



# *THE* **STANDARD BEARER**

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Magazine*



PRC Seminary 1994 —  
faculty, student body, support staff

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## In This Issue ...

Much of this issue is not the usual fare.

Several articles arise from the resumption of classes at the Protestant Reformed Seminary. The text of the convocation address by Prof. Herman Hanko, "Our Church-Governed Seminary," both demonstrates the necessity of a denominational theological school and draws from this principle important practical implications for the churches, the seminarians, and the professors. The reprint of Presbyterian theologian Samuel Miller's remarks at the installation of Prof. Archibald Alexander at Princeton in the good days of 1812 ("An Able and Faithful Ministry") supplements the incisive analysis by Prof. Hanko. Miller told his church that she was "bound ... (to) furnish a seminary in which the candidates for this office may receive the most appropriate and complete instruction which she has it in her power to give."

The editorial is the "chapel speech" given at the opening exercises of the seminary. The speech found in Isaiah 6:5-7 a Word of God requiring, and giving, experiential preparation for the gospel-ministry.

There is also some "news from seminary hill."

Even those readers of the *Standard Bearer* who have no special interest in the seminary of the PRC can profit from some of these articles, treating as they do of the office of the ministry, preparation for it, and the church's calling in the matter.

"Our Heritage and the *Standard Bearer*" is the printed version of Rev. Cornelius Hanko's address to the annual meeting of the Reformed Free Publishing Association (RFPA), publisher of the *SB*. The presence of the speaker had its own power upon the audience. An old man, though perfectly lucid in thought and expression, worn with the labors of the churches as with age, Rev. Hanko goes back to the very beginnings of the PRC and of the *SB*. He reminded us who we are, what we stand for, and to what we are called in 1994.

The report of the secretary of the RFPA, Mr. Tom Bodbyl, is encouraging as regards the position and progress of this Reformed magazine.

—DJE



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# Jehovah's Deep Concern for His People

*O my threshing, and the corn of my floor: that which I have heard of the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel, have I declared unto you.*

Isaiah 21:10.

At the close of the day the prophet stands on the mountaintop of prophecy, looking into the distant future.

What he beholds is so overwhelming, so deeply shocking, that it brings him into great agony. Fear takes hold of him, his heart throbs, he is in pain as a woman in travail.

He sees the kingdom of Judah in captivity in Babylon because of their unfaithfulness to the Lord. The church of God sits at Babel's streams, unable to sing Zion's songs, while the enemy revels in the treasures obtained through her conquests.

Yet he also sees beyond that, for the Medes and Persians arise like a hungry lion to devour Babylon. He hears the shout of the watchman from the watch tower, "Babylon is fallen, is fallen, and all the graven images of her gods hath he broken unto the ground."

All of which causes Isaiah to realize how much the true people of God must suffer, what great agonies they experience before the promised Savior is born.

We are reminded that Babylon in the Scriptures is a type of the anti-Christian world power that always oppresses the people of God. In Revelation 14:8 the cry is repeated, but now in regard to the Antichrist, "Babylon is fallen, is fallen, that great city, because she hath made all nations drink of the wine of her fornication."

The prophet is overwhelmed by the thought that the sovereign Lord, Jehovah, brings all these sufferings upon His cherished possession, yet that He is deeply concerned for them, and even eager to deliver them from all their miseries.

Isaiah hears the Lord cry out, "O my threshing, and the corn of my floor." Then he adds, "That which I have heard of the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel, have I declared unto you."

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The corn of my floor!

The figure is of a farmer who brings his sheaves of grain to the threshing floor, threshes and winnows them until all the grain is separated from the straw and chaff. The straw is then burned, and the grain is gathered into the barn.

We have here a clear picture of election and reprobation. God eternally and sovereignly chooses unto Himself a people to be saved by grace, to dwell with Him in glory, and equally sovereignly determines that the reprobate shall perish in their sins.

Elect and reprobate grow together in the same environment.

Just as the entire stalk of wheat grows in the field under rain and sunshine until the grain is ripe, so also the elect and the reprobate receive the same treatment in the church under the preaching of the Word and the sacraments. The straw and the grain ripen together. Both are threshed, the straw to be separated from the wheat, and the wheat to be preserved.

Reprobation serves election. God says concerning Pharaoh, "Even for this same purpose have I raised thee up, that I might shew my power in thee, and that my name might be declared throughout all the earth" (Rom. 9:17). Likewise in the prophecy of Isaiah the Lord says concerning elect Israel, "Since thou wast precious in my sight, thou hast been honorable, and I have loved thee: therefore I will give men for thee, and people for thy life" (Is. 43:4). After Christ's resurrection the church declares, "For of a truth against thy holy child Jesus, whom thou hast anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, with the gentiles and thy people Israel, were gathered together for to do whatsoever thy hand and thy counsel determined before to be done" (Acts 4:27).

All history revolves around the church. God has eternally chosen unto Himself a certain definite number of elect as members of the body of Jesus Christ. God has also determined the best means and manner whereby His church will be gathered and brought into glory. The whole history of sin and grace re-

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*Rev. Hanko is a minister emeritus in the Protestant Reformed Churches.*



veals the wisdom of God in purifying and preparing His people for glory. The sufferings of this present time work a far more exceeding weight of glory.



"O my threshing!"

The figure of threshing represents a painful process. The grain along with the straw is beaten thoroughly and seemingly relentlessly, and winnowed until the straw and chaff have been separated and nothing but the pure grain remains.

Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, boasts of his triumphs over foreign gods, even over the God of Israel. He has a monument made, an image of the bust of a man on a pedestal which measures sixty cubits high and six cubits wide to be worshiped by all his subjects. The 66 had not yet attained to the 666 of Revelation 13.

Today the world boasts of her well-nigh almighty power. Has she not produced amazing wonders in science, in industry, and in medicine? She boasts of omnipresence. Has she not traveled to the moon and the planets, traversed land and sea, sent her voice by satellite to the ends of the earth? She boasts of omniscience. Anything she imagines she can do. She claims to be God.

She boldly defies all of God's laws. Her dress, her sculptures, her paintings, her music, all declare her rebellious spirit. Her deliberate defense of killing the unborn, of homosexuals, of sexual license even among teenagers, and her despising of holy marriage shows her hatred against the living God. Her measure of iniquity is rapidly filling up.

Jesus warns of false prophets who deceive many, of heresies, of betrayals, and of a tribulation such as the world has not known. Churches closed, saints imprisoned, no business operation or food on the table without the mark of the beast. Jesus urges us to flee in those days where we can find refuge. If the days were not shortened, no flesh would be saved. We think of Daniel

in the lions' den, and of his three friends in the fiery furnace.

In spite of their weaknesses and sins, God loves His church with an eternal love in Christ Jesus. He sees no sin in Israel and no transgression in Jacob, because He has placed His chosen under the blood of His dear Son, the perfect ransom for all their sins.

God's judgments upon the earth are shared by the church, but only as chastening. He is merciful unto His chosen possession. He is slow to anger, plenteous in compassion. He will not forever chide, nor will He keep His anger forever.

Our God is the living God, long suffering, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.

Isaiah declares of the Israel of God, "In all their affliction he was afflicted, and the angel of his presence saved them: in his love and in his pity he redeemed them, and he bare them, and carried them all the days of old" (Is. 6:9).

A parent must often cause his child to suffer, not because he takes pleasure in it, but because he loves him. A wound must be treated, a sliver must be extracted from under the thumbnail, or whatever. The child cries and begs him to stop, yet the parent knows how necessary it is for the welfare of the child to continue to hurt him. Or the child may need chastening, which pains the parents as much, if not more, than the child.

Our merciful Father sends sufferings, severe sufferings that cause us to ask: "Has God forgotten to be kind? Will He withhold His mercies forever?" Yet He assures us, "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee." His mercies are renewed every morning, for He turns all things to our salvation.

The Lord of hosts has spoken it.

The prophet Isaiah is deeply moved. It is all too amazing, too wonderful for him to fathom its riches. A powerful nation will take God's heritage into captivity, and another powerful nation will deliver

and restore her to her own land. The Lord is just in His dealings with His people, yet also amazingly merciful. And all this because of Jehovah's love, compassion, and deep concern for His chosen. This is so true, that Isaiah must assure us, "That which I have heard from the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel, I have declared unto you."

The Lord of hosts is sovereign Lord over all. The myriads of angels worship Him, even as they are attentive to His word. He holds the billions upon billions of stars in His hand and directs their courses through the heavens. The beasts of the field cry to Him for food, while the lowly flower is in His care.

He is also sovereign Lord over the kings and rulers of the earth. The proud Nebuchadnezzar was made like a beast of the field. The handwriting on the wall warned Belshazzar that his kingdom would be taken from him. God appoints King Cyrus and moves him to restore His people to their own land. The prophecy of Isaiah is fulfilled: "Babylon is fallen, is fallen, and all the images of her gods hath he broken to the ground."

The Lord of hosts is the Almighty of Israel. All the trials and afflictions that come upon us in this present time are sent from the hand of the Almighty to sanctify and to bless us in preparation for our place in His glorious kingdom.

Nations may rage, and peoples may imagine vain things, but God has set His Son upon His holy mountain. Christ, the mighty Conqueror over Satan, sin, hell, death, and the grave, is exalted to the highest heavens with a Name above all names. All power is entrusted to Him to carry out the counsel of our God.

Our soon coming Lord will appear with the clouds. He is coming with ten thousands of His angels and all His saints to judge the nations with a righteous judgment for the salvation of His church.

The world powers of this day already stand condemned by the Word of the Lord that stands secure,



"Babylon is fallen, is fallen, that great city, because she hath made all nations drink of the wine of her fornication."

"Be patient therefore, brethren, unto the coming of the Lord.... Stablish your hearts; for the coming of the Lord draweth nigh" (James 5:7, 8).

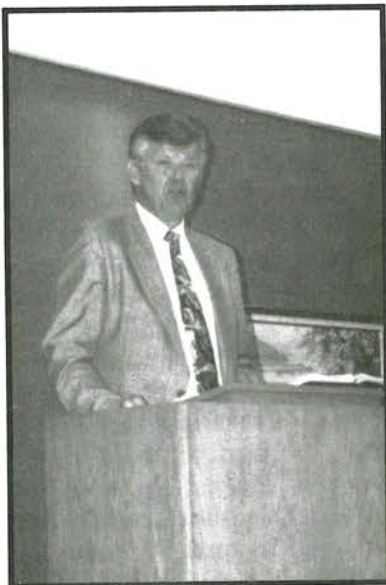
The Bride of Christ sighs, "Come, Lord Jesus; yea, come quickly." Amen. □

## Editorial

# Experiential Preparation for the Ministry

*(This is the text of the speech given to faculty and students of the Protestant Reformed Seminary on the occasion of registration at the beginning of the 1994/1995 school-year.)*

The work of the seminary that we take up again this morning is preliminary and basic to the call to the ministry of the gospel. You young men who study for the ministry are



*Prof. Engelsma addresses ...*

not yet called. You believe yourselves to have the inward aspect of the call. But God has not yet called you by His church, so that you are commissioned officially to bring His Word to His people. God has not

yet said to you what He said to Isaiah the prophet in verse 9: "Go, and tell this people."

