



THE **STANDARD BEARER**

**A Reformed
Semi-Monthly
Magazine**



"Our Lord has written the promise of the resurrection,
not in books alone,
but in every leaf in springtime."

Martin Luther

*Vol. 71, No. 14
April 15, 1995*



EDITORIAL COMMITTEE

Editor: Prof. David J. Engelsma
Secretary: Prof. Robert D. Decker
Managing Editor: Mr. Don Doezema

DEPARTMENT EDITORS

Rev. Wilbur Bruinema, Rev. Ronald Cammenga, Prof. Robert
Decker, Rev. Arle den Hartog, Rev. Russell Dykstra, Rev. Barry
Gritters, Rev. Carl Haak, Rev. Jason Kortering, Rev. Cornelius
Hanko, Prof. Herman Hanko, Rev. John Heys, Rev. Dale
Kuiper, Mr. James Lanting, Mrs. MaryBeth Lubbers, Rev.
Jalkishin Mahtani, Rev. Thomas Mierema, Rev. Charles
Terpetra, Rev. Gise VanBaren, Rev. Ronald VanOverloop, Mr.
Benjamin Wigger, Rev. Bernard Woudenberg.

EDITORIAL OFFICE

The Standard Bearer
4949 Ivanrest
Grandville, MI 49418
BUSINESS OFFICE
The Standard Bearer
Don Doezema
P.O. Box 603
Grandville, MI
49418-0603

PH: (616) 531-1490
(616) 538-1778
FAX: (616) 531-3033

CHURCH NEWS EDITOR

Mr. Ben Wigger
6597 40th Ave.
Hudsonville, MI 49426
NEW ZEALAND OFFICE
The Standard Bearer
c/o B. VanHerik
66 Fraser St.
Wainuiomata, New Zealand
NORTHERN IRELAND OFFICE
c/o Mr. Jonathan McAuley
164 Church Rd., Glenwherry
Ballymena, Co. Antrim BT42 3EL
Northern Ireland

EDITORIAL POLICY

Every editor is solely responsible for the contents of his own
articles. Contributions of general interest from our readers and
questions for The Reader Asks department are welcome.
Contributions will be limited to approximately 300 words and
must be neatly written or typewritten, and must be signed. Copy
deadlines are the first and fifteenth of the month. All
communications relative to the contents should be sent to the
editorial office.

REPRINT POLICY

Permission is hereby granted for the reprinting of articles in our
magazine by other publications, provided: a) that such reprinted
articles are reproduced in full; b) that proper acknowledgment
is made; c) that a copy of the periodical in which such reprint
appears is sent to our editorial office.

SUBSCRIPTION POLICY

Subscription price: \$12.00 per year in the U.S., \$15.00
elsewhere. Unless a definite request for discontinuance is
received, it is assumed that the subscriber wishes the
subscription to continue, and he will be billed for renewal. If you
have a change of address, please notify the Business Office as
early as possible in order to avoid the inconvenience of
interrupted delivery. Include your Zip or Postal Code.

ADVERTISING POLICY

The Standard Bearer does not accept commercial advertising
of any kind. Announcements of church and school events,
anniversaries, obituaries, and sympathy resolutions will be
placed for a \$10.00 fee. These should be sent to the Business
Office and should be accompanied by the \$10.00 fee. Deadline
for announcements is at least one month prior to publication
date.

BOUND VOLUMES

The Business Office will accept standing orders for bound
copies of the current volume. Such orders are filled as soon as
possible after completion of a volume year.

16mm microfilm, 35mm microfilm and 105mm microfiche, and
article copies are available through University Microfilms
International.

Meditation — Rev. Richard Moore	
Christ Is Risen!	339
Editorial — Prof. David J. Engelsma	
A Defense of (Reformed) Amillennialism	
2. Revelation 20	341
Letters	343
Apples of Gold — Mrs. Thelma Westra	
The Christ	345
Ministering to the Saints — Mr. Gordon Schipper	
The Office of Deacon: Its Function	346
A Word Fitly Spoken — Rev. Dale Kuiper	
Nations	348
All Around Us — Prof. Robert D. Decker	349
Taking Heed to the Doctrine — Rev. Bernard Woudenberg	
The Covenant Promise	350
A Cloud of Witnesses — Prof. Herman C. Hanko	
Alexander Henderson: Covenantant	353
Day of Shadows — Homer Hoeksema	
The Last Four Days of Creation-Week (cont.)	355
News From Our Churches — Mr. Benjamin Wigger	358

In This Issue ...

All of the letters in this issue have in common that they come from cities where there is no Protestant Reformed Church (PRC). Although associated in the public mind with these churches, the magazine is read outside these circles by men and women who have an interest in the issues of the Reformed faith and life treated on its pages.

Tucson, Arizona questions interpretation of I Thessalonians 5:22: "appearance of evil."

Winnipeg, Manitoba appreciates that misrepresentation of the PRC in another Reformed periodical was straightened out in the *Standard Bearer*.

Lawrence, Michigan challenges the description of a Congregational theologian as a "Presbyterian" and gets the correction desired.

As the Lawrence correspondent notes, he has recently published a new edition of "the historic Puritan Congregational Church Order," the *Cambridge Platform* of 1648. This is the document drawn up and accepted by the Congregational churches in New England. This is also the document that has become popular with the independent churches that have seceded from the Christian Reformed Church in the past few years.

It differs radically with the church polity of both Westminster and Dordt by rejecting the authority of the broader assemblies (synod) over the consistory. Thus it rejects the federation of churches.

This significant church order of Congregationalism will be reviewed in a future issue of this magazine.

Those who like to obtain a copy of this edition of the *Cambridge Platform*, can order it from the Reformed Tract Publication Committee, P.O. Box 691, Lawrence, MI 49064-0691. Cost is \$12.00.

It includes a 12-page introduction to the *Platform* by the publisher. His bias is pronounced: "... the hierarchical system of Presbyterianism."

The cover picture of this issue was taken by Mrs. Marilyn Wassink, member of the First Protestant Reformed Church of Holland, Michigan.

— DJE

Christ Is Risen!

In this meditation we have an occasion for great rejoicing and gladness as the elect church of Christ dwelling in the midst of a sin cursed world. We would consider the simple declaration of the Scripture as it is set forth in Mark 16:6, where we read, "And he saith unto them, Be not affrighted: Ye seek Jesus of Nazareth, which was crucified: he is risen; he is not here: behold the place where they laid him." The instruction of the passage is one that we have heard many times in the past; but for God's children this testimony never does grow old. This is especially true because it speaks to us the word of salvation and is the central theme around which all of the Scripture is set.

The morning of Resurrection Day

The women approached the grave of Jesus early in the morning on Resurrection Sunday intending to anoint the body of Christ properly. It was with sorrow in their hearts that they approached the tomb, for they were separated from their Master by His death. And, yet, they came to His tomb to finish the work of love. They would properly anoint His body for His burial, which they were not able to accomplish before the Sabbath Day. Even as they approached the tomb they had questions as to how they would remove the stone that closed the mouth of the tomb. But they continued on toward the tomb in the

faith that somehow they would be able to carry out their task.

