as they remained members of the church and a functioning part of the Reformed community, such members could be borne

with in the presumption that they were regenerate and that eventually that would become evident.

It was this particularly against which Dr. Klaas Schilder, together with a number of his companions, objected. To them it seemed quite improper to presume regeneration in people who showed no signs of covenant responsibility in their lives. And so they began to warn against the teachings of Dr. Kuyper, and to maintain that it was destroying the life of the Reformed church by rendering it sterile and spiritually dead.

In was this also, no doubt, which goes far to explain the close affinity which developed between Rev. Herman Hoeksema and Dr. Schilder when he visited our country in the late 30s. The same deadness and

worldliness which Dr. Schilder complained of in The Netherlands was what Rev. Hoeksema had always objected to in the Reformed community here. Although they may have differed somewhat in what they considered to be the cause, Dr. Schilder focusing on presumed regeneration, and Rev. Hoeksema on common grace, the two viewpoints did not seem at all incompatible, and far from mutually exclusive. Thus they parted as friends, determined to remain in contact, and to strengthen each other in their common battle. But then the war intervened; and the paths they followed in seeking to meet this common problem proved to be quite different.

But of that we must write more next time. □

*All Around Us*  
Prof. Robert Decker

## Calls for Unity Among Reformed Denominations

"The Reformed Church in the United States should begin now to forge links of fellowship and cooperation that will lead to eventual union with other Reformed churches. Our period of geographic and cultural isolation is at an end. It is time for the RCUS to become more definitely a part of the continuing Reformation." With these words The Reverend Peter B. Grossman, editor of his denomination's magazine, *Reformed Herald*, began a recent editorial. The RCUS is the conservative remnant of the old "German" Reformed Church.

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

In 1934 one classis (Eureka in the Dakotas) refused to join the Evangelical and Reformed merger. The Evangelical and Reformed became part of the United Church of Christ in 1957, one of the most liberal of the mainline churches in this country. There was some contact between the RCUS and our churches in the 1940s, as some of our older members perhaps recall.

The confessional standard of the RCUS is the Heidelberg Catechism. This denomination has close contact especially with the Orthodox Presbyterian Church (OPC) and the Reformed Presbyterian Church in North America (RPCNA). The close relationship with the OPC is due to the fact that most of the RCUS ministers were educated at Westminster Theological Seminary (Philadelphia) dur-

ing the 1950s and '60s. The RCUS in recent years has less formal contacts with conservative Christian Reformed churches and men. In fact one of the RCUS ministers, Rev. Robert Grossman, is Professor of Practical Theology at Mid-America Reformed Seminary in Orange City, Iowa.

Grossman continues, "The church landscape is littered with splinters of Bible-believing reformed and presbyterian churches. We are not alone in the battle for the faith of the Reformation. That fact should be obvious to any who look beyond their own front door. Two reformed groups are especially important for the RCUS. (Grossman is referring here to The Orthodox Presbyterian Church [OPC] and The Reformed Presbyterian Church in North America [RPCNA],



RDD). Our histories and theological positions are amazingly similar. A new reformed unity movement ought to capitalize on that."

Grossman proceeds to list and briefly identify the denominations which he thinks ought to be working together to achieve unity. In addition to the OPC and the RPCNA, Grossman includes the Presbyterian Church in America, a rather large and conservative church which came out of old "southern" Presbyterian Church in the US in the early seventies. Grossman lists the conservatives in both the Reformed Church in America and the Christian Reformed Church, the Canadian Reformed Churches, the Orthodox Christian Reformed Churches, and the Protestant Reformed Churches. Concerning the PRC he writes, "The Protestant Reformed Church is a group about the size of the RCUS that came out of the CRC in the 1920s. The RCUS had conversations with the PRC in the 1940s and '50s, but no union."

It is Grossman's position that, "True church unity must be based on unity of confession and devotion to the Bible as God's true Word. The churches we've noted above, and others, hold vigorously to either the Westminster Confession of Faith, or, the Three Forms of Unity .... Is there any reason why we should not work toward actual and visible unity? .... It is time, *now*, to herald a new Reformed ecumenical movement. Our fathers preserved the church from the liberalism of an earlier generation. If we do not leave a unified, biblically Reformed church for the next generation, the Reformation may well die in our land."