A certain preparation is necessary for the call and the task that belongs to it. This is the place and purpose of our seminary.

The question is: "What is this preparation?" More specifically, the question is: "Is the preparation in the Protestant Reformed Seminary only academic and intellectual, or is it also spiritual and experiential?" The charge, or fear, today is that all Reformed seminaries give only academic and intellectual preparation. If this is true, it is a devastating indictment of the seminaries. There is reason for this charge, or fear, in existing seminaries and their graduates. We may acknowledge that the charge points to a real danger also for our seminary.

Let us guard against this threat, and be reminded of the necessity of a spiritual, experiential preparation

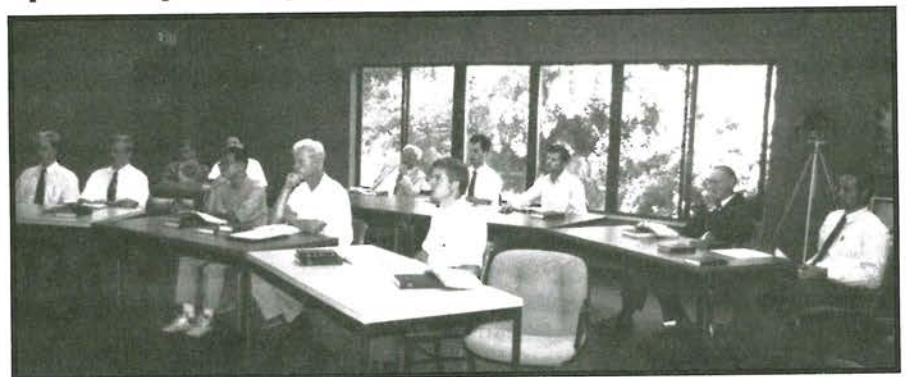
for the ministry, as well as an academic, intellectual preparation, by taking heed to the Word of God in Isaiah 6:5-7.

Then said I, Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips: for mine eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts.

Then flew one of the seraphims unto me, having a live coal in his hand, which he had taken with the tongs from off the altar;

And he laid it upon my mouth, and said, Lo, this hath touched thy lips; and thine iniquity is taken away, and thy sin purged.

The passage is the account of the preparation of the prophet for the LORD's call of him to his office and for the work that belongs to this office. It is the account of a necessary preparation for the call and the office. The chapter describes the call



*... faculty and student body.*



of Isaiah to the prophetic office, the original call that lay behind his entire prophetic ministry. There is some question about this, since this account of the call is given after the record of some of the prophet's labors in chapters 1-5, but mistakenly. Verses 8, 9 leave no doubt that this is the original and basic call to the prophetic office that preceded also the labors recorded in chapters 1-5: "Whom shall I send, and who will go for us? Then said I, Here am I; send me. And he said, Go." The postponing of the account of the original call, with which Isaiah's ministry began, to chapter 6 can be satisfactorily explained.

The call is immediately followed by the prophet's mandate in verses 9b, 10: "Make the heart of this people fat." The divine purpose with the mandate is given in verses 11-13: "Until the cities be wasted without inhabitant . . . but yet in it shall be a tenth."

Preceding call and mandate is the prophet's vision of the thrice-holy LORD of hosts in verses 1-4.

In this description of the vision of the LORD and of the call of the prophet occur the prophet's outburst, "Woe is me!" and the seraph's putting the live coal to the prophet's lips. The outburst expresses the personal misery of the prophet; the seraph's placing of a live coal to his lips is the deliverance of the prophet from his misery.

The description of the prophet's personal misery and salvation refers to an aspect of the LORD's preparation of him for the task to which he will at once be called. It is commonly recognized that there is a relationship between Isaiah's vision of the LORD and his call by the LORD in that the holiness of Jehovah explains the message and mandate of the prophet. But there is also this relationship between the vision of the LORD and the call of the prophet, that the vision of the LORD prepares the prophet for his call, prepares him, obviously, spiritually and experientially. This preparation is necessary for the prophetic office in every age.

The Reformed minister must have been prepared in this way also.

This necessary preparation of the minister consists of the experience of forgiveness in the way of a heartfelt knowledge of one's misery as a foul sinner.

The prophet Isaiah was forgiven. This took place by the symbolical act and the word of the seraph of the LORD God. Although the cleansing of sanctification is implied, the act of putting the coal to the prophet's lips and the accompanying word represent justification. Especially the last part of the angel's word makes this clear: "Thy sin is purged." The Hebrew word translated "purged" refers to the covering of sin's guilt in the act of pardon. That forgiveness is applied specifically to the lips of the prophet, just as in verse 5 his wickedness is concentrated in his lips, is indicative of the fact that the purpose of God with His people is that they confess and praise Him with the mouth. Their great sin, therefore, is a sin of the lips.

Forgiveness was personal and experiential. It was a living spiritual reality in the prophet's consciousness. Forgiveness was seared there. It could never be forgotten.

God's forgiveness of the prophet was the application to him of the sacrifice of the Lamb of God in the death of Jesus Christ. This comes out in the symbolic act: a coal from the altar was laid on his mouth.

The altar with its fire typified the offering of the propitiatory sacrifice.

The prophet knew the cross! He knew the cross as his own redemption! It was not abstract to him, or only academic. The cross of Christ was for him personally, and it was his life.

This belongs to your preparation for the ministry. You hope to preach to others the cross and its pardon. You must speak what you yourselves believe.

The preparation that consisted of forgiveness was accomplished in

the way of Isaiah's profound conviction of his misery of sin: "Woe is me!" etc. (v.5).

This was personal. There was no isolation of himself from the people to whom he ministered. He, as well as the people, was a man of uncleanness, and the filth of the people aggravated his own unworthiness.

This was experiential. Confession of sin was the lament of a broken heart. It was the Old Testament equivalent of the apostle's groan in Romans 7: "O, wretched man that I am."

The prophet knew his own depravity. This depravity rendered him guilty and shameful in the judgment of the LORD. It was guilt, for it meant "woe," and the woe was nothing less than being "undone." As guilty, he was very really exposed to the wrathful punishment of the LORD. This was his "woe." Apart from the grace of pardon, the end was that he was "undone," that is, perished.

Without this living, shattering knowledge of one's own guilt before God, there is no forgiveness.

If those who would proclaim the gospel must know forgiveness, it is also necessary that they know their misery, that they know experientially this "woe is me!"

But the knowledge of misery depends squarely upon the vision of the LORD God: "for mine eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts" (v. 5). Isaiah saw Jehovah God in His glory. He saw the triune God. This is the significance, in part, of the "trisagion": "Holy, holy, holy" (v. 3). This is indicated by the plural in verse 8: "Who will go for us?"

He saw the triune God as God of holiness. This holiness was not only His separation from impurity, but also His difference from all created reality, His transcendence, His exaltedness, His Godness. Awe at the holiness of God marked all of Isaiah's ministry. More than any

Shall we  
preach Him,  
and never  
have seen  
Him our-  
selves?



other prophet, Isaiah called God "the Holy One." Delitzsch says that this was Isaiah's "prophetic signature."

Isaiah's was the vision of Jehovah God triune as the Holy One in Christ. Isaiah saw Christ! We are told this explicitly in John 12:41: "These things said Esaias when he saw his (Jesus') glory, and spake of him (Jesus)." No man ever sees the naked substance of the Godhead. But Christ is the revelation of God as triune and holy; Jesus Christ is the glory of God.

We ministers of the Word must have seen, and indeed constantly see, Christ. Shall we preach Him, and

never have seen Him ourselves? We see Him in the gospel, by the Spirit, but in a personal, spiritual, experiential manner: the way of faith.

Reformed pastors and teachers must have this knowledge of God in Christ with its effect of repentance leading to forgiveness. It is not yet the call, but it is basic to the call. Since the seminary prepares men for the pastorate, this spiritual, experiential preparation is an aspect of the task of the seminary. The work of the seminary is not only the academic and the intellectual. With the academic and the intellectual, the work of the Reformed seminary is

spiritual and experiential. The seminary accomplishes this work, in the power of the Spirit, by teaching the doctrine of the triune, holy God as made known in Jesus Christ according to the Holy Scriptures. It teaches this doctrine as the doctrine that the professors and seminarians themselves believe and by which they themselves have been saved. Then, and only then, is it taught as a doctrine that must be delivered to the people of God in the congregations.

God grant that in school this year, our eyes see the King, Jehovah of hosts in Jesus Christ. □

— DJE

## Letters

### The Apocrypha on Doctors

"She suffered Many Things of Many Physicians" (*Standard Bearer*, Sept. 1, 1994) dealt with one of my favorite Scripture passages from Mark 5:21-34. Perhaps the saddest commentary in verse 25 is the observation that she "had spent all that she had, and was nothing bettered, but rather grew worse." How terrible of those doctors to take this poor woman's money without truly healing her. It is certainly quite possible that some of those physicians were "faith" healers who claimed to her that they could produce a miraculous healing when they really did not possess that power.

I would, however, like to point out that Ecclesiasticus 38:1-15 begins by saying, "Honor a physician with the honor due unto him for the uses which ye may have of him: for the Lord hath created him," and goes on to state (v. 4), "The Lord hath created medicines out of the earth; and he that is wise will not abhor them." The books of the Apocrypha were originally included in the 1611 edition of the King James Version of the Bible, and perhaps if those books had remained in published versions, it would not have been so easy for some faith-healers to discount the possibility that healing *could* come from physicians as

well as by and through faith. The Apocrypha was recognized by certain Protestant groups as educational and uplifting. These books were not only included in the 1611 edition of the Authorized King James Version, but also in Martin Luther's German Version and in most other translations in use at the time of the Reformation.

*Martyrs Mirror* (p. 284), in dealing with the Confessions of the Waldenses, makes this observation about the Apocrypha: "Then follow the books of the Apocrypha, which were not received by the Hebrews; hence, we read them, as Jerome says, in the preface to the proverbs, for the edification of the people, but not for the purpose of confirming church doctrines."