In the women that came to the grave that morning we have a picture of the church of the ages, of God's people who, walking in submission to God and filled with love for their Lord, find blessing in His service. Even in His death they would still serve Him by this work of love. However, as is always true of members of Christ's body when traveling down life's pathway, the women still struggled, in their service, with sin of the flesh. This became apparent as they came close to the tomb and became afraid. We read in Mark 16:5, "And entering into the sepulchre, they saw a young man sitting on the right side, clothed in a long white garment; and they were affrighted." They were afraid when they saw the angel of the Lord at the sepulcher — not because Jesus body was not there, but because they came into the presence of the holiness of God reflected in the angel.

We ought to have, and by the grace of God we will have, this same trembling before God's holiness when we come into the house of God, as we stand before His Word as it is proclaimed from Lord's Day to Lord's Day. How could it be otherwise as we still dwell in this flesh? As we dwell in this earth, this must needs be our reaction because, simply stated, we are sinners. And, as sinners entering the presence of God, we are conscious that we are worthy only of judgment, as were also these women. Certainly, against the holiness of the angel, who was come from the presence of God, sin stands out in stark contrast. It

was sin that had brought Jesus to the cross and to the grave! Our sin!

But the cross and the grave are not the end. Into the holy presence of God we may come, for Christ is risen!

Risen indeed!

This is the glorious message that the angel had for the women as they came to the grave, and for us as we hear the testimony of our text. As we consider the wonder of this truth and its true significance for the women and for us, we would first take note of the fact that we have here the record of the Scripture that Jesus in fact has risen from the grave. The presence of the women at the grave serves to verify the fact that Jesus arose. It was providentially brought to pass that the church might have the eye-witness account that Jesus was raised from the grave. There is in fact an overwhelming testimony that Jesus has risen bodily. It is a testimony that begins with the women coming to the grave, where it is declared by the angel waiting there, "He is not here, but risen." The grave itself, with the burial clothes and their position, gave testimony that Jesus had risen. And there were many appearances of Christ to the church of the day, that made this clear, *Surely He arose.*

Jesus' human soul is united with a body glorified and raised from the grave. We are given a glimpse of what our own resurrection will be like, for the body Jesus received is altogether different from the body He had while He lived with us in our flesh (as we learn from Jesus' conversation with Mary Magdalene:

Rev. Moore is pastor of the Protestant Reformed Church of Hull, Iowa.

Touch Me not). Yet the body is the same, from the point of view that He received His own body glorified, as is evident from the fact that the apostles could and did recognize that this was their Lord that they were able to see. And now, as the women came to the tomb, the angel brings the message that He is not here, but risen; and thus God gives testimony to the wonder of the resurrection. The grave could not hold Christ. Death could have no victory.

In Jesus Christ is fulfilled the Scripture recorded in Isaiah 53:7: "He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth: he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth." He had been mocked, rebuked, judged, and crucified without justification. He bore our griefs and was bruised for our iniquities; but now in His resurrection we have the public declaration of God that speaks of His innocence and of His righteousness. It is the word of God saying unto His Son, "Well done, my good and faithful Servant." Jesus is publicly justified and exalted, and this exactly as the representative of those given Him of the Father.

The blessed testimony at the tomb that morning is that there is salvation for those chosen in Christ. This is expressed in the prophecy from Isaiah 53, which is fulfilled by Jesus' death and resurrection. We quote:

Yet it pleased the Lord to bruise him; he hath put him to grief: when thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in his hand. He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied: by his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many; for he shall bear their iniquities. Therefore will I divide him a portion with the great, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong; because he hath poured out his soul unto death: and he was numbered with

the transgressors; and he bare the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors (Is. 53:10-12).

In perfect obedience and righteousness Christ bore the sin of those given Him, and He receives a portion with the great, being exalted to the throne of God. We see in Colossians 1:15-19 that this was determined in God's eternal counsel, and that all of creation served this sacrifice of Jesus for the church, which is the body of Christ, who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in all things Christ might have the preeminence unto the glory of God. This means that the resurrection of our Lord is set in the eternal counsel of the living God, and that Jesus on the cross accomplished that eternal will of the Father perfectly. Therefore we are given to understand that the God of our salvation knew each of His children by name, and had chosen them in His Son to be saved from their sin exactly through this means of the cross and Jesus' resurrection. All the works of God were subservient to this end — they were to serve the glory of God through the salvation of His people in the perfect obedience of the Son through the death of the cross. For Jesus was determined before the foundation of the world to be the firstborn of many brethren, and this exactly by removing our guilt by the atonement and by His being raised as the firstborn from the dead.

With great blessing

The resurrection is central in the proclamation of the gospel. The true church is content and blessed in preaching the Christ crucified and raised. This is the testimony that we need to hear, for no matter where God's children turn, there is in this life a continual testimony that opposes them. There is a testimony that we are guilty of sin and transgression against the living God. We know that the wages of sin is death; and as by grace we see this, it dwells in our consciousness every day.

Further, in our very soul is the abiding conviction that the condemnation of our sin cannot be escaped in any other way than through the death and resurrection of our Lord and Savior. Only when we receive the testimony of the resurrection can there be any hope. But, like the women at the grave, we too need not be afraid, for Christ is not in the grave, but is risen! Risen in victory, in righteousness, not only for Himself, but also for us! Therefore this became the heart of the preaching, from the very first sermon that Peter preached after Pentecost. The preaching of the cross and resurrection was central to the preaching of the apostles, and it continues to be the true gospel proclaimed in the church today.

By the resurrection God declares that Jesus is He "who was delivered for our offenses, and was raised again for our justification" (Rom. 4:25). As the Spirit of Christ applies this word to our hearts, and we see Jesus' broken body and shed blood and His resurrection, we know that all is well and that there is peace. Our conscience is delivered from all that which would trouble our souls. For indeed now are we partakers of Christ's resurrection!

On the basis of His satisfaction by blood, the Spirit is poured out and we are made dead to sin, so that no longer do we live therein. It is in this strength of faith that we are able to and do stand in the presence of God, seeking all things of Him. For by the Spirit of Christ we are made partakers of Christ's resurrection life. Paul teaches us in Romans 6:4-5: "Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection:" We have therefore the assurance that all things shall work together for our good. We may go forth on this pilgrims' pathway knowing that God

shall surely bring to pass His counsel. We shall with Christ be glorified, as Paul promises in Romans 8:29-30: "For whom he did fore-

know, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren. Moreover whom he

did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified." □

Editorial

A Defense of (Reformed) Amillennialism

2. Revelation 20

The name by which the distinctively Reformed doctrine of the last things is known is "amillennialism." This name derives from the 20th chapter of Revelation. Six times in verses 1-7 is mentioned a period of "a thousand years." An angel binds Satan for "a thousand years" (vv. 1, 2). The result is that Satan cannot deceive the nations for "a thousand years" (v. 3). John sees certain souls living and reigning with Christ "a thousand years" (vv. 4, 6). The rest of the dead lived not again until the "thousand years" were finished (v. 5). When the "thousand years" expire, Satan is loosed, deceives the nations, and makes war against the saints (vv. 7-9).

The term "millennium," of Latin origin, means 'thousand years.' "Amillennialism," therefore, is the teaching about the thousand year period of Revelation 20 that *denies* that this period is a literal one thousand year period of history during which Christ will establish an earthly kingdom in the world. Positively, amillennialism holds that the thousand year period of Revelation 20 is a figurative description of the entire period from Christ's exaltation until shortly before His second coming.