Dr. Nelson D. Kloosterman, a professor at Mid-America Reformed Seminary, addresses this issue as well in his seminary's newsletter under the title, "Preparing for Genuine Ecumenicity." Writing from the perspective of the conservative CRC position, Kloosterman thinks there are "opportunities for re-alignment." Writes he, "Here is opportunity coming to meet us: if survival requires re-establishing a confessional identity,

we are going to be faced with two axiomatic (that is: fundamental) matters: namely, *how* and *with whom* that identity is re-established. Plans are underway among Reformed leaders from various church fellowships in North America to answer these two questions. One very promising piece of news is this summer's decision by the general assembly of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church to investigate the possibility of adopting, alongside the Westminster Standards, the Three Forms of Unity. Beyond that, there is considerable interest in examining ways to bring the two forms of church government together as well. From this earthling's point of view, the timing couldn't be better."

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*"The key to any future  
ecumenical developments ...  
is re-establishing  
a confessional identity  
that takes subscription  
seriously by  
enforcing it meaningfully."*

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Kloosterman wants to " ... articulate a common faith response (confession) ..." to what he deems are the three contemporary enemies of the Reformed faith. These enemies are, "egalitarianism, expressed, for example, in feminism and her blood brother, homosexuality ... evolutionism, ... and religious individualism ...."

Kloosterman concludes, "The key to any future ecumenical developments among North American Christians of Reformed and Presbyterian conviction and tradition is re-establishing a *confessional* identity that takes subscription seriously by enforcing it meaningfully. Read that last sentence again, and reflect on this: in view of a rapidly expanding loss of 'evangelical' doctrinal, liturgical and ecclesiastical identity — and given the lateness of the hour — the LORD may be about to breathe new strength into weary church members

so they may serve, once again, The Way, The Truth, and The Life."

This article was reprinted in *Christian Observer*.

The Rev. G. I. Williamson, an OPC pastor, reports that, "On the 16th. and 17th. of August a small group of concerned men, about 15 in number, met at Trinity Christian Reformed Church in St. Catharines, ON. The original call for this meeting came from men in the Christian Reformed Church, and they also made up the largest portion of this gathering. However, the Orthodox Presbyterian Church, the Presbyterian Church in America, and the growing unaffiliated Reformed community were well represented."

This group of men resolved: "That a Confessional Conference be held at a time and place to be determined by a committee chosen by the steering committee; persons attending shall be delegated by a church.

"That the purpose of the Confessional Conference shall be:

A. To address the issues of egalitarianism and origins. To that end the conference shall:

1. Articulate a clear statement of the hermeneutical and revelational principles involved;

2. Develop confessional statements to serve as a Biblical response to the two contemporary issues of egalitarianism and origins;

B. To explore ways in which God might bring us into one united Reformed Church, based on the Three Forms of Unity and the Westminster Standards."

What must we make of all this? Certainly any unity among Reformed believers must be based on the truth of the inspired, infallible, Holy Scriptures as that truth is articulated in the Reformed Confessions. In addition, however, there are a host of differences and denominational distinctives with which such a conference would have to deal — among them: various views on the covenant, church polity, common grace, the re-marriage of divorced persons, labor union membership, and more. Among the denominations mentioned in the above



articles are those who sing only the Psalms, and others who use hymns in the worship. At least one of the denominations mentioned is committed to Purity of Worship.

Perhaps in the light of all this it

would be better to work to establish a Council of conservative Reformed Churches from around the world similar to the Reformed Ecumenical Council. This would provide a forum to address enemies common to us all.

What will come of all this only the Lord knows. □

*Reformed Herald  
The Mid-America Messenger  
Christian Observer*

## A Word Fitly Spoken

Rev. Dale Kuiper

# Seas

What can we learn from the restless seas? What do the Scriptures intend to teach us with these large bodies of water with their immeasurably powerful waves, tides, and storms? The uniform teaching of the Word of God is that the seas have a negative, symbolic meaning: they stand for troubles, and especially for unbelief and the wicked nations of the world.

How often does the psalmist express his troubles in terms of these great depths! When his soul is cast down and he is filled with disquiet, he cries out, "Deep calleth unto deep at the noise of thy waterspouts; all thy waves and thy billows are gone over me" (Ps. 42:7). When he speaks of the multitudes that hate him wrongfully, he calls to the heavens, "Save me, O God; for the waters are come in unto my soul. I sink in deep mire where there is no standing. I am come in deep waters where the floods overflow me" (Ps. 69:1, 2). As no man can successfully resist or harness the power of the sea, so no man can overcome, in his own strength, his spiritual enemies and his sin.

The restlessness and confusion of having doubts and being of a double mind is compared by James to the sea. We are to ask God for wisdom, especially wisdom that we may count it joy when we fall into divers trials, nothing wavering. "For he that wavereth is like a wave of the sea, driven of the wind and tossed" (1:6). A man who prays without the conviction of being heard and answered is unstable, and can only be compared to the confusion and purposelessness of the storm-tossed sea.