Perhaps the most important element of the passage occurs in verse 34, when Jesus addresses the woman as *daughter*. Jairus had come to Jesus because Jairus, a finite, mortal man was genuinely concerned about his one and only daughter. But Jesus, the Master, was deeply and genuinely concerned about *all* the daughters of God. II Corinthians 6:17, 18, quoting Isaiah 52:11 and Jeremiah 31:9, says of God, "And will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty."

Perhaps the most overlooked element of healing is the need of the afflicted to be able to visualize themselves as the favorite son or daughter of the Savior — for in Jesus' eyes, we all are favorites! Truly, Paul observed (Gal. 4:6), "And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father. Wherefore thou art no more a servant, but a son; and if a son, then an heir of God through Christ." In the depths of Gethsemane, Christ Himself cried, "Abba, Father, all things are possible unto thee: take away this cup from me: nevertheless not what I will, but what thou wilt" (Mark 14:36).

Whether it is a daughter's flow of blood or a beloved son's impending crucifixion, Abba, Father, is deeply and genuinely concerned and is taking a personal interest in all events.

(Dr.) Phyllis Pottorff-Albrecht  
Cenchrea Christian Counseling  
Broomfield, CO

### Response:

Our Reformed churches have this view of the Apocrypha:

We distinguish those sacred books (which have just been named — Ed.) from the apocryphal (which are then named — Ed.) ... All of



which (apocryphal books — Ed.) the Church may read and take instruction from, so far as they agree with the canonical books; but they are far from having such power and efficacy, as that we may from their testimony confirm any point of faith, or of the Christian religion; much less detract from the author-

ity of the other sacred books (Belgic Confession of Faith, Art. 6).

Regarding the heavenly Father's loving care over afflicted men and women, the sons and daughters of II Corinthians 6:17, 18 are believers in Jesus Christ (vv. 14, 15); the sons

of Galatians 4:6 are children of God "by faith in Christ Jesus" (Gal. 3:26); the suffering woman of Mark 5:25-34 had faith in Jesus (v. 34); and Jesus Christ is the eternal, natural Son of God in human flesh (John 1:1-18).

— Ed.

*Feature Article*

*Prof. Herman Hanko*

# Our Church-Governed Seminary\*

## Introduction

Both in Presbyterian and Reformed circles in the last three quarters of this century the tendency has been to establish independent seminaries which are governed by boards of directors who are in some instances answerable to societies of one sort or another, and who are, in other instances, answerable only to themselves. Most seminaries organized within the last seven decades or so are such independent seminaries.

The seminary of the Protestant Reformed Churches has become something of an oddity in this respect.

In the beginning of the history of our Protestant Reformed Churches, now nearly 70 years ago, our fathers established a seminary which was governed by the

churches. This was a conscious and deliberate decision which expressed their considered judgment that a seminary, if it was to be Reformed, had to be under the supervision and direction of the church. This conviction was embodied in the Constitution of the Theological School: "The supervision and administration of the institution belongs to Synod itself"; and in the Constitution of the Theological School Committee: "The Synod itself shall care for all matters that pertain to the proper administration of our theological school." Our seminary was established as and remains a church-governed seminary.

In a way it is understandable that the trend is towards independent seminaries. For one thing, it has often happened in the history of the church that heresy first appeared in the seminaries. There is a certain truth to the saying: "As goes the seminary, so goes the church." But these seminaries have, as often as not, been under the supervision of ecclesiastical bodies; and it is thought, whether rightly or wrongly, that an independent seminary stands a better chance of remaining faithful to the historical faith of the church. Independent seminaries are expres-

sions of disillusionment with denominations and church-controlled seminaries.

In other instances independent seminaries are formed by those who wish to stay within a denomination which they know has departed in significant respects from the historic Christian faith, which departure has involved the seminary as well. They wish to set up a rival seminary, therefore, which can be trusted to train orthodox preachers, perhaps in the hope that the sad apostasy in the denomination of which they are a part can be reversed.

Whatever the reasons, independent seminaries are presently in vogue, and our seminary is something of an exception on the ecclesiastical scene.

This unusual character of our seminary brings us face to face with the question: Were our fathers right in establishing a church-governed seminary? In doing so, was it a mere arbitrary choice with them? Was it a decision made on purely pragmatic grounds? Ought we to follow today's trend and make our own seminary independent? Is this wise? Is this good? More importantly, is this Reformed?

It is the burden of what I have

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

\* This feature article is the text of Prof. Hanko's seminary convocation address.



to say that, if we truly desire to maintain a Reformed seminary, the present status of our school as church-governed is the only option open to us. A Reformed seminary is a church-governed seminary; an independent seminary, free of church control, is wrong, fundamentally wrong, so wrong that it cannot function as an institution for the training of Reformed pastors.

### A Practical Consideration

We are interested tonight in establishing the fact that the *only* way in which a seminary can be truly Reformed is to be church-governed. But before this is demonstrated, it might be well to consider the fact that an independent seminary faces some real practical problems which make it difficult, if not ultimately impossible, to remain a truly Reformed seminary.

An independent seminary is answerable to no ecclesiastical body. This means, first of all, that it has not the support of any ecclesiastical body as far as finances are concerned. It depends for its very existence on a relatively large student body, a popular staff widely known, and the good graces of individuals who are willing to contribute to its support. Our seminary, on the other hand, can function just as well with two or three students as with two or three hundred students. The number makes no significant difference. As long as the seminary serves the purpose for which the church has established it, its existence is guaranteed. An independent seminary must please a varied constituency to continue to function. This could pose, in itself, a significant threat.

More importantly, to separate a seminary from the church is all but to guarantee that it will in time cease to function in the way it ought to function, i.e., to prepare within its walls preachers and pastors for the church of our Lord Jesus Christ.

A church-governed seminary is ecclesiastically related to the churches and derives its strength

and power from the people of God who sit in the pews. God's people want and need pastors and teachers. They have established a seminary for this purpose. They demand of the seminary that the school accomplish this purpose. They want a seminary for no other reason than that pastors and preachers may bring the gospel of salvation to them and their children.

A seminary independent from the churches becomes often times a law unto itself in this respect. It does not hear the incessant cry for ministers of the gospel, for it has cut its ties with the church. And so, without being firmly anchored in the very life of the church, it can, and often does, become a citadel of learning and scholarly research, an institution to produce Ph.D.'s, Th.M.'s, Th.D.'s, and M.Div.'s.

I and my colleagues in the seminary would be the very last people to scorn academic training and to mock degrees. Nevertheless, the church of our Lord Jesus Christ does not want, in the first place, Ph.D.'s; it wants pastors and teachers.

While the two need not necessarily be mutually exclusive, the fact remains that from some independent seminaries over half of the graduates never enter the pastoral ministry. Such a seminary has lost its reason for existence, for a Reformed seminary, in all the tradition of the church, has been a school for the preparation of ministers of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

A seminary loose from ecclesiastical moorings easily becomes wrapped up in studies, the pursuit of academic achievement and scholarship, degree-granting programs, and the churning out of learned professors to teach in colleges and universities. But this is not what seminaries are for. A seminary anchored firmly in the organic and institutional life of the church is a seminary which will be interested in pre-

paring ministers for the gospel ministry, for this is what the people of God insist on. And this is a Reformed seminary.

### What Is a Church-controlled Seminary?

Fundamentally, a Reformed seminary is a church-controlled seminary because such a seminary is demanded by the Scriptures.

It is clear that nowhere in all the Scriptures will one find an exhortation to the church to establish seminaries. That is not the point.

But the Scriptures do state clearly that the training of ministers is part of the ministry of the Word of God, and is, therefore, part of the work of the church as institute. That is, the *training of ministers* itself is part of the official preaching of the gospel. And only the church institute may, according to the command of Christ, the Head of the church, preach the gospel.

I know only too well that even Reformed churches are altogether too slovenly about the proper distinctions of Scripture with regard to the church institute.

<p>The seminary established for the training of ministers must be a function of the church, and therefore under her control.</p>	<p>In spite of the fact that Scripture clearly assigns to the church institute alone the work of preaching (along with the administration of the sacraments and the exercise of discipline) all kinds of ecclesiastical organizations and para-church groups engage in and think they can perform that which belongs rightfully only to the church. Nothing else can, e.g., explain an "independent board of missions."</p>
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However that may be, we may not blur the lines. Only the church is commissioned to preach the gospel. Scripture clearly indicates that the training of ministers belongs to the preaching of the gospel. The seminary established for the training of ministers must be a function of the church, and therefore under her control.



Let us look briefly at the pertinent Scriptures.

The first text to note is Ephesians 4:11, 12: "And he (the ascended Christ) gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ."

The text is speaking of those offices in the church of Christ given by the ascended Lord which belong to the church and are the work of the church. These offices are for the perfecting of the saints, the work of the ministry, and the edifying of the body of Christ.

Among those offices are "pastors and teachers."

The precise meaning of this expression has been disputed. Some have held to the idea that the expression refers to only one office and that those who hold this office are both pastors and teachers. Some, however, have disagreed. They have insisted that the words "pastors and teachers" refer to two distinct offices in the church, the office of pastors and the office of professors of theology, the latter of whom teach in schools established for the training of pastors. This latter interpretation was the interpretation of John Calvin and was followed by so notable an exegete as William Hendrickson. Calvin's distinction has found its way into our Church Order which, in Article 2, speaks of four offices, one of which is professor of theology.

It is not my intention to enter this dispute tonight. What is important for our purposes is the fact that no matter which of the two interpretations is adopted, the text clearly insists that teaching is a part of the official work of the church, an aspect of the work of pastors, that is, of the preaching of the gospel. And that is why this passage has always been referred to in Reformed churches as the basis for the idea that theological instruction is a part of the ministry of the church.

This idea is further proved by

another passage in Scripture, II Timothy 2:2. Paul in writing to Timothy, his spiritual son, is telling him which matters belong to Timothy's work as a faithful pastor: "And the things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also."

Paul is speaking here of the fact that men must be prepared who can be preachers in the church. But the preparation of these men is firmly placed on the shoulders of Timothy. It is part of his work as a pastor and teacher to commit the things he himself has learned to others so that the church may continue to have preachers.

That settles the matter. Let it be clearly understood — if it were not for the fact that I and my colleagues *preach* in the Seminary, none of us would be there. We are called to be preachers. If we were not persuaded by the Scriptures themselves that we are preaching, no power on earth could ever have brought us to the seminary.

It is preaching in a different form; preaching in the form of lectures, discussions, questions and answers, tests and exams; preaching in the form of instruction in Hebrew grammar and church history; but preaching for all that. It is an official function of the church.

No para-church organization may preach. No board or society may preach. The church is given the calling and responsibility to preach. In independent seminaries there is no preaching. And instruction which is not preaching is not preparation for the ministry of the gospel.