During this period two important events take place. One occurs in the abyss: Satan is bound. The other happens in heaven: the martyrs live and reign with Christ.

Millennial Error

The matter of the millennium, mentioned only in Revelation 20, has come to require more attention in eschatology (the church's doctrine of the last things) than Scripture would suggest. The thousand year period is just one more feature of the revelation of the end in the book of Revelation. The reason why the subject receives so much attention, and *must* receive so much attention, is that serious doctrinal errors have attached themselves to the millennium of Revelation 20.

On the one hand, there is the grievous heresy that bewitches multitudes of supposed evangelicals and fundamentalists so that they expect a carnal kingdom of the Jews in Palestine, preceded by a secret "rapture" of the church. This bizarre teaching involves denial of the oneness of Old Testament Israel and the New Testament church, rejection of the unity of the covenant of grace,

opposition to infant baptism, and embrace of the dread doctrine and practice of antinomism (lawlessness of life with appeal to "grace").

On the other hand, there is the serious error tolerated, if not promoted, by Reformed and Presbyterian churches, that finds in Revelation 20 the basis for expecting a carnal kingdom of Christ that will be victorious according to earthly standards. Not only does this error, known as postmillennialism (since it postpones Christ's coming to the end of the future earthly golden age), find in Revelation 20 the basis of a carnal kingdom, but it also finds in this chapter a mandate to the church to get busy to "Christianize" this world. Any church that declines this mandate is severely criticized, if it is not heartily damned.

The effect of this interpretation of Revelation 20 is the radical, total reconstruction of Reformed eschatology. No longer are there signs of the return of Christ; no longer does the earthly future hold abounding lawlessness; no longer are we to anticipate great apostasy; no longer are the saints to prepare for Antichrist; no longer are we to brace ourselves for a great tribulation.

Especially because of these millennial errors, Reformed and Presbyterian people must be clear as to the meaning of Revelation 20.

The Meaning of Revelation 20

"A thousand years" is a figurative, or symbolical, description of the entire age of the new covenant. The number 1,000 is a symbolical number, made up as it is of the number 10. In the Bible, 10 is the number of completeness. The symbolical nature of the thousand year period is in harmony with the symbolical character of the book of Revelation, e.g., the depiction of Satan as a great red dragon (Rev. 12). It is also in harmony with the obviously figurative character of the binding of the spirit, Satan, with a great chain. In addition, Revelation 20 is a vision ("and I saw," vv. 1, 4), not historical observation.

The binding of Satan represents the sovereign control and restraint of the devil by the Lord Jesus that prevents him from deceiving the nations. During the present age, Satan cannot unite the nations under Antichrist. This restraint is related to the "withholding" and "letting," or restraining, of II Thessalonians 2:6, 7 that assures that the man of sin, "that Wicked" (v. 8), will be revealed in his proper, God-appointed time (v. 6).

Throughout this same age, the martyrs — those who were beheaded on account of the witness of Jesus and on account of the Word of God — live and reign in heaven with Christ. The vision of the thrones in Revelation 20:4-6 refers to what theology calls "the intermediate state," that is, the life and glory of elect saints at death and until the second coming of Jesus.

This is plain.

John sees "souls" sitting on the thrones. Earlier, in Revelation 6:9, the apostle spoke of the souls of the martyrs under the altar in heaven. Those souls in heaven were distinguished from humans dwelling on earth (v. 10). The "souls" of Revela-

tion 20:4-6 are those men and women who had been beheaded for their faithful confession of Christ in time of antichristian persecution throughout the present age.

At the instant of death, the martyred saint is taken up in his soul to be with Christ in heaven, and there he lives and reigns with Christ.

Living with Christ in heaven in the soul at the instant of physical death is the "first resurrection" (v. 5). The postmillennialists argue that the living and reigning with Christ cannot refer to the intermediate state because the life of the soul at death is not resurrection. J. Marcellus Kik, whose commentary on Revelation 20 has been very influential among modern postmillennialists, wrote: "The very fact that Revelation Twenty deals with a resurrection eliminates the interpretation that the Chapter is speaking of the intermediate state of the soul" (*An Eschatology of Victory*, Presbyterian and Reformed, p. 230). The "Christian Reconstructionist" David Chilton has written:

We can dispose of the Amillennial position right away, by pointing out the obvious: this is a *resurrection*, a *rising again from the dead*. Dying and going to heaven is wonderful, but, for all its benefits, it is not a resurrection. This passage cannot be a description of the state of disembodied saints in heaven (*Paradise Restored: A Biblical Theology of Dominion*, Reconstruction Press, p. 196).

The postmillennialists are wrong.

The taking up to heaven of the soul of the believer at death is, indeed, resurrection. There is an act of the risen Christ upon the soul at the instant of death purifying it from all sin and transforming it from a soul adapted to earthly life into a soul adapted to heavenly life. There must be this resurrection of the soul by Christ if the soul is to be with Christ in heaven. Souls do not automatically fly away to heaven at death. Souls of believers do not

naturally fly to heaven. The Heidelberg Catechism indicates Christ's raising of the soul of the believer at death in Question 57: "my soul after this life *shall be ... taken up* to Christ its head."

The saint goes to heaven by resurrection, and *only* by resurrection. There are two stages. The first is the resurrection of the soul. This is the resurrection of Revelation 20:5. The second is the resurrection of the body. This is the second resurrection, implied by the first resurrection of Revelation 20:5.

Accordingly, the first death of the reprobate ungodly is the suffering of God's wrath in his soul at the moment of physical death. The second death will be his suffering of God's wrath in hell in soul and body after the final judgment (see Rev. 20:6, 14).

At the end of the thousand years, Satan will be loosed for a short time (vv. 3, 7). The one who "leteth," or restrains, will be taken out of the way (II Thess. 2:7). This enables Satan to establish his world-kingdom under Antichrist. The result is the final, all-out assault upon the true church and her living, faithful members (vv. 8, 9). The "beloved city" represents the church. The "saints" are all those whom the Spirit of Christ has sanctified through faith in Christ.

After a short time of intense persecution of the church — the "great tribulation" of Matthew 24:21 and the "time of trouble" of Daniel 12:1 — fire from God will devour the ungodly in the second coming of Christ (cf. II Thess. 1:6-10).

Then follow at once the final judgment and the eternal state, heaven and hell (Rev. 20:11ff.).

The Explanation by Postmillennialism

The postmillennial explanation of the passage in the interests of the physical victory of an earthly kingdom of Christ in history is mistaken. The explanation by J. Marcellus Kik, adopted in the main by the "Chris-

tian Reconstructionists," is an example of this mistaken interpretation.

The reign of the saints is located on earth, as though the apostle never spoke of "souls," indeed, of "souls" who had been "beheaded." Beheaded souls do not live and reign on earth. B. B. Warfield, himself a postmillennialist, recognized that "disembodied souls" do not rule in Christ's kingdom on earth. Correctly, he concluded that Revelation 20:4 gives us "the picture of the 'intermediate state'" ("The Millennium and the Apocalypse," in *Biblical Doctrines*, Banner of Truth, pp. 648, 649).