But the Scriptures especially use the figure of seas to represent the ungodly nations. "The wicked are like the troubled sea, when it cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt" (Isa. 57:20). When Jeremiah speaks of God's judgment upon the nations he says, "There is sorrow on the sea; it cannot be quiet" (49:23). When John describes the Antichrist from the point of view of his political power and authority, having one of his heads scarred with a healed-over, deadly wound (the wound was the birth of nations at Babel — the healing the unification of nations just before the end) he says, "And I stood upon the sand of the sea, and saw a beast rise up out of the sea" (Rev. 13:1). The Antichrist arises out of the wicked nations, and although he is ugly in the extreme, the world wonders after him.

Jesus teaches His victory, and the victory of the church in Him, by His great miracle of stilling the tempest (Mark 4:35-41). The church, represented by the twelve, is in a little ship and must cross the sea agitated by a great storm of wind so that the waves beat into the ship. They were in jeopardy, at the point of perishing. Jesus rebuked the wind and the waves. He rebuked them. He spoke against someone for doing evil, and that someone is the devil who rules the kingdoms of this world and would destroy the church that she not reach her desired haven. "And the wind ceased, and there was a great calm." So, too, in Luke 5, we read of the miraculous draught of fishes, where Jesus shows that He saves His people out of the wicked, perishing world. The disciples couldn't catch a single fish, but Christ working through His disciples saves a great multitude, even as many as should be saved.

The time comes when the raging of the nations against Christ shall cease, when the nations shall be dispossessed and destroyed so completely that no place is found for them. John saw "a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea" (Rev. 21:1). No more sea because there shall be no more wicked nations, no more dirt and mire, no more opposition for the church of Christ, and hence no more pain, sorrow, or crying. "Thou rulest the raging of the sea: when the waves thereof arise, thou stillest them" (Ps. 89:9).

Peace, be still! □

*Rev. Kuiper is pastor of Immanuel Protestant Reformed Church in Lacombe, Alberta, Canada..*



## Protestant Reformed Seminary

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Robert D. Decker, Rector  
Professor of Practical Theology and New Testament

September 18, 1991

Dear brothers and sisters in the Lord:

What a difference having a few more students makes! We have seven in all: five from our PRC churches and two from the Evangelical Presbyterian Churches in Australia. The parking lot is nearly full, as are also the classrooms. Because the professors also use their classrooms as offices, there is little room to spare in some classes. With classes of five to seven students there is often lively discussion of pertinent theological issues. Professors are stimulated and sometimes challenged. Students encourage one another and are motivated to further study by their peers. We thank God for this! The Lord is answering our fervent prayers for students.

Mr. Patrick Baskwell is in his second year and will graduate, D.V., in 1994. Scott Haakma and Henry DeJong are in the second year of a five-year program. They along with two first-year students, Allen Brummel and Douglas Kuiper, expect to graduate in 1995. The men from Australia are Christopher Connors and David Higgs. They are in the first year of a three-year course of study. In addition several pre-seminarians are taking their Dutch and Greek at our school.

Besides the necessary work for their classes, the professors are busy preaching and teaching in the West Michigan churches. Prof. Engelsma expects to have his Master's thesis (Calvin Seminary) completed by the end of the calendar year. Prof. Hanks lectured and preached in Loveland, Colorado PRC in September. During early October, Prof. Decker addressed the PRC Teachers' Convention in Northwest Iowa. All three faculty members spoke at the Conference on the doctrine of Holy Scripture in late October.

We ask that you remember our school in your prayers. In these latter days it is crucial that our seminary remain faithful to the truth of God's Word as maintained in our PRC. To meet the needs of our expanding library, Synod has authorized the Theological School Committee to work with an architect on plans and cost estimates for an addition to our building. We ask that you give this your prayerful consideration as well.

May God bless you richly in Christ Jesus.

Cordially in Christ,  
Prof. Robert D. Decker,  
for the faculty



## Decency and Order

Rev. Ronald Cammenga

# Claiming State Protection

"The consistory shall take care that the churches, for the possession of their property and the peace and order of their meetings, can claim the protection of the authorities; it should be well understood, however, that for the sake of peace and material possession they may never suffer the royal government of Christ over His church to be in the least infringed upon."