An anomaly exists in this respect in our own churches, an anomaly which ought to be corrected. The present set-up in our churches is this: a professor is called by the Synod. If he should accept the call, he becomes an emeritus minister of the congregation he last served, and, as far as his official work is concerned, he is under the direct supervision of that

church. He is also, however, a *member* of a church near the seminary, and his membership is in a different congregation than his ministerial credentials. I am an emeritus minister of Doon Protestant Reformed Church, but a member of Hope Protestant Reformed Church.

This ought to be changed. Not Synod calls a minister; only the local church calls a minister. That minister, called to be a minister in training others for the ministry, ought to be called by a local church. And that church should hold both his ministerial credentials and his membership papers. I ought to be an associate pastor of Hope Protestant Reformed Church, called to serve as professor in the seminary.

It is to be hoped that this strange situation which now exists will be changed by the time our churches call another professor.

The truth of the matter is, however, that in spite of this anomaly our churches have insisted that professors be preachers of the gospel, and that they continue as preachers when their work is shifted from the pastoral ministry to the ministry of preparing pastors and teachers in Seminary. (See Article 5 of "The Constitution of the Theological School.")

### Practical Implications

This principle position has many practical implications.

It has practical implications, first of all, for the churches and for the people of God within the churches.

The seminary belongs to God's people. It is not the seminary of a board of trustees or an executive committee. It is the seminary of the people of God. The building belongs to them, and the professors are their servants sent to minister to the needs of the sheep. The students are their students who have come from their homes, their families, their congregations. The seminary is established by God's people to accomplish the one great and all-important work in which all God's people have a cru-



cial part: providing the church with pastors and teachers.

God's people support the seminary. They support the seminary financially and they support the seminary in their prayers. It is a source of great encouragement to us to discover in the churches an eager interest in the seminary. Wherever the professors go, God's people bombard them with questions about the seminary. This is exactly as it ought to be. The seminary has and must have the spiritual support, the interest, the concern, the trust, the love of God's people.

But God's people must also continue to see to it and to demand of the seminary that it provide them with pastors and teachers, competent to do the work and faithful to the heritage of the truth. God's people ought to visit the seminary, ought to read avidly the annual report of the Theological School Committee sent to Synod, ought to listen carefully to the students when they bring a word of edification in the churches, ought to visit the catechism classes taught by the students. They want to know and need to know whether the seminary is still doing its work well. The seminary is entrusted with the work of providing them and their families with preachers and instructors of their children. Is the seminary doing this? Whatever must be done to maintain a Reformed seminary, God's people must do.

The principles I have set forth have implications for the students. The students are not only attending an institution of higher learning to do post-grad work. They are placing themselves under the official preaching of the Word of Christ. That is, they are sitting at the feet of Christ Himself, who is pleased to instruct them in the calling to which presently He will call them.

It may not always be clear to students that a Hebrew grammar quiz is official preaching, and taking notes in principles of missions is listening to preaching. But such it is. And students must recognize and

accept their instruction as such.

The work of the seminary is the God-ordained way of saving their souls. This does not mean that students do not need the preaching of the Word on the Lord's Day as well. But the means of grace for the salvation of the students *in their work of preparation for preaching* comes to them in the way of their theological instruction in seminary. Paul tells Timothy that through his faithful labors he shall save both himself and those who hear him.

Students are, therefore, in subjection to their professors as to Christ.

This does not preclude discussion, questions, even debate, argumentation and perhaps disagreement in the classroom. But the fact is that students must submit themselves to the authority of their professors, and in such submission, submit to Christ. They must submit to the instruction too which is given them. They must heed the injunction of James which comes to all who put themselves under the preaching: "Let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak" (1:19).

Criticism of their practice preaching, correction of their moral conduct, instruction in the truth — all these the students must receive as from Christ. Questions must not be for purposes of challenging the professors, but for purposes of learning more fully the truth. Debate must be carried on with respect. Attentiveness must characterize classroom conduct.

God is giving them, through this form of preaching, that special grace necessary to be faithful ministers of the gospel.

Finally, these truths have implications for professors.

Professors preach the Word.

It is well that professors remind themselves of this. It is altogether too common in today's seminaries that professors call the attention of the students to the views of innumerable theologians, but never express their own opinion on these theories because, so it is said, the

student must make up his own mind. It is like a preacher who reads on the pulpit from eleven different commentaries with eleven different interpretations, and then tells the people to take the interpretation they like.

Professors preach. They say: "Thus saith the Lord." They say: "This is the truth, the very truth of God." It is not a matter of "take it or leave it." Believe this and be saved; reject this and only eternal desolation awaits you.

They preach in Homiletics, in Hermeneutics, in Exegesis, In History of Dogma. Because they preach, their instruction must not be only academic, but it must be geared to the spiritual nurture of the students. It must be practical as well as academic. It must be spiritual in addition to intellectual. It must be geared to prepare men of God for the ministry who are truly men of God, men of integrity, men of spiritual courage, men of personal piety and devotion to God and His cause, men of prayer.

And finally, professors must themselves profit from their own instruction and studies. They must profit spiritually.

They must, of course, profit intellectually. They must continue to study, to read, to grow, to advance in learning and in the understanding of God's Word. It will not do for a professor to do what some ministers do — turn over the pile every ten years or so. They must not teach from notes yellow with age, never changed, never developed, never with anything new and fresh. They must grow or their students will die.

But Paul speaks also of the fact that such growth must be spiritual. "But I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection; lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a cast-away" (1 Cor. 9:27). What is true of preachers is also true of professors who are, after all, preachers training preachers.

B. B. Warfield, in commenting on this very verse and how it ap-



plies to seminary instruction says: "You can go through the motions of the work, and I shall not say that your work will be in vain — for God is good and who knows by what instruments he may work his will of good for men?" But then he goes on to describe a professor who him-

self derives no spiritual profit from his own teaching: "I starve with hunger treading out the corn, I die of travail while their souls are born." Rather, says Warfield, it should be said of a professor:

O teacher, then I said, thy years,  
Are they not joy? each word that

issueth

From thy lips, doth it return to bless  
Thine own heart manyfold?

A church-governed seminary is  
a genuinely Reformed seminary.

May, by God's grace, our seminary remain a church-governed seminary. □

## Protestant Reformed Seminary

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October 10, 1994

### News from Seminary Hill

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

By this time we are well into the work of the first semester of the new school-year. Classes began at the Protestant Reformed Seminary on August 30. On the evening of September 7, at Hope Church in Walker, Michigan, Professor Hanko gave the convocation address to a large and appreciative audience. His topic was, "Our Church-Governed Seminary."

God has blessed the churches with eleven seminary students. Two are in their fourth (and final) year and will graduate in June, 1995, God willing. Both are doing their internships. One is working in the Doon, Iowa PRC under the supervision of the Doon consistory. The other, interested in missions, is working in Singapore under the supervision of the consistories of the Evangelical Reformed Churches of Singapore (ERCS) and minister-on-loan Rev. Jay Kortering.

There are two third-year students, six second-year students, and one who entered seminary this year.

Nine of the eleven aspire to the ministry in the PRC. One is a member of an Orthodox Presbyterian congregation. Another is a Singaporean training for the ministry in the ERCS.

Eight of the students are engaged in practice-preaching. Monday mornings are devoted to students' sermons and to critique by students and professors.

Punctuating the lecturing and practice-preaching are the sounds of construction. The addition to the seminary building is going up. All of us look forward to the completion of the addition. There will be study-space for the students, offices outside the classrooms for the professors, a good-sized library to house our books, and space for denominational archives and publishing activities.

Synod 1994 decided to raise the money that is still needed for this project (about \$100,000) by collections

in the churches. We commend this cause to our people and, indeed, to all the readers of the *Standard Bearer*. It is particularly gratifying to us that of the approximately \$320,000 already contributed for the addition about \$100,000 was given by friends and supporters outside the PRC.

We desire your prayers on behalf of the work of the seminary, that the churches may have able, diligent, faithful ministers of the Word — Reformed pastors.

Cordially in Christ,

*David J. Engelsma*



Construction begins on seminary library/office expansion.



# An Able and Faithful Ministry

... A further means which the Church is bound to employ for providing an able and faithful ministry is *furnishing a seminary in which the candidates for this office may receive the most appropriate and complete instruction which she has it in her power to give*. In vain are young men of fervent piety, and the best talents, sought after and discovered; and in vain are funds provided for their support, while preparing for the ministry, unless pure and ample fountains of knowledge are opened to them, and unless competent guides are assigned to direct them in drinking at those fountains. This, however, is so plain, so self-evident, that I need not enlarge upon its proof.

But perhaps it may be supposed by some, that there is no good reason why the means of education should be provided by the Church, as such. It may be imagined, that they will as likely be provided, and as well provided, by private instructors, as by public seminaries. But all reason, and all experience, pronounce a different judgment, and assign, as the ground of their decision, such considerations as these.

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*Samuel Miller was one of the founders of Princeton Seminary in 1812. He himself taught at Princeton for 36 years. The article we publish is part of the sermon that Miller preached at the installation of Archibald Alexander as first professor at Princeton in August, 1812. The full sermon has been published by Presbyterian Heritage Publication, P.O. Box 180922, Dallas, TX 75218. The excerpt reprinted here is taken from this publication with permission.*

First, when the Church herself provides a seminary for the instruction of her own candidates for the ministry, she can at all times inspect and regulate the course of their education; can see that it is sound, thorough, and faithful; can direct and control the instructors; can correct such errors, and make such improvements in her plans of instruction, as the counsels of the whole body may discover. Whereas, if all is left to individual discretion, the preparation for the service of the Church may be in the highest degree defective, or ill-judged, not to say unsound, without the Church being able effectually to interpose her correcting hand.

Again, when the Church herself takes the instruction of her candidates into her own hands, she can furnish a more extensive, accurate, and complete course of instruction than can be supposed to be, ordinarily, within the reach of detached individuals. In erecting and endowing a seminary, she can select the *best instructors* out of her whole body. She can give her pupils the benefit of the *whole time*, and the *undivided exertions*, of these instructors. Instead of having all the branches of knowledge, to which the theological student applies himself, taught by a single master, she can *divide* the task of instruction among several competent teachers, in such a manner as to admit of each doing full justice both to his pupils and himself. She can form one ample *library*, by which a given number of students may be much better accommodated, when collected together, and having access to it in common, than if the same amount of books were divided into a corresponding number of smaller

libraries. And she can digest, and gradually improve a system of instruction, which shall be the result of combined wisdom, learning, and experience. Whereas those candidates for the sacred office who commit themselves to the care of individual ministers, selected according to the convenience of the caprice of each pupil, must, in many cases, at least, be under the guidance of instructors who have neither the talents, the learning, nor the leisure to do them justice — and who have not even a tolerable collection of books to supply the lack of their own furniture as teachers.