The postmillennialist interpretation supposes that Christ's taking of the soul of the Christian to heaven at death is not resurrection when, in fact, *only* resurrection can translate a sinful, earthly soul to a holy, heavenly life. The postmillennialist denies that the intermediate state involves resurrection in the face of the explicit testimony of Revelation 20 that the living in heaven of souls that had been beheaded is the first resurrection.

The Kikkian/"Christian Reconstructionist" postmillennialists are even wrong in their explanation of the binding of Satan. Kik explains the binding as restraining Satan from having "complete control over the nations of the world" (*Eschatology*, pp. 203-208). But Satan *does* have "complete control over the nations

of the world." Of course, he is not the almighty sovereign. The triune God is sovereign. But Satan controls the nations of the world as to their spiritual condition. Scripture calls him the "god of this world." History proves that for the past 1900 odd years now, Satan has governed nations as to their spiritual and moral life.

The binding of Satan is the restraint of him in this one respect: he cannot establish the kingdom of Antichrist. This is unacceptable to postmillennialism since it has decided that Antichrist is a thing of the past, having been fulfilled in the Roman empire from about A. D. 65 to about A. D. 313.

Kik is also in error when he explains that Satan is bound by the *action of the church*. The church has the great chain. She could almost completely "restrain his influence over the nations." It is the fault of the church that the devil has so much influence in the world. If only the church would heed the "Christian Reconstructionists" and exert herself to get and wield dominion on earth, Satan would be bound (see *Eschatology*, p. 196).

This is obviously false. The angel who binds Satan is not the church, but the servant of the ascended Lord Jesus Christ. Christ has bound Satan. Kik's explanation is a denial that Satan is actually bound. Since the church has not yet

exerted herself to get dominion, Satan is not yet bound. But the text says that he has been bound: "... and bound him a thousand years" (v. 2).

Revelation 20 against the Postmillennialists

Revelation 20 is no support to postmillennialism, but rather a refutation of that error. The saints do not gain earthly victory in the world; rather, they suffer and are beheaded. History does not come to its end with the earthly triumph of the church; rather, Satan is loosed, and the hordes of the ungodly attack the church and the saints. The hope held before the people of God is not a carnal kingdom on earth; rather, it is our living and reigning with Christ in heaven at death.

This hope, with its accompanying hope of bodily resurrection in the Day of Christ, does not render the Reformed amillennialist passive on earth. On the contrary. Exactly because we are assured that the worst that the foe can do is usher us into heaven and onto our thrones, we are encouraged to be faithful and diligent in our confession of the Word of God. This is the calling of the church in the world.

And this is preparation for the "little season" that is before the church, the loosing of Satan. □

— DJE

Letters

■ Appearance of Evil

I always look forward to reading the *Standard Bearer*. And I do mean, "look forward." I'm always behind on my reading!

Thanks to Rev. Bruinsma in the September 15, 1994 issue urging us to walk a godly path in life. I like his quote highlighted on page 489. However, I'd ask that he take a second look at the word "appearance"

(*eidōs*) in I Thessalonians 5:22. I was reading in Strong's, Vine's, and BAGD. The passage actually exhorts us to abstain from true forms of evil, not, as Rev. Bruinsma seems to be saying, if I understand him correctly, to avoid everything that "looks like ... might be ... could possibly be ..." perceived by someone as evil.

If "appearance" means "looks like" wouldn't that put Jesus' lifestyle in question? Jesus ate with

the tax gatherers and sinners, perceived by some to be "an appearance of evil."

We must be careful of our choices: where we go, what we do, and what we wear. When I stop and think about it, trying to avoid everything that "might appear as sinful in the eyes of others" would be an impossible task.

Duane L. Burgess
Tucson, AZ

Response:

There is some difference of opinion as to the proper interpretation of the term "appearance" in I Thessalonians 5:22. There are a number of Bible scholars that wish to interpret the Greek term in question as "form" rather than "appearance." They do so in order to avoid the perceived difficulty that is raised in the letter of Brother Burgess.

Although I do not consider it a grave matter of exegesis, I prefer to stay with the interpretation that I gave the term in my article: to abstain from that which might be perceived by someone as evil. Here are my reasons:

1. The term "appearance" in this passage comes from the Greek root word (*eidon*) which means "to see or perceive." It refers, therefore, to the outward perception, the external appearance, of something that in reality might be quite different. For example, in Luke 3:22, we read, "And the Holy Ghost descended in a bodily shape like a dove upon him." The word in this passage translated as "shape" is the same as the term translated "appearance" in I Thessalonians 5:22. The Holy Spirit came down in what *appeared to* or *was perceived by* men as a dove, but was in reality the Holy Spirit Himself. This same word is used similarly in passages such as John 5:37 and II Corinthians 5:7.

2. This Greek word for "appearance" (*eidon*) is also used to translate the Hebrew word "vision" (*maarah* or *mareh*). A vision, as we well know, is that which was seen or perceived by a person (even involving the use of all his senses), yet which was not reality, but only that which appeared to him as reality.

3. I prefer to remain consistent with this common usage of the term "appearance" when interpreting I Thessalonians 5:22. A child of God must abstain (in as much as is possible) from what may *look like* or *be perceived as* a sin by another, even though this may not have been the intention.

There still exists, however, the

difficulty that is raised by Brother Burgess: "trying to avoid everything that might appear as sinful in the eyes of others would be an impossible task." I agree whole-heartedly. If I were to meet a young woman of my congregation in a restaurant in order to speak with her of an important matter concerning her life, it may *appear* to my ungodly neighbor as if I were being unfaithful to my wife. If I were to enter a grocery store on Sunday to buy much needed medicine for my child who took ill during the night, that might be *perceived*, by another child of God, as a desecration of the Sabbath. Surely, we cannot avoid all appearance of evil. Nor need we, when it is necessary to realize or achieve a pure and holy purpose (as it was with Jesus). I believe, however, that this passage in I Thessalonians 5:22 directs our attention to the many times we as God's children, without any thought for the consequences, place ourselves in a situation which we could well have avoided, and which as a result offends another. Even in those cases where of necessity such appearances cannot be avoided, the child of God who is sensitive to the instruction of this passage will seek (if possible) other means of dealing with the situation.

— Rev. W. Bruinsma

■ Putting the Record Straight

It was with a measure of dismay that I read the article of Rev. J. Tuininga in the December 26, 1994 issue of *Christian Renewal* in which he made some remarks about the Protestant Reformed Churches in America.

The response to his article is found in the editorials in the February 1 and February 15, 1995 issues of the *Standard Bearer*.

In his article, Rev. Tuininga also makes reference to the independent Reformed churches, and it appears that he is the official spokesman for these churches. This is not the case. Rev. Tuininga is just giving his own

opinion and views on this matter.

I am glad that Rev. Engelsma put the record straight.

H. Minderhoud
Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada

■ Can an Independent be a Presbyterian?

I have been reading with interest the continued controversy in your pages over postmillennialism, what your paper describes as "Jewish Dreams." Since I have not done specialized study in eschatology, I doubt that I have much to contribute to the primary issue. However, as a Congregationalist whose name is known to many readers of the *Standard Bearer*, I believe that I come under some obligation to question the accuracy of your editor's passing comment that "John Owen was a godly, orthodox Presbyterian theologian" (*SB*, 3/1/95, p. 270).