### A Radical Revision

Our present Article 28 represents a radical revision of the original article. The original Article 28 as drafted by the Synod of Dordt, 1618-'19, reads:

Since the office of Christian authorities is to promote church services in every way, to recommend the same to their subjects, and to assist the ministers, elders, and deacons in all cases of existing need or emergency, and to protect them in the execution of their tasks as governors of the churches, so also the ministers, elders, and deacons are in duty bound diligently and sincerely to impress upon the whole congregation the obedience, love, and respect they owe the magistrates; they shall, moreover, make themselves good examples to the congregation in this matter, and by proper respect and the establishment of correspondence with the civil authorities, they shall endeavor to secure and maintain the good-will of the government toward the churches; to the end that, each doing his duty in the fear of the Lord, all suspicion and distrust may be prevented and that thus due cooperation may be maintained for the welfare of the churches.

Our present article is the result of the revision of the *Church Order* by the Christian Reformed Church in

1914. Apparently it was felt that the article adopted by the Synod of Dordt applied more to the situation of the Reformed Churches in The Netherlands, where a much closer relationship existed between church and state than in our country. Undoubtedly it was also felt that the original article went too far in its call for cooperation between church and state. It called upon the magistrate "...to promote church services in every way...." It called upon the churches to establish "...correspondence with the civil authorities...." And it called for the civil authorities "...to assist the ministers, elders, and deacons...."

Although the original Article 28 went too far in calling for cooperation between church and state, the Synod of the Christian Reformed Church of 1914 went too far in their revision of Article 28. Whatever may be said of the original article, it did set down, in the main, the Reformed view of the proper relationship between church and state. It also did a good job of delineating their respective rights and responsibilities. To a great extent this is lost in our present article. For example, there is nothing in our present article pointing the officebearers to their calling "...to impress upon the whole congregation the obedience, love, and respect they owe to the magistrates...." Neither are the officebearers called to "...make themselves good examples to the congregation in this matter...."

Much more faithful to the original article is the revision adopted by the Canadian Reformed Churches.

Article 28. Civil Authorities. As it is the office of the civil authorities to promote in every way the holy ministry, so all officebearers are in duty bound to impress diligently and sincerely upon the whole congregation the obedience, love, and respect

which are due to the civil authorities; they shall set a good example to the whole congregation in this matter, and endeavor by due respect and communication to secure and retain the favor of the authorities towards the Church, so that the Church of Christ may lead a quiet and peaceable life, godly and respectful in every way.

### The Distinctively Reformed View of the Relationship Between Church and State

Article 28 is intended to set forth the distinctively Reformed view of the relationship between church and state. The Synod of Dordt was concerned to do this, first of all, over against the Arminians who had resurrected the Erastian view, namely, that the government should be in authority over the churches. For some time they had been promoting this view in order to avoid being judged for their false teachings by the church. The Synod also intended to distinguish the Reformed view from the Roman Catholic position — in a way the opposite of the Erastian view — that the state is subject to the church. In addition, the Synod was also distinguishing the Reformed view from that of the Anabaptists, who refused even to recognize the legitimacy of the state.

Article 28 gives expression to the unique Reformed view that the church and state occupy two distinct, God-ordained spheres of authority. These two spheres are to remain separate; there is to be no intrusion of the one into the domain of the other. At the same time, although church and state occupy separate spheres of authority, there are mutual responsibilities. The church is to obey the magistrate in all things lawful, and instruct her members to be in submission to

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every law of man that does not require violation of the law of God. On its part the state is obligated to provide for peaceful Sabbath worship—the right of public assembly—and to protect the possessions and property of the church.

Consistories are to secure proper recognition by the government: "The consistory shall take care that the churches, for the possession of their property and the peace and order of their meetings, can claim the protection of the authorities...."

The church has a duty that it owes to the state. That duty is submission to the state inasmuch as the church is an earthly organization. The church must obey the laws of the land regarding such things as sanitation, fire code, building code, property use, and so forth.

At the same time, the church has certain rights. According to Article 28, the church's rights include possession of property, public assembly for the worship of God, and protection by the authorities.

The duty of the consistory, now, is to "claim" these rights. The consistory is to secure official government recognition (legal standing) for the congregation with the state. The consistory is to do what is necessary to see to it that the lawful rights of the congregation are honored.

#### **Incorporation**

The main way in which the church obtains recognition by the state is incorporation. Although Article 28

does not specifically mention incorporation, this is evidently intended. The phrase "for the possession of their property" clearly implies incorporation. The "Questions For Church Visitation" make specific reference to this: "...is the congregation properly incorporated with the State?" The most recent revision of the *Church Order* of the Christian Reformed Church requires such incorporation: "Each assembly shall provide for the safeguarding of its property through proper incorporation" (Art. 32b).