Further, when the Church herself provides the means of instruction for her own ministry (at a public seminary), she will, of course, be furnished with ministers who have enjoyed, in some measure, a *uniform course of education*; who have derived their knowledge from the same masters, and the same approved fountains, and who may, therefore, be expected to agree in their views of evangelical truth and order. There will thus be the most effectual provision made, speaking after the manner of men, for promoting the *unity* and *peace* of the Church. Whereas, if every candidate for the holy ministry is instructed by a different master, each of whom may be supposed to have his peculiarities of expression and opinion (especially about minor points of doctrine and discipline), the harmony of our ecclesiastical judicatories will gradually be impaired; and strife, and perhaps eventually schism, may be expected to arise in our growing and happy Church.

It is important to add, that when the Church provides for educating



a number of candidates for the ministry at the same seminary, these candidates themselves may be expected to be of essential service to each other. Numbers being engaged together in the same studies will naturally excite the principle of emulation. As "iron sharpeneth iron" (Prov. 27:17), so the amicable competition, and daily intercourse of pious students, can scarcely fail of leading to closer and more persevering application; to deeper research; to richer acquirements; and to a more indelible impression of that which is learned, upon their minds, than can be expected to take place in solitary study.

Nor is it by any means unworthy of notice, that when the ministers of a Church are generally trained up at the same seminary, they are naturally led to form *early friendships*, which bind them together to the end of life, and which are productive of that mutual confidence and assistance, which can scarcely fail of shedding a benign influence on their personal enjoyment, and their official comfort and usefulness. These early friendships may also be expected to add another impulse to a sense of duty, in annually drawing ministers from a distance to meet each other in the higher judicatories of the Church; and, which is scarcely less important, to facilitate and promote that mutual consultation respecting plans of research, and new and interesting publications, which is, at once, among the safeguards, as well as pleasures, of theological authorship.

These, brethren, are some of the considerations which call upon every Church to erect, and to support with vigor and efficiency, a theological seminary for the training of her ministry. If she desires to augment the number of her ministers; if she wishes their preparation for the sacred office to be the best in her power to give, and at the least possible expense; if she desires that they may be a holy phalanx, united in the same great views of doctrine and discipline, and adhering with uni-

formity and with cordial affection to her public standards; if she deprecates the melancholy spectacle of a heterogeneous, divided, and distracted ministry; and finally, if she wishes her ministers to be educated under circumstances most favorable to their acting in after life as a band of brethren, united in friendship as well as in sentiment; then let her take measures for training them up under her own eye, and control; under the same teachers; in the same course of study; and under all those advantages of early intercourse, and affectionate competition, which attend a public seminary.

In favor of all this reasoning, the best experience, and the general practice of the Church, in different ages, may be confidently urged. "It has been the way of God," says the pious and learned Dr. Lightfoot, "to instruct his people by a studious and learned ministry, ever since he gave a written word to instruct them in." "Who," he asks, "were the standing ministry of Israel, all the time from the giving of the law, till the captivity in Babylon? Not prophets, or inspired men; for they were but occasional teachers; but the Priests and Levites, who became learned in the law by study (Deut. 33:10; Hos. 4:6; Mal. 2:7). And for this end, they were disposed into forty-eight cities, as so many universities, where they studied the law *together*; and from thence were sent out into the several synagogues to teach the people."

They had also, the same writer informs us, "contributions made for the support of these students, while they studied in the universities, as well as afterwards when they preached in the synagogues." He tells us further, in another place, "that there were among the Jews, authorized individual teachers, of great eminence, who had their *Midrashoth*, or *Divinity Schools*, in which they expounded the law to their scholars or disciples." "Of these Divinity Schools," he adds, "there is very frequent mention made among the Jewish writers,

more especially of the Schools of Hillel and Shammai. Such a Divinity Professor was Gamaliel, at whose feet the great apostle of the Gentiles received his education."

Under the Christian dispensation, the same system, in substance, was adopted and continued. At a very early period, there was a seminary of high reputation established in the city of Alexandria, in which candidates of the holy ministry were trained up together, and under the ablest instructors, both in divine and human learning — a seminary in which Pantænus, Clemens Alexandrinus, Origen, and others, taught with high reputation. Eusebius and Jerome both declare that this seminary had existed, as a nursery of the Church and had enjoyed a succession of able teachers from the time of Mark the evangelist. Writers on Christian antiquities also assure us that there were seminaries of a similar kind very early established at Rome, Cæsarea, Antioch, and other places; and that they were considered as essential to the honor and prosperity of the Church.

At the period of the Reformation, religion and learning revived together. The Reformers were not less eminent for their erudition, than for their piety and zeal. They contended earnestly for an enlightened, as well as a faithful ministry; and, accordingly, almost all the Protestant Churches, when they found themselves in a situation to admit of the exertion, founded theological seminaries, as nurseries for their ministry. This was the case in Geneva, in Scotland, in Holland, in Germany, and, with very little exception, throughout Reformed Christendom. And the *history* of these seminaries, while it certainly demonstrates that such establishments are capable of being perverted, demonstrates with equal evidence that they have been made, and might always, with the divine blessing on a faithful administration, be rendered extensively useful. □



# Our Heritage and the *Standard Bearer*

## Address to RFP A Annual Meeting

This is an important occasion, since tonight we celebrate the 70th anniversary of the *Standard Bearer*. On October 1, 1924 the first issue of the *Standard Bearer* appeared in our homes. At that time it was predicted that the magazine would have a speedy death. Maybe it would last five years, at the most ten. Later it was said that it would die out with our churches when Rev. Hoeksema passed away. Today the *Standard Bearer* is still coming to our homes and has a wider distribution than ever before.

We can certainly thank God for that. We can also be thankful for the faithful writers who in our early history contributed so much time and effort to instruct us through its pages. Rev. Herman Hoeksema and Rev. George Ophoff burned a lot of midnight oil to get the *Standard Bearer* to come out on time, and have left us a heritage of invaluable material.

If you were to ask, what is the distinctive truth that distinguishes the Protestant Reformed Churches from other denominations and gives her the right of existence, we would answer, the truth of God's covenant.

We should understand that at the beginning of our history there was no agreement as to the truth of God's covenant. When I was made

candidate for the ministry I was advised by a certain Mr. Elhart of our Southwest Church not to preach on the covenant for a long time. "For," said he, "there are about as many covenant views as there are theologians." That was a bit of an exaggeration, but the point was well made.

There were two outstanding views. The one was of Dr. Abraham Kuiper, who spoke of the covenant as a contract between two parties opposing a third. And he made the basis for infant baptism his presupposed regeneration. There was also the view of Rev. Heyns, who spoke of the promise that is given conditionally to every baptized child. He taught a certain baptismal grace, whereby the child was placed in a sort of neutral position, whereby he could choose to be saved or could become a covenant breaker. This view is similar to that maintained by Dr. Schilder.

Already in the very first issue of the *Standard Bearer* Rev. Hoeksema described the covenant as a relationship of friendship between God and His people in Christ. This view he developed throughout the years, as would be evident to anyone who might read the back issues of the *Standard Bearer*.

This important truth, which we all dearly cherish, has been developed particularly along the lines of God's sovereignty, the antithesis, and its particular, unconditional character.

On that I wish to broaden out a bit this evening.

As we all know, Rev. Hoeksema was strongly theocentric in his thinking and in his writing. I recall the first radio sermon that he delivered, in which he spoke on the subject, "God is." In the second he spoke on the subject, "God is God," and in the third, "God is a covenant God."

He made it a practice always to begin with God. If he was speaking on the subject of love, he would say, "God is love! God loves Himself as the one and only good. He loves His people in Christ, and spreads His love abroad in their hearts, that they may love Him and declare His praises." When he spoke of truth he would stress that "God is truth," and that God reveals His truth in Jesus Christ "who is the way, the truth, and the life." There is no love, no truth apart from God, as we learn from the infallible Scriptures.

Thus when he spoke of God's covenant he always stressed that God is the covenant God, who lives His own glorious and blessed life of intimate fellowship within Himself as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. The three persons of the Trinity think as one, speak as one, and work as one, for all God's works are carried out from the Father, through the Son, and in the Holy Spirit. God is ever blessed in Himself and has no need of men's hands to be worshiped by them.

The triune God wills to reveal Himself in His Son, in Christ Jesus. Therefore Christ is the firstborn of all creatures, the firstborn among many brethren, and the first begotten from the dead, that in him all

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*Rev. Hanko is a minister emeritus in the Protestant Reformed Churches.*



fullness of blessedness should dwell. And Christ is made the head of His church, the Shepherd of the sheep given to Him of the Father.

Moreover, God has willed to reveal the fullness of His glory on the dark background of sin and death. God wills sin, but only to show forth the glory of His name through the salvation of His people in Christ Jesus.

One cannot help but marvel when he reads Genesis one. "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth." The earth is one of the smallest planets, yet it was created first. On the fourth day God created the sun and the moon and the billions upon billions of stars. But the earth is the center of history.

On the sixth day God created man from the dust of the earth, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life. The psalmist declares, "What is man that thou art mindful of him, or the son of man that thou visitest him?" Yet man was made a little lower than the angels, to be crowned with glory and honor in the day of Jesus Christ, when God would make all things new.

Therefore man was made in the image and likeness of God in true knowledge, righteousness, and holiness, to know God, to love Him and serve Him. In his relation to God as his sovereign friend, Adam was God's friend servant. In his relation to the earthly creation he was king, guardian of paradise. And in his relation to the human race he was our representative head and our first father.

Adam lived in intimate covenant fellowship with God, who met him at the Tree of Life, walked with him and talked with him in intimate communion of life. It was Adam's joy to do God's will.

Sin entered in through the temptation of Satan. But God is faithful. He keeps covenant. He comes to Adam and Eve with the promise of a seed. God says to Satan: "I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between her seed and

thy seed. It shall bruise thy head and thou shalt bruise his heel" (Gen. 3:15).

What an amazing wonder. It was the woman who fell first. Yet it is the woman who is mentioned as being saved by child-bearing. The seed that is promised to the woman is the Christ. Galatians tells us that the seed refers to Christ. Scripture speaks, not of many seeds, but of one, which is Christ. And, as we read later, that includes all those who belong to Christ, the body of Christ, the entire assembly of the elect, to be brought into glory through the cross of Christ.