I am pleased to hear Prof. Engelsma describe Dr. Owen as "godly," "orthodox," and a "theologian," but something seems to be amiss when the primary author of the Savoy Declaration of Faith and Order — the 1658 revision of the Westminster Confession of Faith which has been the recognized doctrinal standard of Reformed Congregationalism for almost 240 years — is described as a "Presbyterian."

This description was probably true in Owen's earlier years, but I question the appropriateness of describing the primary author of a Congregational doctrinal standard as a Presbyterian. Perhaps Engelsma could provide some explanation of his description. Apart from further explanation, it would seem to make about as much sense to identify the primary authors of the Heidelberg Catechism, Zacharias Ursinus and Caspar Olevianus, as Lutherans.

I'd like to hear what Engelsma has to say in response, and to have him print that response for the benefit of his readers. If he continues to maintain that Owen was a Presbyterian, I would like to know if he would open the pages of the *Stan-*

dard Bearer to a serious debate of the merits of Congregational polity, perhaps pitting Owen's views against those whose Congregationalism is beyond doubt. Surely Engelsma agrees with me that there is much confusion over church polity in Reformed circles; perhaps a public debate would be beneficial for all. Speaking as the publisher of a modern edition of the historic Congregational church order, the 1648 Cambridge Platform, I trust that Engelsma believes I might have something to contribute to that discussion.

Darrell Todd Maurina
Lawrence, MI

Response:

I referred to John Owen as a "Presbyterian theologian" in view of his strongly Calvinist theology. This included the doctrine of the cov-

enant of God with the children of believers, requiring infant baptism. In his "Greater Catechism" of 1645, Owen wrote as one of the questions and answers:

Q. 3. *To whom doth this sacrament (of baptism) belong?*

A. Unto all to whom the promise of the covenant is made; that is, to believers, and to their seed. — Acts ii. 39; Gen. xvii. 11, 12; Acts xvi. 15; Rom. iv. 10, 11; 1 Cor. vii. 14 (*The Works of John Owen*, ed. William H. Goold, vol. 1, The Banner of Truth, p. 491).

The New International Dictionary of the Christian Church (ed. J.D. Douglas, Zondervan) describes Owen as a "Reformed theologian" (p. 738).

Mr. Maurina is correct, however, that, although having begun well as an advocate of presbyterian church

polity, John Owen became a congregationalist, or independent.

It is Mr. Maurina's contention that, regardless of one's theology, failure to maintain presbyterian church government disqualifies one from being, or being regarded as, a Presbyterian. Since "Reformed" is basically the same as "Presbyterian," failure to embrace and practice presbyterian church polity disqualifies one from being Reformed. So important is church polity.

I agree with Mr. Maurina.

No theologian or church that fails to maintain presbyterian church polity is Presbyterian or Reformed.

I revise my description of John Owen accordingly: John Owen, although a Congregationalist, was a Calvinistic theologian who went seriously astray in his eschatology.

Yet another public debate?

— Ed.

Apples of Gold

The Christ

The Christ, by Israel long expected —
He is born!

Events occurred as God the Lord directed —
He is born!

In a stable, born of virgin lowly,
Jesus Christ, the Sinless One, Most Holy,
Following the plan of God's decree
He is born!

At the time selected in eternity
He is born!

His, a life like ours, with one exception —
Suff'ring One!
Each word and deed was totally perfection —
Suff'ring One!

Throughout His life on earth: humiliation!
Then Passion Week — the final degradation
Of holy Jesus, hanging on the cross.
Suff'ring One!

Rejected by His Father — greatest loss!
Suff'ring One!

Dark the day is made to be;
He is dead!

He is nailed upon a tree;
He is dead!

He who rode triumphantly entering Jerusalem;
He the Son of David, Rod of Judah's stem;
He, the hope of Israel
He is dead!

He has borne the pains of hell!
He is dead!

Three days pass — death's cord is broken.
He arose!

Fulfilled the words by prophets spoken.
He arose!

For His own — atoning for their guilt;
Willingly for them His precious blood was spilt.
Glorious thought — it was for me
He arose!

I now shall live throughout eternity!
He arose!

Thelma Westra
Faith PRC, Jenison, MI

The Office of Deacon: Its Function

"Blessed is he that considereth the poor: the LORD will deliver him in time of trouble."

Psalm 41:1.

Our first article concerning the office of deacon noted that deacons stand in the office of Christ in the church. In particular, deacons represent Christ as He is our merciful High Priest. It is instructive to ask why the office of mercy is connected to the high priestly aspect of Christ's office. The first thought we usually have in connection with the high priest concerns the sacrifices. We think especially of his privilege to enter the Most Holy Place on the great day of atonement to sprinkle blood on the mercy seat. How, then, is the work of the high priest to be reflected in the office of deacon? The correspondence between the Old Testament office of king and the New Testament office of elder is clear: they both govern. The same holds true for the offices of prophet and minister: they both speak the Word. But, how does the Old Testament office of high priest correspond to the New Testament office of deacon? How is a deacon like the high priest?

In order to see the relationship between the high priest and the deacon, we do well to look closely at the institution of the office of high priest as recorded in Exodus 28 and 29. Many articles could be written concerning the significance of the

various elements connected with the worship in the old covenant. For our purpose we should note the references to the garments of the high priest, especially the shoulder pieces and the breastplate. The garments of the high priest were unique. They were "for glory and for beauty" (Ex. 28:2). Calvin notes "that in these garments the supreme purity and wondrous glory of Christ were represented." (Calvin's commentary on this section of Exodus is very worthwhile.)

In the ephod were two shoulder pieces that contained onyx stones engraved with the names of the tribes of Israel. The high priest would thus "bear their names before the Lord upon his two shoulders for a memorial" (Ex. 28:12). By having the names of the tribes on his shoulders, the high priest was conscious of the fact that he did not enter into the temple ministry as an individual, but that he represented the entire nation before the living God. By having these names on his shoulders, he was conscious of the fact that he brought the burdens of the nation before Jehovah. These burdens included all the needs of the nation, physical and spiritual. This symbolism also spoke to the nation. The symbolism pointed above all to the Messiah. It would be the Messiah who would bear their burdens.

This Old Testament type teaches us that we can (and are called to) cast all of our burdens upon the Lord — He will sustain us (Ps. 55:22). We see that all of our strength is in Christ. He carries us.

We have no strength in ourselves. Deacons must be mindful of this aspect of their office. As representatives of Christ they must stand ready to relieve the burdens of God's people. The great burden that Christ bore for us was the guilt of our sins. Therefore, our spiritual life has its source in Christ. However, we should be mindful that Christ also sustains our physical life. Most often Christ gives us the ability and opportunity to work and thereby provide for our earthly needs, as well as support the causes of His kingdom. In some cases, Christ determines the circumstances to be such that there is not enough income to meet earthly needs. Christ sees to it that some are poor. In these cases Christ intends that their needs be supplied through the diaconate. In both cases Christ supplies the need, but in His wisdom He uses different means. When a member of the church is in financial need, the figure of high priest bearing the nation of Israel on his shoulders should be a blessed incentive to come to the diaconate for relief. Christ will bear the burden through the deacons.