The main purpose of incorporation is to secure the rightful protection of the church by the state. Just as with the individual Christian, the church is to be a wise steward of the material possessions entrusted to her by God. Proper incorporation secures the protection of the church especially against wrongful infringement of her property rights in the case of a schism. The history of our own churches in the split of 1953-'54 emphasizes the practical importance of this.

Every state provides for the incorporation of non-profit, religious organizations. Incorporation papers are usually required to be filed with the Secretary of State through the County Clerk's office. After the approval of the request for incorporation, the congregation is duly registered and has official, legal standing. As a corporate entity, it may transact its material affairs and claim the protection of the state, if need be in the courts of the land.

#### **A Timely Warning**

Article 28, however, concludes with a stern warning to the churches: "...it should be well understood, however, that for the sake of peace and material possession they may never suffer the royal government of Christ over His church to be in the least infringed upon."

State domination over the church may never be tolerated. The state does not have, and may not be permitted to exercise, ecclesiastical authority. The church may never tolerate state interference in the spiritual and internal affairs of the church. The state has no right of supervision of the official work of the officebearers. The state is not to regulate the faith and life of the church. The state is not to involve itself in the exercise of Christian discipline. The state is not to become entangled in the official labors of the consistory, the classis, or the synod.

On more than one occasion the state has usurped this authority in the past. We expect that this will happen once again in the future. But the church's calling is to resist every effort by the state that would result in "...the royal government of Christ over His church to be in the least infringed upon." What this means practically is that whenever incorporation entails for the church that she acquiesce to state domination, when the cost of state protection is state control, she must refrain from being incorporated. □

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## *Reformed Free Publishing Association (Standard Bearer) Annual Report, 1990-1991*

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To everything there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heavens. So states the Word of God as may be found in Ecclesiastes 3:1. In verse 2, and continuing to the end of the book, there are ample illustrations how we mortals are restricted to, are subject to, the regimentation of the time factor in our lives.

The various aspects one may or can experience in a lifetime are thus rehearsed in our ears. Also the vanity of all earthly things and the excellency of heavenly wisdom is herewith set forth.

But read for yourselves the conclusion of the whole matter as found in chapter 12:13, 14.

How many annual reports of one sort or another have not begun by saying, "Another year (time) has passed," or "Another year (time) has started." In fact, I think I'll begin this report in just that way. Another year has passed.

Volume 67 of the *Standard Bearer* ended September 15, 1991. The



October 1 issue begins Volume 68. This issue could be in your homes as of this very evening.

Efforts have been put forth, during the year which has passed, for an improved mailing schedule; but take this into consideration: 2nd class mail does not usually get preferred treatment.

Before we give a brief review of the Board's other activities and accomplishments, let me express on behalf of the Board a genuine appreciation to the Editor, Editorial Committee, Department Editors, guest writers, and all others who contributed and helped during this past volume-year. Very much included is our ever-busy, ever-capable Business Manager, Mr. Don Doezeema, and his wife Judi, who contribute so much, from start to finish, issue after issue of the *SB*.

The writers continue to set forth and defend the truth of the Scriptures and the rich heritage of the Reformed faith. The Editorial Committee, and especially our Editor, Prof. Engelsma, have seriously attempted to generate a renewed and continuing interest in their subject material. Especially was this evident in the editorials on the Covenant. Letters to the Editor were also found to be stimulating and profitable reading, not only from this series, but from other articles as well.

During the course of this volume-year, consideration was given to ways of further reducing the cost involved in publishing our magazine. Already a year ago we had begun giving the typesetters all of the material for the *SB* on a computer disk. This year we went a step further and began preparing our own camera-ready copy. Before we started using our own equipment, we were paying around \$1,500.00 for typesetting and printing of each issue. Now, each issue is prepared at our seminary building, a service for which the RFPA pays the seminary. And, with the selection of a different company to do our printing, we now pay about \$1,150.00 per issue, realizing for the *SB* a savings of approximately \$350.00 each time over the previous process.

The RFPA has long been a non-profit corporation registered with the State of Michigan. This past year we gained, in addition, official IRS recognition of tax exempt status.

Ever interested as a Board to increase our circulation, we gave special attention to gaining new subscribers, not only from a business viewpoint, but more especially in order to share with others the truth of the Scriptures, to promote sound doctrine and upright walk. Our subscription list continues to grow at a modest rate. October 1, 1988 we had 1,860 subscribers. By September 1, 1991, we have seen an increase to 2,168. Copies go to Singapore, Jamaica, British Isles, mainland Australia, Canada, Tasmania, New Zealand, Northern Ireland, and, if I forgot a country, they go there too, plus all over the U.S.A.