That brings us to the doctrine of the antithesis, which is hardly understood anymore today. Already in 1924 common grace was thought to serve as a bridge between Jerusalem and Athens, between the church and the world. At that time a paper appeared that was called "Religion and Culture." The church and the world seemed to have so much in common, especially the many blessings of God. The world had developed so far in knowledge that, as one professor expressed it, Socrates in his philosophy had climbed up all the way to heaven. All he lacked was a bit of special grace and he might have been saved. Today the distinction between church and world is virtually obliterated, so that the churches are moving in the direction of post-millennialism.

In describing history, many teach a dualism. History is often described as a battle between God and Satan. Satan made his first attack in Paradise. God put up Abel, but Cain killed him. The world became so wicked that God was forced to send the Flood. After that, the conflict goes on even to Christ, so that Satan crucifies the Christ. And the battle of the ages still continues; but we need not fear, because the ultimate victory will be the Lord's. This whole idea is nothing less than blasphemy

and unworthy of God. The devil is not a power outside of God, but is a creature of God who must serve God's purpose.

Over against that error, we hold that God maintains the antithesis. Already on the first day of creation He created the light and formed the darkness. Light is the combination of all color; darkness is the absence of color.

Soon after, God set up the tree of life in Paradise, and placed over against it the tree of knowledge of good and evil. The tree of life was God's "Yes." The tree of knowledge was God's "No." To eat of the tree of life meant life; to eat of the tree of knowledge meant death.

God spoke of the seed of the woman and the seed of the serpent. Throughout history there is the conflict between Christ and Belial, holiness and unholiness, righteousness and unrighteousness, good and evil, church and world, heaven and hell.

The church is called to fight the battle of faith against all the forces of darkness. For it is exactly through that conflict that she is purified, strengthened, preserved, and prepared for glory. God is for her and nothing can be against her. She is more than conqueror in a world that is doomed for destruction.

This is most beautifully expressed in II Corinthians 6:14-18: "Be ye not unequally yoked with unbelievers; for what fellowship has righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion has light with darkness? and what concord hath Christ with Belial? or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel? and what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? For ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, And I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you,



and will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord almighty."

The Lord casts the wicked far from him. He dwells with the lowly, with those with a broken heart and a contrite spirit, who tremble at His word.

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It was particularly in 1953 that a strong emphasis was placed upon the particularity and unconditionality of God's covenant.

When Rev. DeJong and Rev. Kok were in the Netherlands they told the professors of the Liberated churches that our churches had no official covenant doctrine, and that there was ample room in our churches for the Liberated view of the conditional promise.

This set off a series of articles in the *Standard Bearer* maintaining and defending our covenant view.

Once more, reference was made to the promise to Abraham, "And I will establish my covenant between me and thee and thy seed after thee in their generations as an everlasting covenant, to be a God unto thee and to thy seed after thee" (Gen. 17:7).

Let me remark a moment that this speaks of a unilateral covenant. God says, "My covenant," and, "I will establish my covenant." And

this covenant will be established with Abraham's seed, which is Christ.

The Liberated interpreted that to mean that all those included in the generations are in the covenant, so that all baptized children receive the promise. Moreover, they held that the promise is conditional, depending upon their acceptance later in life.

The promise is to Christ and all those who are included in Christ, as is evident from Galatians 3. Scripture regards the church organically. God tells Abraham that "in Isaac shall thy seed be called." The children of the promise are regarded as the seed. Therefore he is not a Jew who is one outwardly, but he is a Jew who is one inwardly, and circumcision is a matter of the heart. Therefore it is not all Israel that is called Israel, but true, spiritual Israel is the chosen of God. In the New Testament Paul refers to the church as "saints in Christ Jesus." And our Heidelberg Catechism speaks of the holy, catholic church, as "gathered by the Son of God, and chosen unto everlasting life, agreeing in one faith."

God's promise is particular and unconditional. We are saved by grace, and by grace only. All of God, nothing of man. Of Him,

through Him, and unto Him are all things forever and ever. That truth we cherish and defend.

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In conclusion I wish to stress that our early leaders were theocentric in their thinking and writing. They put God first and began with God. We do well to emulate them in that.

Moreover, they left us a heritage that we love and cherish. The truth of God's covenant, which is taught throughout all of the Scriptures, and may well be considered a fundamental truth, appears on virtually every page of the Bible. We are called to preserve it for future generations.

That truth also has a strong appeal to those who still love the truth of the Scriptures. That is evident from the recent conference that was held in Scotland, as well as from much of the response that our *Standard Bearer* receives from time to time.

The *Standard Bearer* has always been our vanguard, our witness to the church-world round about us. Our opposition still comes, not so much from the world, although that is worsening, but from the church-world round about us. To them we must continue to witness of the truth entrusted to us. May we be faithful unto death. □

Annual Report

Mr. Tom Bodbyl

## Secretary's Report to the RFPA — September, 1994

Members and Friends of the RFPA:

As we conclude another year of publishing the *Standard Bearer*, we are reminded of the words of David in Psalm 127, "Except the Lord build the house, they labour in vain that

build it." Yes, truly, we are involved in the building of the spiritual house of our God through the instruction and faithful witness of the *Standard Bearer*. It has been our distinct and great privilege to testify of our cov-

Mr. Bodbyl is secretary of the Board of the RFPA.



enant-keeping God and His sovereign work in salvation. We give thanks that God has been pleased to use the *Standard Bearer* in this work. Unto that end, we pray that God will continue to use our editor-in-chief and the many contributing editors. The board expresses our deep appreciation to Prof. Engelsma for his willingness to serve as editor-in-chief and to Don and Judi Doezeema, our managing editor and business manager and assistant business manager, for the excellent work that they do in bringing the *Standard Bearer* to publication.

The entire magazine is prepared for publishing and distribution in the seminary building. The fact that the editor-in-chief and the business managers are employees also of the seminary make the arrangement a natural one — advantageous, really, to both parties. The RFP Board nevertheless appreciates very much the willingness of the Theological School Committee to permit this use of the seminary facilities, and for further cooperation during this past year in the joint purchase of a large-screen monitor for the office computer, and for sharing the cost involved in acquiring an automatic mailing machine and postage meter. We look forward to a continued cordial and mutually beneficial relationship in the future.

In addition to the large-screen monitor, we have purchased new software to help in the area of accounting. With the purchase of the automatic postage mailing machine, we have come from the age of "lick-em and stick-em" to being on the cutting edge. The time saved will be used in more important ways by our very busy manager.

The *SB* continues to experience solid financial support from the subscribers as well as through the gifts of individuals and the churches. The individual gifts and church collections account for approximately 60% of our annual revenue. The board takes this opportunity to thank all those who have supported this publication with their gifts.

In the hope of adding new subscribers, the board has been busy promoting the *SB* again in this past year through various means. In addition to advertising in *World* magazine, we have tried something new by purchasing the services of *Tri-Media*, which sends product "card-decks" to thousands of addresses, targeting specific categories of people or institutions. We contracted with *Tri-Media* to include a card advertising the *SB* in a deck sent to 100,000 different pastors throughout the country. So far, over 300 pastors have asked for a free sample copy, and, of those, 100 have asked for a free trial subscription.

In working to gain new readers of our magazine, the RFP Board noted with dismay that approximately 350 families in the PRC were not subscribers to the *SB*. Some promotion within our own denomination of churches seemed therefore to be in order. We decided to send six issues free of charge to each of the 350 P.R. non-subscribers, in the hope that after several months of enjoying regular reading of the *SB*, some of the 350 will be motivated to become regular subscribers to it. In the cover letter that was sent with the first of the six free copies, we stated our objective thus: "We believe that our people should be a reading people, and that a good part of their reading should be the kind of material found in our *Standard Bearer* — material that helps a Reformed believer grow in the Reformed faith, keeps him informed about what is happening in the ecclesiastical world, gives him biblical direction in all aspects of the Christian life, and directs his attention (by book reviews) to some of the excellent Reformed literature available today." It is certainly the desire of the board that many, if not all, will become lifelong subscribers to the *SB*.

The following quotes are from letters that we received and are an encouragement to the board to continue in our pursuit of adding new subscribers to the *Standard Bearer*.

"I just wanted to tell you how much I missed the *Standard Bearer* while you were on vacation. When the August issue did arrive I devoured it. I can honestly say that it was worth the wait." Another one was from a pastor in Maryland. "I am thinking of using these articles for a small men's fellowship we have each Sunday morning consisting of a group of eight men."

If anyone has suggestions on how to add to the readership of our magazine, please contact the business manager.

The number of subscribers to the *SB* stands at 2,587 as of July 1, 1994. This is an increase of 126 over last July 1st. Of our total subscribers, 36 are students in college, 266 are in foreign lands, and almost half are not Protestant Reformed. It might be interesting to note that over the last 10 years our subscriptions have increased by slightly over 1,000, an average of about 100 per year.

The publishing of the *Standard Bearer* continues to be a work of love for the board and it is our prayer that God will continue to use this publication to the glory of His name. □

#### NOTICE

The seminary has appreciated very much the response to its appeal, some time ago, for copies of old *Acts of Synod of the Protestant Reformed Churches*. We have not yet, however, been able to put together a complete set for the Archives room. Nor have we been able to make a complete backup set for the library. Especially hard to come by are the *Acts* of the 40s and the 50s and some of the 60s.

So, once more, we ask that any of our readers who have copies of the older *Acts*, and are willing to donate them for denominational use, please remember the need for them at the seminary. Our address:

4949 Ivanrest Ave.  
Grandville, MI 49418



## ■ Irenic Debate

Several months ago (May 15, 1994 issue) we commented on a document drafted by Richard John Newhaus (a Roman Catholic priest) and Charles Colson. The title of the document is "Evangelicals and Catholics Together: The Christian Mission in the Third Millennium." It was signed by a good number of prominent Evangelicals (Richard Mouw, James I. Packer, *et. al.*). This document calls upon Roman Catholics and evangelicals to accept each other as Christians and to stop "aggressive proselytizing of each other's flocks." The document recognizes the groups' common faith. "We together, evangelicals and Catholics, confess our sins against the unity that Christ intends for all his disciples," the statement says.

Recently a group of evangelicals have composed a document called "Resolutions for Roman Catholic & Evangelical Dialogue." This document lists seven resolutions or statements of evangelical belief which are, "... offered as material for dialogue between Roman Catholics and Evangelicals, following from the recent document, 'Evangelicals and Catholics Together: The Christian Mission in the Third Millennium,' .... We the undersigned offer this response in a spirit of *irenic debate* (emphasis mine, R.D.D.) on issues arising from that important joint statement ... the following statements seek to identify issues of concern to evangelical Protestants that the thrust of the document raises. What follows is intended to encourage further discussion of the possibilities and problems of acting together."