The high priest also wore a breastplate. The breastplate was set with twelve precious stones, a different stone engraved with the name of each tribe in Israel. The breastplate was secured by golden chains and worn over the linen garment of the high priest. When the high priest ministered, he bore "the names of the children of Israel upon his heart" (Ex. 28:29). Calvin notes that he bore them upon his heart "not only that

Mr. Schipper is a deacon in Southwest Protestant Reformed Church.

he might present them to God, but that he might be mindful of them, and anxious for their welfare." Calvin notes also, "what was to be fulfilled in Christ, was typified by the external sign under the Law; viz., that though we sojourn in the world, yet are we united with Christ by faith, as if we were one with Him; and, besides, that He takes care for our welfare, as if He bore us enclosed in His heart; and, finally, that when our heavenly Father regards us in Him, He esteems us above all the wealth and splendor of the world."

It must live in the soul of a deacon that he is called to have the welfare of God's people enclosed in his heart. He must be mindful that God's people are precious in His sight, and He calls the deacon to see to it that they are not left in distress. While the primary distress the deacon deals with is financial need, the profound spiritual dimension of his office was demonstrated by the Old Testament high priest. It is not the deacon as an individual that cares for the poor. It is Christ that is concerned for their welfare. The deacon comes as His representative. He must be asking himself, "What would Christ have me to do?"

How does the deacon convey the truth that it is Christ that is caring for the poor? By bringing the Word of Christ, applying that Word to the situation of the poor, and leading them in prayer. In this way the deacon functions as a representative of the merciful High Priest. What rich and instructive symbolism is found in the Old Testament type!

Deacons need to realize that financial distress brings unique spiritual needs to the poor. Our physical life impacts our spiritual life. In an affluent and materialistic age those who cannot maintain an average standard of living can begin to covet the things that God has given to others. Those who cannot provide for their needs are under a great deal of stress. They are usually working as hard as possible and trying to live as economically as they can, and

they still do not have enough to pay the bills. In some cases they may have lost a job, or God may have taken away their ability to work. In other cases there may be unusually large bills to pay. Whatever the situation, the fact remains that there is not enough money to provide for the needs of the family. This can lead to bitterness, resentment, and even despair. The devil can use any and all of these factors in combination with our sinful nature to tempt the poor to walk by sight, not by faith. It may happen that those in poverty are tempted to steal or to take the name of God in vain (Prov. 30:8, 9).

Deacons who come to the poor with the welfare of the poor enclosed upon their hearts, and mindful of the fact that their office requires them to shoulder the burden of the poor, have the proper spiritual perspective. They have the blessed privilege of caring for the whole person — soul and body. They must assure those in poverty that Christ is merciful. While discussing the mercy of Christ, deacons should point out that this mercy was revealed chiefly at the cross of Calvary. There Christ died in order that His people, who are spiritually destitute, might have the riches of salvation. It is because of the cross that the deacons are there instead of a government agency! In addition to bringing money, deacons open the Bible and lead God's people into the comforting truth that our biggest debt has been paid in full!

The poor in the world get financial assistance from the state or social agencies. This humanistic mercy stands apart from the benefits of the cross. Proverbs 12:10 states that such "tender mercies" are in fact cruel. The poor in the world get temporal relief from the effects of sin without seeking the forgiveness of God for the guilt of their sins. They ignore their true poverty. The world seeks to relieve its citizens

from the effects of sin and thereby silences the voice of God's judgment. This is cruel.

The deacons must also use Scripture to show God's poor that they are in a privileged situation. In God's wisdom, He has determined the circumstances of their life to be such that they need financial assistance. This financial assistance comes through the church. (Their membership in the church is already evidence of God's mercy toward them!) The financial assistance is possible because God's people realize that they have been given many riches. They have the spiritual riches that comprise the blessings of salvation. First and foremost, they have had the debt of their sins removed! In gratitude to God for the riches that they have freely received (even though they are by nature destitute sinners), they give some of the money that God has given to them back to Him in thanksgiving. Thus, the deacons have "many good means" to assist those in poverty.

The blessing that comes to those who need financial assistance is also in this — they experience the mercies of Christ in a direct physical way. Christ comes to them in a way that most of God's people do not experience. Christ will supply their physical needs. They can come to Him without hesitation. Indeed, it is a confession of faith to come to Christ! They look to Him to cover the debt of their sins. They also look to Him to supply their daily bread. They also *must know* that they are a blessing for the entire congregation. When their circumstances are the occasion for the diaconate to function actively, Christ is active in His church. Christ is present only through the offices in the church. When the diaconate functions, Christ is with us. To lose the diaconate would be to lose Christ. What a wonderful promise, then, is the word of our Lord, "For ye have the poor always with you" (Matt. 26:11). □

*It is because
of the cross
that the deacons
are there instead of
a government
agency!*

in a way that most of God's people do not experience. Christ will supply their physical needs. They can come to Him without hesitation. Indeed, it is a confession of

faith to come to Christ! They

look to Him to cover the debt of their sins. They also look to Him to supply their daily bread. They also *must know* that they are a blessing for the entire congregation. When their circumstances are the occasion for the diaconate to function actively, Christ is active in His church. Christ is present only through the offices in the church. When the diaconate functions, Christ is with us. To lose the diaconate would be to lose Christ. What a wonderful promise, then, is the word of our Lord, "For ye have the poor always with you" (Matt. 26:11). □

Nations

The concept nations is very important throughout the Scriptures. The first times the word appears is in Genesis 10, where we have the generations of Noah and the mention of Nimrod, and in Genesis 11 where we have the incident of the tower of Babel. The beginning of Nimrod's kingdom was Babel or Babylon in the land of Shinar (Gen. 10:10, Dan. 1:2). It is clear, therefore, that Nimrod was the first man to aspire to world dominion, the first type of the Antichrist, and the chief enemy of the church in his day. There was one language when he inspired men to build a great tower to make a name for men and to prevent the scattering of the human race over the face of the earth (Gen. 11:1-4). But what would this rebellion against God's express command mean for the church? Just before this, the universal Flood had delivered the church from persecution and extinction. Would not the establishment of a godless world power once again put the church in peril?

When God saw the city and the tower with the people working together using one language, He confounded their speech so they could not understand each other. God wounded the Antichristian beast and prevented its rapid development. Thus nations developed: some rich, some poor; fighting more and more wars as time goes on (Matt. 24:7); their attention diverted to a large extent from persecuting the church to making a name, extending borders, and getting wealth. The result of Babel is that the church down through the ages can go about her work of preaching the Gospel to all the nations as Christ commanded (Matt. 28:19).

Just before the end of time, the wound inflicted on the nations at Babel will be healed (Rev. 13:3). All nations will be united and wonder after the beast (a great political and religious leader). He will speak blasphemies, will have power to make war with the saints and overcome them, and will have dominion over all tongues and nations (Rev. 13:5-7). One great leader, one world kingdom, one speech or language. Those who have their names written in the book of life, and who refuse to receive the mark of the beast, will have no place in this kingdom. This is the beginning of the great tribulation! Thus, from the time of Nimrod to the time of Antichrist, the church is surrounded by many nations, each with its own

gods (II Kings 17:29), its own language, and its own humanistic agenda.