Taking a more aggressive approach in gaining new subscribers, we are beginning to advertise in religious magazines. Last year, we advertised the *SB* in the *Journey Magazine* and *Christian Observer* with positive results.

This year, at our request, Editor Engelsma furnished the Board with a concise and brief statement of who we are and what we stand for. This text was then used as the basis for an ad placed in *Christian Renewal*, *Evangelical Times*, and *Christianity Today*. Since the latest of the ads has appeared only very recently, and response is still coming in, it is premature at this point to declare results of this effort; but we have already been given opportunity to testify as to the distinctives of the Reformed faith.

Twice during this past year, we put out a color cover issue. Through the generosity of a concerned subscriber, we were able to publish these attractive issues at a minimum cost for us. The color cover issue of May 1, 1991 also was special in that it featured 9 articles concerning the Doctrine of Creation. Expressly the various writers were of one mind — God's Word and work, no if's, and's, or but's.

The excellent financial support

we receive through church collections and individual gifts is encouraging and gratifying. We are grateful to our God for your prayers and gifts.

The Board is considering the updating of the *SB* Index, which currently includes the first 57 volumes.

By the way, first-time subscribers can still, for only \$6.00, receive 21 issues of the *SB* — that is, the first year for one-half the regular cost. We firmly believe that the message of the *SB* is worthy of the widest possible readership; and this one-half price offer is our way of encouraging people to become subscribers to it. We are glad to report also that we have the cooperation of some church extension committees in promoting the *SB* through their mailing-list contacts.

Allow me to end my report with a personal observation. From time to time having duties that brought me to the seminary building, I observed and spoke to a pleasant and charming young lady who was busy for some weeks cutting, trimming, and pasting on sheets of paper English written articles from the *SB* volumes 1-20. Because many of the articles of these volume-years (1924-1944) are in the Dutch language, which the vast majority of our readers are unable to read, the Board decided to extract the English articles and make them available some day in volume books. The young lady who did so much work for this project was Stephanie Rawson, daughter of Rev. Philip Rawson, Pastor of Measbro Dyke Evangelical Church of Barnsley, England. She lived with Prof. Hanko and family for close to a year, and during that time spent countless hours at the seminary. We thank her here, publicly, for her efforts.

Nine years ago, I concluded an Annual *SB* report with an observation made by Rev. C. Hanko, who was at that time resigning as a regular writer and staff member. In the December 1, 1981 issue he wrote as follows: "The pulpit and the printed page must never grow weary of sounding the trumpet, arousing the church to battle, and warning her of the foes within and without the gate."



Uppermost is the prayer of the psalmist: "Bless the Lord, O my soul, and all that is within me bless his holy

name. Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits" (Ps. 103:1, 2). □

Respectfully submitted,  
Peter Koole, Secretary

## Book Reviews

**Church History**, by P.K. Keizer (Translated by T.M.P. VanderVen); Inheritance Publications, 220pp. (paper). [Reviewed by Prof. H. Hanko.]

This book, written by a minister of the Reformed Churches of the Netherlands (Liberated), who also taught church history in a Reformed high school in Groeningen, is intended as a textbook for high school students. In the preface we are told, however, that the book assumes a certain amount of knowledge of church history which is taught in elementary and junior high classes. And this is true.

For this reason, while the book can be used in our own high school, it serves better as a reference work than as a classroom text.

There are some good features about the book: it makes an effort, usually successful, to put church history in the context of the teachings of Scripture and our own modern era; and it gives a lot of worthwhile information about various important figures in the history of the church, men whom God used in the work of the preservation of the church throughout the ages.

Another reason, however, why the book would not serve well for a text in our high school, is that it is written from the viewpoint of the Liberated churches. This becomes especially apparent at the end of the book when the struggle of the Reformed in the Netherlands to purify the church led to the establishment of the Liberated Churches in 1944. Because of this emphasis, no attention is paid to the development and history of the Reformed churches in our country.

The book is marred by some inaccuracies. On page 46, e.g., it is asserted that the Councils of Hippo

and Carthage which fixed the canon of Scripture repudiated the apocryphal books — when in fact they accepted them. On page 135, the error of Arminianism is described almost exclusively in terms of the Arminian doctrine of free will, when, in fact, Arminianism corrupted other doctrines of Scripture as well.