What concerns us is not the statements or resolutions as such. As a matter of fact they are on the whole very strong statements of the major differences between Rome and Protestants, differences which made the 16th century Reformation necessary. What concerns us a great deal is the stated purpose of the group in issuing these resolutions. Is it our calling to dialogue (converse) with Rome? And, is it our calling to dialogue "in a spirit of irenic (peaceful) debate?" While "... the souls of them that were slain for the Word of God, and for the testimony which they held are crying with a loud voice, saying, How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth?" (Revelation 6:9-11), must we have peaceful discussions and debate with Rome on the issues that divide us? Many of those saints (including Guido de Brès, the author of *The Belgic Confession of Faith*) were slain by Rome in the 16th century!

The answer is never! We must call Rome to repentance for her apostasy and the terrible atrocities she committed against those whose only "crime" was the desire to be faithful to the Word of God.

— *Modern Reformation*

## ■ Woman Serving As Pastor

On Sunday, August 28, 1994, Mary-Lee Bouma was "commissioned" to serve as unordained pastor of the Trinity Christian Reformed Church in Mount Pleasant, Michigan. As reported earlier in these columns the CRC's 1994 Synod refused to ratify its 1993 decision to open the offices of minister and elder to women. In 1989, however, the CRC synod allowed women to serve as "adjunct elders," and in 1992 the synod allowed women to "teach, expound the Word of God,

and provide pastoral care under the supervision of the elders" of a local church. While a number of CR congregations have used the 1992 provision to have women seminarians lead worship services, and a few have hired female interns, Trinity CRC in Mount Pleasant is only the second CR congregation to hire a woman as its full-time pastor. The other woman serving as an unordained pastor is Ruth Hofman, who in 1992 began serving First CRC in Toronto, a congregation which has had women elders for years.

Rev. Keith Tanis, coordinator of field education at Calvin Theological Seminary in Grand Rapids, conducted the commissioning service at Mount Pleasant. "It's a good fit for her. She really is an outstanding leader because of her campus ministry background in Inter-Varsity Christian Fellowship," Tanis said. Central Michigan University is located in Mount Pleasant.

Tanis said the commissioning service included laying on of hands but carefully avoided language of an ordination service. Other ministers participating in the service included Mary-Lee's father, Rev. Henry Bouma, and a Lutheran pastor from the area.

The service was attended by a number of female seminarians from Calvin. "It was very encouraging for the women students to see that they could do ministry in the Christian Reformed Church," Tanis said, noting that the 1994 synodical decision not to allow the ordination of women ministers or elders had discouraged a number of women seminarians.

We have just one question in the light of this, "What is the difference between teaching/expounding the Word of God under the supervision of the elders and preaching the Word of God under the supervision of the elders?"

— *Reformed Believers Press Service*

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



## ■ The Synod of the Reformed Churches in Australia

This denomination, consisting mostly of post World War II immigrants from the Netherlands, is divided over three major issues. The first of these issues came by way of an overture asking the RCA to terminate its membership in the Reformed Ecumenical Council. One of the two men who represented the RCA at the last meeting of the Reformed Ecumenical Council in Athens, Greece urged the synod to adopt the overture and thus terminate its membership in the Council. Several denominations (some of whom sent fraternal delegates to the RCA synod) have recently with-

drawn from the Reformed Ecumenical Council because of the latter's inability or unwillingness to exercise discipline over one of the member denominations, the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands. The Dutch church, among other things, openly tolerates homosexuals even among its officebearers. The synod, however, after an impassioned plea for continued involvement in the Council by Professor Henk deWaard, decided by a substantial majority to continue membership in the Reformed Ecumenical Council.

The Australian Church is also divided over the issue of women in office. The synod affirmed the male headship principle as recommended to Synod of 1991 and established a study committee to examine the ex-

egetical basis for women to serve in the office of deacon.

There were several appeals against the 1991 synod's decision on the "Word and Spirit" issue. In 1991 the synod took a decision which in effect left the door open to new revelations/prophecies. The appeals urged the synod to affirm the clear testimony of the *Westminster Confession of Faith*, viz., "those former ways of God's revealing His will unto His people have now ceased" (Chapter 1, Section 1). The synod did not adopt the appeals. These issues are likely to continue to trouble the RCA. □

— *Christian Observer*  
— *Reformed Ecumenical Council*  
*News Exchange*

*Taking Heed to the Doctrine*

*Rev. Bernard Woudenberg*

# When the Knitting Stopped

*Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others.*

Philippians 2:4

For some time now we have been dealing with the relationship between the Protestant Reformed Churches in America and the Liberated (*Vrijgemaakt*) Reformed Churches in the Netherlands. I have enjoyed doing this since it touches on the life and development of that part of church history in the middle of which I was privileged to live as a maturing child and young man; and my sense is that what happened during that time was important, not just for the Protestant Reformed

Churches as such, but as a reflection of certain dimensions of spiritual practice and doctrine which touch on the essence of what Christianity is about. My regret is that so little attention has been given it since that time; and it would appear that there are others who feel the same, if I can judge from the rather frequent expressions of appreciation I have received from those who have followed what I have written.

In all of this, however, one thing has surprised me, the absence of comment from those who might be expected to take exception to at least some of what I have said — members of the Liberated Churches, and those who followed Rev. DeWolf in 1953 — until, that is, just recently. A short while ago I received a very kind letter from a member of the Liberated Churches in the Netherlands who has been following my articles, and disagrees with certain

aspects of my presentation. He did ask that I not publish his letter inasmuch as he fears his limitations in the English language might have led him either to misunderstand what I wrote, or to express himself inadequately. It is a request I cannot but honor (although he does do quite well); but there are at least a few points he makes which do warrant consideration.

He expresses regret that since 1951 the Liberated Reformed and Protestant Reformed churches have never been able to work together again; and that is a regret we certainly share, as did Rev. Hoeksema in his rueful answer to Dr. Schilder's final and rather curt editorial to us, "*De kous is af*," or "The stocking is finished." Hoeksema concluded his response with these words, "I wish to emphasize once more that the stocking is not finished. And if Dr. Schilder feels that because of the

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*Rev. Woudenberg is pastor of the Protestant Reformed Church of Kalamazoo, Michigan.*



stand of our churches as revealed in the Declaration of Principles he does not want to unravel the tangle and start knitting anew, it suits me. Nevertheless, I want to state that in that case I am disappointed in him, and for the rest say, 'Vade, Amice Schilder'." Deep in his heart he felt that as Christians we ought to be able to pick up and start over again, even while with his mind he knew it would not be. Our differences were simply too great, and went too deep. The knitting had indeed become too tangled to go on: or rather, one might say, it was too tangled from the start ever to have been properly begun. Let me try to explain.

Prior to that, throughout the decade of the 40s, the Protestant Reformed Churches, and Rev. Hoeksema particularly, had put a great deal of effort into trying to forge a working relationship with Dr. Schilder first, and then with the Liberated Reformed Churches in whose birth Dr. Schilder played such a prominent part; but all that had come out of it was the troubled sense that it would not be done. There were differences between us in mentality and spiritual perspective which stood in the way; and I fear still do today, as I believe this letter from our friend, as kindly drafted as it is, demonstrates.

One of the first points at which this comes out is in his questioning of my attempt to show that the break between our two churches had for all practical purposes been there well before the Declaration of Principles was ever penned. As carefully as I tried to bring this out — for I know it is a bone of contention — he cannot seem to grasp the fact that the Declaration of Principles was not a confessional statement to which those who joined our churches had to subscribe, but a simple setting forth or declaration for those with whom we were working as to the doctrinal convictions which live within our denomination, and which should be understood and respected by anyone seeking to live and work

within our midst. We simply did not want them to think we were different from what we are. But this is apparently something which the Liberated mind could not, and still today cannot, seem to grasp; and it cuts across the whole spectrum of religious perspective and Reformed thought. It begins actually, as we have tried to show in recent articles, with a variation in our concept of logic itself. It involves a difference of viewpoint — as our friend's letter also brings out — concerning the nature of the true church, and its identity. It relates to one's perspective as to the place which children have in the covenant of God. And finally, when everything is said and done, it comes down to what finally proved to be the primary point of contention between us, the question of conditionality in the covenant of grace. These were, and are, important issues (each of which we hope to examine as time goes on); and because of them it had proved impossible for us to work together — to knit a common stocking, if you will — with the kind of love and understanding such a mutual effort requires. The love and understanding were not there; and accordingly our knitting had not as much as begun.

But let us get back to where it started, that sad history through which the yarn became tangled; and for this there is perhaps no better source than the long series of editorials which Rev. Hoeksema wrote concerning Dr. Schilder and the Liberated Churches, particularly after the end of the war (a series I wish could be reprinted for all to read), even while bearing in mind from whence the Protestant Reformed Churches had come.

We, after all, having originated out of the controversy over common grace, had gone on also to develop a positive and consistently Reformed theology of grace, an effort which had brought us to what we believed to be a new and fresh approach to the doctrine of the covenant. To us it was meaningful and gratifying,

avoiding many of the problems over which those in the Netherlands were being torn apart; and it troubled us that no one else seemed to care.

Then in 1939 Dr. Schilder came to our shores. Not only did he stop to meet us, but by the time he left for home we felt that we had gained a friend. Having warmed to the graciousness of his personality, we felt sure that at last there was a major Reformed theologian who would give our doctrinal efforts serious consideration, which in his capacity as editor of *De Reformatie* (perhaps the most respected Reformed periodical of that day) he was quite able to do. But it was not to be; the Second World War intervened.

All through that war we waited and prayed, while hanging on every bit of news that filtered across the sea in the hope that the Lord would spare the doctor, hated as he was by the German forces under whose dominion he lived. And the shock came when we heard that his greatest enemies had proved to be not the Germans, but those of his own church. They had actually used the cover of the war, when he was in hiding, to deprive him of his office as professor, and his place in the Reformed Churches to which he had given his life, all without an opportunity for open discussion or for him to defend himself. He had been forced, together with his friends, to leave and form a new denomination of their own. It was so reminiscent of what we had been through in our past that immediately there sprang forth for them a deep bond of sympathy and love.

And then the war was over. Details of what had happened came through, each of which was reported and analyzed in the pages of the *Standard Bearer* and among the people in their homes (I remember well the Sunday afternoon conversations about it all, between my parents and their friends). Those were days in which people cared, studied, and struggled to understand what was happening to the churches, together with the doctrinal causes



for it all. But there was a disturbing element as well: the covenant view defended by our new Liberated friends showed closer affinity to that of the Christian Reformed than to our own — with one exception, they openly professed to reject common grace. And that was our hope. We wanted to believe that somewhere under the tangled mix of theological elements being disputed, there would be found a common thread which would draw us together as one. At least for that we longed and, as soon as open communications began again, listened with straining ears.