Soon after Babel, according to Genesis 12, God came to Abram and said, "I will make of thee a great nation." Abraham is called the father of many nations (Gen. 17:4), and receives the promise that in him all the nations of the earth shall be blessed (Gen. 18:18). The nations are blessed and saved by the great Seed of Abraham, Jesus Christ, with whose birth a nation was born at once (Is. 66:8), who is the desire of the nations (Hag. 2:7), who has power over the nations (Rev. 2:26), is sent for the healing of the nations (Rev. 22:2), and will judge the nations.

Israel was a kingdom of priests and an holy nation (Ex. 19:6). She was the light of the nations; an exalted nation because of righteousness (Prov. 14:34); unto her nations ran, and would run, because of the Lord her God (Is. 55:5). Yet Israel had nothing of which to boast, for she was in herself a stiffnecked people (Ex. 32:9). Nor did the Lord set His love upon her and choose her because she was more in number than other nations, for He drove out seven nations greater than she (Deut. 7:1-7). God's love for them was sovereign and unconditional. Indeed, God gave nations for her ransom and people for her life (Is. 43:3, 4). Also, at the end of the world, the nations will be dispossessed and left with nothing (Dan. 2), and the holy nation of the redeemed will be given the new heavens and new earth.

In times past God suffered all nations to walk in their own ways, although He always left His witness among them (Acts 14:16). On the day of Pentecost, with the miraculous sign of tongue-speaking (Acts 2:5), God reveals His will to grant repentance unto life unto the Gentiles (Acts 11:18). It was expedient that one Man should die for the people, that the whole nation perish not; but Christ did not die for Israel alone, but that He should gather in one the children of God scattered abroad (Acts 11:58). By His Word and Spirit, Christ gathers His church from all the nations, forming them into a holy nation that will show forth the praises of Him that called them (I Pet. 2:9).

"Blessed is that nation whose God is the Lord" (Ps. 2:16). □

Rev. Kuiper is pastor of Southeast Protestant Reformed Church in Grand Rapids, Michigan.

■ A House Divided

That is the situation in the Christian Reformed Church in North America (CRC): she's a house divided. Divided is the CRC on the issue of women in office. Twice in recent years the CRC synod decided to open all offices in the church to women, and twice subsequent synods refused to ratify those decisions and make the necessary changes in the CRC Church Order. Last year the synod refused to admit women to the offices of minister and elder on the ground that this is contrary to the plain teaching of Scripture. Meanwhile there are a number of churches which have installed women into the office of elder and are refusing to dismiss women from office as the 1994 synod urged them to do. While this issue has been studied, debated, and voted on several times, a goodly number of people have left the CRC. A few of these have joined existing Reformed denominations (among them our own Protestant Reformed Churches) while the majority have formed independent Reformed churches. As a result of this exodus the CRC, as reported earlier in these columns, has lost a significant number of members.

One would think that most of those opposed to the opening of the offices to women have departed the CRC, so that she could now get on with her agenda and allow women to serve in office. But apparently such is not the case. The CRC synod of 1995 will be faced with at least two overtures calling for action against those churches which continue to allow women to serve in the office of elder. The one overture from Classis Minnesota South

consists of three parts. The first part asks that the synod ban churches with women elders from sending delegates to synod. The second part calls for the synod to prohibit from serving on denominational boards and committees those individuals who agree with their congregations' decision to allow women to be in office. The third part of the overture is to ban Classis Grand Rapids East from sending delegates to synod until it rescinds its support for churches with women elders. Rev. Eric Verhulst, pastor of Hull, North Dakota CRC, said, "These actions are moderate attempts to deal with these churches. This particular overture is a response to the decisions of some churches to simply say we are going to do what we want and do our own thing, and that can't be tolerated." The first part of the overture passed unanimously, while parts two and three were passed by near unanimous votes.

An overture from Classis Hudson calls for even stronger action. This classis is asking the synod to "adopt a policy, effective immediately, that all members of such congregations (those which allow women elders, RDD) not be allowed to function as synodical delegates, synodical deputies, members of denominational boards or committees, or classical delegates." The overture goes much farther than this by asking the synod to "declare that all churches which refuse to submit to the urging of Synod 1994 (to remove women from the office of elder, RDD) be declared outside the CRC and removed from the official registry of the Christian Reformed Church in North America effective immediately." In the grounds for the overture Classis Hudson, citing a number of prior precedents in which synod disciplined local congregations for ecclesiastical disobedience, states that "strong action by

synod is legitimate." "The widespread abuse of the church order in the CRC and the refusal of classes to respond appropriately makes a denominational response imperative," the overture continues. "Failure to respond to violations of Church Order Article 3 will render the authority of Synod null and void. Our denominational unity will be broken and congregationalism will replace it. 'In those days Israel had no king, everyone did as he saw fit' (Judges 21:25)."

Classis Lake Erie also is sending an overture to synod. This Classis is asking the synod to revise the 1994 decision against women in office and to allow women to serve immediately as ministers, elders, and evangelists.

What will the synod do with these overtures? No one knows. One thing the synod will not do, we make bold to predict, is expel those churches which allow women in office from the denomination. Whatever the outcome, one thing is certain, the CRC is a house divided against itself and a house divided against itself ... (Luke 11:17).

Reformed Believers Press Service

■ Boesak In Trouble Again

Dr. Allen Boesak is the former moderator of the former Dutch Reformed Mission Church of South Africa and the former president of the World Alliance of Reformed Churches. He resigned from both of these positions in 1990 in the wake of a marital scandal. Now Dr. Boesak is being charged by Scandinavian aid officials with misappropriation of funds. The Scandinavian church organization had donated about \$1.2 million to Boesak's Foundation for Peace and Justice. They allege that about 75% of the money was misused. They say that private loans were given to Boesak, to the foundation's bookkeeper, and to other staff members.

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

While denying any wrongdoing on his part, Boesak announced he would sell his Capetown home to replace some of the missing funds.

South Africa's Anglican Archbishop, Desmond Tutu, said Boesak should clear his name before taking any official post. Said Tutu, "Boesak has played a tremendous role in our struggle, and I ... would want to see him cleared."

Following meetings with Boesak on February 8, the Scandinavians filed a charge with South African police. They claim Boesak was unable to give a satisfactory account of where the money had gone. Boesak called the meeting "a farce."

REC News Exchange

■ Together On the Way

In January the three Dutch denominations in the union process *Samen op Weg* (Together on the

Way) began phase three of organizing the union. In the first two phases they developed a basic church order and the general lines of structural organization. In phase three, committees will plan the details of how organizations will blend. Both the committees of directors and the staff workers in the organization will be involved in the planning.

Participants in the union process include the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands (GKN) and the Dutch Reformed Church (state church) and a Lutheran denomination. When the union is finally realized the churches in which most of us have our roots, the GKN, will cease to exist as a separate denomination. This is the denomination of Hendrick De Cock, Albertus VanRaalte, Abraham Kuyper, and other champions of the Reformed faith. What a shame! But it makes

little difference, since the GKN has long since departed from the Reformed faith. Had this not been the case she never would have participated in the union process.