This leads me to my final remark. There is a certain imbalance in the work which becomes evident in a less than satisfactory treatment of important issues in the history of the church, issues such as the predestination conflict during the time of Gottschalk, the Arminian conflict of the 16th century, and others; while at the same time, a disproportionate amount of time is given to relatively insignificant issues, such as the slavery issue in England.

The book can serve as a good resource book, however, to understand the history of the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands from the *Afscheiding* of 1834 to the formation of the Liberated Churches. ■

**Return to Reason: A Critique of Enlightenment Evidentialism and a Defense of Reason and Belief in God**, by Kelly James Clark (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1990). \$10.95 (paper). [Reviewed by James Lanting.]

Mr. Clark, an assistant professor of philosophy at Calvin College, introduces the reader to current debates in the field of natural theology and Reformed apologetics. He summarizes the recent writings of Alvin Plantinga, Nicholas Wolterstorff, and George Mavrodes who are attempting to develop a novel Reformed epistemology with its own criteria for rationality.

It is the author's thesis that classical natural theology has failed because of its stubborn adherence to the erroneous Enlightenment notion of "evidentialism." Evidentialism holds that a belief is rational *only if* there is sufficient evidence or arguments or reasons for that belief. This classical notion of proof (which requires evidentiary proof and deductive argumentation) is a far too stringent concept of rationality, contends Clark. Although defending belief in God, the author suggests that our belief need not be based on "arguments" or "evidence" to be rational.

How then is belief in God to be rational if it does not depend on evidence or arguments? Because for Clark, Plantinga, *et. al.*, belief in God is a "properly basic belief," one that is accepted *prior* to evidence or argument. In other words, belief in God is part of the given *foundation* of our world of knowledge — in the same category as self-evident truths, memory beliefs, belief in other minds, etc. All of these beliefs we accept quite properly without evidence or argument; belief in God is one such "basic" belief. Says Clark: "The theist will develop a conception of the structure of believings which will legitimately capture his intuition that belief in God is properly basic."

Clark also attempts to answer the charge that this rejection of the classical perception of rationality (with its emphasis on evidence and reason) results in mere intuitionism or fideism. His defense against this accusation is not always convincing.

Clark saves his sharpest criticism in this book, not for the 18th century Enlightenment philosophers, but for R.C. Sproul, John Gerstner, and Arthur Lindsley and their book *Classical Apologetics*. "They con-



tend," writes Clark, "that theism requires a classical proof in order to be rational, and they have not supplied a decent proof. They fall short of their own standards."

This book is essentially a defense of the new "theistic epistemol-

ogy" recently being developed by Alvin Plantinga and Nicholas Wolterstorff in *Faith and Rationality* (Notre Dame: Univ. of Notre Dame Press, 1983). Although Clark describes this view as a "return to reason," its critics may dub it as a "return to

intuition."

This book is written as an introductory text to the philosophy of religion and is very readable, even for those with only a little background in philosophy and logic. ■

## News From Our Churches

Mr. Benjamin Wigger

### News from Singapore

Rev. Kortering wrote his congregation in Grandville, MI recently, and we include a few of his first impressions here for our readers.

"We thought we could imagine what life would be like here, but nothing can match the experience. We have windows on both sides of the flat, no screens, so we leave them open day and night. We can smell what our neighbors are cooking, and we can hear them scold their children. Their clothes hang on bamboo poles two feet above, below, and on either side of us. We heard someone just below us play with enthusiasm, "When the Saints go Marching In." There seem to be children everywhere, and plenty of crabby mothers. We are seeing life as it is .... There may be cultural differences, but a common faith in the sovereign God enables us to experience once again the joy of the catholic, universal church."

If you would like to send the Korterings a note while they are in Singapore, their address is: Blk. 416, Hougang Ave. 10, #07-1302, Singapore 1953, Republic of Singapore. Their FAX number is: 001-65-289-5342.

### Congregational Activities

For the past few months the Consistory of our Pella, IA PRC has been discussing how best to carry out their calling to spread God's truth in their community. They discussed either forming an Evangelism Com-

mittee or working directly through the Consistory. They chose the latter. They are going to begin considering various projects, and they have asked for input from the congregation in this regard.

The Church Extension Committee of our Loveland, CO PRC sponsored a "Conference on Christian Child-Rearing" held on September 26-28. On Thursday evening, September 26, Prof. H. Hanks spoke on "The Place of Children in the Christian Family." On Friday, Rev. Cammenga followed by speaking on "The Parental Responsibility for Child-rearing." Saturday morning, Prof. Hanks spoke on "Disciplining our Children." This was followed in the afternoon by Mr. Ron Koole speaking on "Christian Education." All speeches were followed by a question and answer session, and between the speeches on Saturday a meal was served. Rev. Ron Cammenga, Loveland's pastor, writes that tapes of the four speeches given at this conference are available for a cost of \$6.00 by writing the church at 705 E. 57th St., Loveland, CO 80538.