We waited, then asked, and finally pleaded. The Liberated knew of our sympathies, that was beyond question; but would they please consider the problems we faced in the theology they expounded, and give some consideration to what we held instead? Some said they would — although by no means the men of greatest ability and prominence. But that did not matter; this was something in which all should be free to have a place. So when a few began to write, Hoeksema eagerly took what they produced, translated it, and published both the English and the Dutch so that our people could follow it through as the discussion developed, only to find these articles to cease to appear before the points of real problem were ever met. Still we were not being taken seriously.

In fact, in that respect even the long awaited visit of Dr. Schilder was a disappointment. In many ways it was a wonderful time. His ingratiating personality warmed the hearts of our people once again; and the brilliance of his lectures thrilled them to the point that they were spoken of for years. But still things were not right. To begin with, of course, Rev. Hoeksema had been laid low by a massive stroke, and could take but a minor part — a providence which we must to this day accept. But even more there was the fact, which only Rev. Ophoff pointed out at the last conference which was held, that the real points

of difference between us were not being talked about.

It was almost, therefore, with a sense of dismay that we learned in 1948 that the Liberated synod had voted to seek a sister-church relation with us. It was not that we did not feel honored; it was just that, having had no substantial discussion between us, we were not anywhere near being ready for that. But maybe, at least so we wanted to think, that was what was meant; and soon we would be presented with a plan for meaningful talk. But again months passed, and nothing was heard.

And then the silence was broken, as though by thunder, with that letter of Prof. Holwerda — written privately for other ears. The committee had met, we learned, not with official representatives, but with two private individuals who happened to be visiting in their land. That, however, was not the greatest problem; it was what they talked about. They did not talk about what we believed, and whether they understood our biblical basis for it; but simply whether the views of Rev. Hoeksema, upon which our churches had been built, were binding, or could they be safely ignored? Without one engagement of meaningful discussion, our doctrinal positions were being dismissed as unworthy of consideration; and those who had joined our churches were being told to have nothing to do with them. The theological positions on which we had always stood were simply dismissed as unacceptable. This was hardly the knitting in good faith of an ecumenical stocking, but a kind of purposeful tangling of the threads instead.

And what followed perhaps hurt even worse. Suddenly there appeared on our shores a pamphlet, the most significant part of which was written by Prof. C. Veenhof, under the title *Appel*. Here was a man we trusted, for he had been a personal correspondent of Rev. Hoeksema all through the war. Hoeksema had addressed him as “neef”

(nephew) so as to pass back and forth in coded messages information about Dr. Schilder, as though they were all part of one family. Certainly he, we thought, would have understood and respected what we thought; but in fact his composition, a defense of the Liberated covenant view, was so full of blatant common grace, in fact unashamed Arminianism, that even those among us most sympathetic to the Liberated cause were made to blush. Nearly five years had passed since the war, during which opportunities for discussion and dialogue had abounded, but never been held. We had sent over as much of our material as we could in English and in Dutch, and apparently had received little serious thought. The knitting had not begun; and how could it be, with threads as tangled as these had become.

And that is the point. Efforts to come together in a mutual sharing and consideration of theological thought so that we might learn from each other, correct each other's shortcomings, and build together toward a common theological goal and ecclesiastical life were getting nowhere. The only thing that seemed to matter was the question of whether we were really serious in our convictions, whether we considered them binding or not, when for any Reformed man the answer to that is quite clear. There is one thing binding and that alone, that which is taught in the Word of God, and that which derives from it — as set forth in the Reformed creeds — together with, by extension in the practical applications of ecclesiastical life, those things which are proved to be based on it (Church Order, Article 31). But such is not found in simple, cold formulations; it takes place only where this binding authority is used in the life of the church, in an active interchange of conviction between congregations within a denomination and, where it is possible, with those outside. This last we had hoped could be realized between us and the Liberated Churches, a will-



ing engagement in theological and ecclesiastical interaction with mutual interest in and respect for each other.

But by 1950 it was evident that this was not to be. We saw no real interest in what we believed, and have

not to this day; and without it the stocking was indeed "af." In fact, it had never really had a start. □

## News From Our Churches

Mr. Benjamin Wigger

### Evangelism Activities

The Consistory of Georgetown PRC in Bauer, MI has appointed five men to be the initial members of their newly created Evangelism Committee. Their mandate, in part, is to lead their congregation in reaching out into the community and to help equip each member with the knowledge and or materials with which to give witness to their faith.

The Reformed Witness Committee, comprised of members from our Doon and Hull, IA, and Edgerton, MN PRCs, has started yet another new and exciting venture, a call-in-radio program. This program, called *Reformed Perspectives*, will air at 9:00 P.M. on the first and third Sundays of each month over radio station KTSB. Mr. Jim Regnerus and Rev. Dykstra are the hosts of this program. The first program, not a call-in because it was pre-recorded, aired on October 2.

Rev. C. Terpstra, pastor of the South Holland, IL PRC, reported to his Council on his recent visit to Florence, KY with Mr. Art DeJong. The core group is small (6-7 people) but the members of it are eager to see the work progress, if the Lord wills. South Holland's Council approved their Evangelism Committee's tentative plan to hold a series of mid-week meetings in the Florence area sometime this fall, in order to present the basic truths of the gospel from a Reformed perspective.

The Lord willing, Prof. D. Engelsma, of our churches' seminary and editor of this magazine, was scheduled to take part in an ambitious speaking tour in the state of Mississippi this Reformation Day weekend.

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

At the request of a number of Presbyterian churches in Mississippi, Prof. Engelsma planned to speak on October 27 at a Reformation Day lecture in Woodville, MS on "What is the Reformed Church ... and Where?" The next day, plans called for Prof. Engelsma to be in Collins, MS speaking on the topic, "Martin Luther: Man of Conviction." Plans also gave Prof. Engelsma the opportunity to preach twice on October 30 for two Presbyterian churches in Mississippi.

### Congregational Activities

The Consistory of the Byron Center, MI PRC has appointed a committee of church members to help set up a church library.

A growing PR congregation in Randolph, WI has resulted in the formation of a new Bible study society there. This society was begun for the benefit of young adults and young married couples, ages 19-35. Another indication of increased growth at Randolph is that the Consistory called a special congregational meeting to gain approval for the expansion of their parking lot to the north.

During this past Sunday School season the children of the Southwest PRC in Grandville, MI decided to give the collections

taken during the summer months to the newly established Faith Christian School in Randolph, WI.

At a special congregational meeting held at the First PRC in Edgerton, MN, approval was given to go ahead with projects to

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reshingle the parsonage roof and construct an attached double garage.

On September 23, Rev. B. Gritters was installed as the pastor of the Hudsonville, MI PRC. Rev. W. Bruinsma, appointed by Classis East as Hudsonville's counselor, led the service and preached a fitting sermon based on I Corinthians 4:1, 2 entitled, "Stewards of Christ." On that same night, Hudsonville welcomed the entire Gritters family by way of a program which included numbers from Hudsonville's choir and Sunday School. The following Lord's day, September 25, Rev. Gritters preached his Inaugural Sermon at Hudsonville under the title, "A Pastor's Jealousy for the Church's Chastity," based on II Corinthians 11:2, 3.

#### Minister Activities

We are happy to report that one of our churches' pastors, the Rev. S. Houck, serving at the Peace PRC in Lynwood, IL, successfully underwent an angioplasty procedure to open the arteries of his heart. He has since resumed his work after a couple of weeks for recuperation.

### ANNOUNCEMENTS

#### RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The Martha Ladies Aid Society of the Hull Protestant Reformed Church expresses their sincere Christian sympathy to their fellow member, Mrs. Lois VanMaanen and her family in the loss of her father,

**MR. HENRY SANDBULTE.**

May they be sustained by God's grace and comforted in His Word: "The Lord will give strength unto his people; the Lord will bless his people with peace" (Psalm 29:11).

Rev. Richard Moore, Pres.  
Mrs. Jack Andringa, Sec.

Remember to pray for him as well as all our churches' pastors.

Rev. A. denHartog, pastor of the Hope PRC in Redlands, CA, declined the call from the Loveland, CO PRC to serve as Home Missionary for work in southern Colorado.

Since Rev. W. Bruinsma was scheduled to travel to southern Colorado and preach there for two weeks in October, he asked for an extension from the Byron Center congregation and will answer their call the end of October.

From a trio consisting of Revs. W. Bekkering, R. Dykstra, and T. Miersma, Loveland chose to extend a call to Rev. Miersma, for the work of Home Missionary.

From a trio of the Revs. R. Dykstra, S. Key, and C. Terpstra, our congregation in Lynden, WA has extended a call to Rev. Dykstra.

#### WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

On September 20, 1994, our parents, grandparents, and great grandparents,

**MR. and MRS. JOHN ZANDSTRA, SR.,**

celebrated 50 years of marriage.

We are thankful to our God for giving us godly parents, who brought us up in the fear of His holy name. May the Lord continue to bless them and keep them in His care in the years ahead.

"He hath remembered his covenant for ever, the word which he commanded to a thousand generations" (Psalm 105:8).

❖ Jacob and Joyce Lenting

Timothy Lenting, Duane and Mary Bruinsma, Mark Lenting, Joel and Deborah Smits, Dale Lenting

❖ John Zandstra, Jr.

❖ John and Darlene Boersma

Chad, Jodi, John, David, Brian and 4 great grandchildren

South Holland, Illinois

#### Food for Thought

"God creates out of nothing. Therefore until a man is nothing God can make nothing out of him."

— M. Luther □

#### ATTENTION EVERYONE

The Evangelism Committee of South Holland has undertaken the project of preserving the sermons of our deceased ministers. Many of these sermons are still on the reel-to-reel tapes, which are getting quite brittle. We intend to transfer these sermons to cassette tapes and catalog them. We will also make them available for our church libraries and to all others who desire to have these sermons in convenient and usable cassette form. These sermons will then be preserved for the coming generations.

We need to hear from you!! We need everyone's participation in this project! Please drop us a note listing the tapes you have. We need the sermons of Rev. Hoeksema, Rev. Ophoff, Rev. Vos, Rev. Schipper, Prof. Hoeksema, Rev. Kuiper, and Rev. Verhil.

Please take the time to respond, especially if you have tapes from Rev. Ophoff and Rev. Vos, for these are difficult to find.

Let us as good stewards preserve these sermons which God has given to us in His grace.

Our address is:

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