At their last congregational meeting, the congregation of the Southeast PRC in Grand Rapids, MI not only called a pastor, but also passed two proposals dealing with their parsonage — one to redecorate and another to remodel the kitchen-dining room area.

The members of First PRC in Grand Rapids, MI begin their Fall Bible Study season by planning a Fall Fellowship Dinner. This evening of Christian fellowship serves as a springboard to get their society sea-

son started on a positive note.

The Kalamazoo, MI PRC accomplishes this same positive beginning for their fall society season by sponsoring an annual fall concert of the Hope Heralds at their church in mid-September.

### Denominational Highlights

Not only did the Hope Heralds Male Choral Group help Kalamazoo begin their fall society season, they also were featured at this year's Seminary Convocation. They sang at the Holland Home and they presented a program on September 8 at Southwest PRC in Grandville, MI.

The annual meeting of the Eastern League of Men's and Ladies' Societies was held September 17 at the Southwest Church. Rev. Gise VanBaren spoke on "The Development of Mission Efforts in Ireland."

A Fall Retreat for young adults 18 and older was held on September 20 and 21 at Camp Michawama in Hastings, MI. This year's retreat had for its theme, "Making Christian Testimony." Activities included discussion groups, volleyball, basketball, softball, tennis, and swimming.

Elizabeth Key, daughter of Rev. and Mrs. Key, suffered a broken leg in a playground mishap in mid-September. She was hospitalized in traction at the Beaver Dam Hospital in Beaver Dam, WI for approximately 10 days, and she will be confined at home in a body cast for about six weeks.

### Ministerial Calls

The congregation of the First PRC in Grand Rapids, MI has extended a call to Rev. R. Moore to serve as missionary to the island of Jamaica. □

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



## Report of Classis West

Classis West met on Wednesday, September 18, 1991 in Edgerton, MN. Classis met for a full day, finishing its work at about 6:00 Wednesday evening. Rev. S. Key served as President of the meeting and was welcomed by Classis, having recently moved to Randolph, WI, from Classis East. Rev. Robert Hargrove of Sovereign Grace Presbyterian Church in Spokane, WA, and Mr. Jim Roberts of Sovereign Redeemer Fellowship in Boise, ID, were welcomed as visitors to Classis.

The main items of business were an appeal from a brother in Loveland, CO against the Loveland Consistory and an overture from the Loveland Consistory asking that the number of delegates to Synod from each Classis be increased from 8 to 12 (6 ministers and 6 elders). The appeal against the Consistory of Loveland was treated in closed session and was rejected by Classis while the overture will be sent on to Synod, 1992, with the approval of Classis.

The following schedule for classical appointments to Hope, Isabel, SD was approved: October 13, 20 — Rev. M. DeVries; November 24, December 1 — Rev. T. Miersma; December 15, 22 — Rev. W. Bekkering; January 12, 19 — Rev. S. Houck; February 9, 16 — Rev. S. Key; March 8, 15

### WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

On October 17, 1991, our beloved parents,  
**MR. and MRS. JOHN BODBYL,**

celebrated their 45th wedding anniversary. We, together with them, thank our heavenly Father for preserving them and us in the way of truth in His church and in His covenant. It is our prayer that they may continue to experience God's blessing on their earthly pilgrimage.

George and MaryLynn Postmus

John, Nathan, Catherine

George and Jayne Bodbyl

George, Marcella, Monica, Emily

John and Jane Bodbyl

Jennifer, John, Jason, Jeremy, Jimmy, Julia

Tom and Gretine Bodbyl

Maria, Larissa, Joel, Nate, Eric

John and Joan Mulder

Elizabeth, Lynnelle

Dan and Anna Mae Bodbyl

Amanda, Tina, Rosanne, Seth

Hudsonville Protestant Reformed Church

— Rev. C. Terpstra. A request from Classis East for classical appointments to Larne, Northern Ireland, and Venice, Florida, received just before the meeting of Classis, was not granted since this was a departure from the usual procedure for supplying the mission fields and since the consistories of Classis West did not have time to consider the matter. Classis encouraged the Mission Committee and the calling Consistories for these fields to contact the Consistories in Classis West for supply.

The expenses of Classis were \$8,592.12.

The next meeting of Classis West will be in Doon, IA, on March 4, 1992.

Rev. R. Hanko  
Stated Clerk

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