REC News Exchange

■ An Anniversary

This year marks the fortieth anniversary of the Reformed Theological College (equivalent of our seminary) in Geelong, Australia. The College is the seminary of the Reformed Churches in Australia. This denomination is composed largely of immigrants who came from the Netherlands to Australia after World War II. The College was begun "to teach, defend and propagate the Reformed Faith and to train students for the holy ministry." One of its first faculty was Dr. Klaas Runia. □

Trowel & Sword

Taking Heed to the Doctrine

Rev. Bernard Woudenberg

The Covenant Promise

And I will establish my covenant between me and thee and thy seed after thee in their generations for an everlasting covenant, to be a God unto thee, and to thy seed after thee.

Genesis 17:7

If there was one thing central to our difficulties with the Liberated churches, it was certainly to be found in their view of the covenant of grace. To them it was crucially important; to us it presented endless problems.

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

As we have noted at various times in the past, the difficulties in the Netherlands during the thirties were perceived to arise primarily from an atmosphere of dead orthodoxy which had settled over the *Gereformeerde Kerken*. But to this there was an exception; and it centered in the Dr. Klaas Schilder. His preaching in the churches and his writings in the *Reformatie* were receiving a great deal of popular attention. Thus it was concluded, by those who followed Dr. Schilder, that the general deadness in the churches was due to the speculative, scholastic approach to theology followed by so many of their leaders and preachers, with their emphasis upon a number of the favorite teach-

ings of Dr. Abraham Kuyper: a supralapsarian approach to election, justification from eternity, immediate regeneration, common grace, and particularly his covenantal view that infants are to be baptized on the basis of a presumption that they are regenerated even though according to the doctrine of election it is not necessarily so. This scholastic approach caused a sense of smugness and deadness within the churches, which focused their attention more on debating abstract theological issues than living the Christian life. Of these Kuyperian doctrines Schilder took a different and essentially opposing view. Infra-lapsarian in his approach to election, he maintained justification in time; regenera-

tion through the preaching of the Word; a considerably milder form of common grace (limited to a favor of God toward his creation in general¹); and a view of the covenant which emphasized the positive nature of its promise, while including the commands of covenantal responsibility. But it was with this covenant concept, in the end, that we had our greatest difficulties.

Perhaps as great among our problems as any was, and continues to be, the determining of exactly what it is that the Liberated have in mind with their views. They claim them to be simple and direct and easy to understand; but the gist of their thinking we cannot seem to grasp. The problem may well be, as we have pointed out in the past, that the Liberated people work with a different concept of logic, that is, a different standard for determining what is right and true. This was probably the case already in the forties when Rev. Hoeksema repeatedly approached them with requests that they explain how their view of the covenant could be harmonized with the basic and traditional principles of Reformed theology, but never received a clear answer. Nor was it essentially different in the more recent debate between Prof. Engelsma and Dr. DeJong of the *Clarion* magazine. Although the debate went on for some time, our problems with the Liberated view of the covenant never seemed to get answered, while we were repeatedly accused of misrepresenting them and of imposing a logical scheme of thought upon the matter — as though being logical is somehow an undesirable thing. Their commitment would appear to be, as we have tried to explain, to the not uncommon use of a rhetorical logic, which is satisfied as long as something can be made to sound reasonable, without requiring a true harmony and consistency throughout.

It is no doubt in this sense as well that the Liberated covenant view is considered to be quite simple. To them the covenant of

grace consists basically of two things, a direct bestowal of the covenant promise on every child who is baptized — primarily as set forth in Genesis 17:7, “And I will establish my covenant between me and thee and thy seed after thee in their generations for an everlasting covenant, to be a God unto thee, and to thy seed after thee” — together with a continuing demand for faith and obedience. It was this, it is thought, that came through in the preaching of Dr. Schilder, and made it so relevant and powerful with the people. He spoke the promise of God with definitive authority, while laying before his hearers the responsibilities which must accompany it; and, in doing so, he escaped the speculative uncertainty of so many who went about discoursing on such obtuse subjects as election and reprobation, while concluding with the suggestion that people should examine themselves subjectively as to which of these applied to them. The result was, in the view of his followers, that the preaching of Dr. Schilder spread through the Netherlands like a breath of fresh air, restoring spirituality and life where everything had become dormant and dead.

Now there can be little doubt but that in those days Dr. Schilder did arouse a great deal of enthusiasm and interest in spiritual matters, and that this stood in sharp contrast to the often dry preaching found in many of the churches. Whether this was due, however, to Dr. Schilder’s doctrinal positions, or to his rhetorical abilities, and to his bold anti-establishment pronouncements — even against the invading Germans when they came — is perhaps an open question which can never be answered and must be left to the judgment of God. What is certainly true is that the Liberated view of the covenant would seem not to be anything new, but essentially to correspond to an old traditional position which had often been maintained before.

This traditional view had, for example, been commonly taught in the

Christian Reformed Church in its early years, particularly by the Prof. W. Heyns in the seminary. In his teaching he defined a covenant, in general, as God’s way of dealing with man by placing him before “promises of life if he should, and threatenings of death if he should not do that will of God, thus leaving the decision to him.”² And this latter was certainly the crux of the matter. It was Prof. Heyns’ way of leaving the final decision as to who should be saved, at least rhetorically, in the hands of man, which came through again when he applied this general definition to the covenant of grace:

The Covenant of Grace is that special institution for the salvation of man in which the Triune God binds Himself with a covenant and an oath to the believers and their seed, to be their God: their Father, their Redeemer, and their Sanctification, and binds them to Himself to be His own and to serve Him, thus insuring their salvation, unless they break the Covenant by unbelief and disobedience.³

And then to this definition he added next a number of ambivalent qualifications. He maintained that this covenant is “one-sided” but in such a way that there are two parties within it upon which its fulfillment is dependent.⁴ He called it “Unbreakable,” but in such a way that it can be broken by sin.⁵ And it is “Unconditional,” but in such a way that man as a party in it must fulfill the conditions of faith and obedience in order to remain within its bounds and receive its benefits.⁶

¹ This view was later dropped, perhaps in deference to us.

² Prof. W. Heyns, *Manual of Reformed Doctrine*, Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing House, Grand Rapids, 1926, p. 67.

³ *Ibid.* p. 125.

⁴ *Ibid.* p. 127-130.

⁵ *Ibid.* p. 130.

⁶ *Ibid.* p. 130.

In rather typically Arminian style he both affirmed a principle of Reformed theology; and then so qualified it as to make its opposite true as well. And so too he went on to add three more significant points: This covenant includes a covenantal grace for all its participants.⁷ The purpose of the covenant is to "encourage and strengthen faith in the promise." The covenant must not be seen as established only with the elect, but with all the children of believers.⁸

It was this doctrine of the covenant that was taught by Prof. Heyns during the years Herman Hoeksema was in seminary; and it was to it, perhaps more than anything else in his seminary education, that Hoeksema objected. In his view it was nothing less than Arminianism applied within the covenant of grace, inasmuch as it extended to every baptized child the grace and expressed desire of God that he should be saved.

Thus it was, when after the war a relationship began to develop between our churches and the Liberated, that Rev. Hoeksema met this with a degree of careful reserve. On the one hand, he had great sympathy for the Liberated people and their new churches, due to the way in which they had been high-handedly ejected from the *Gereformeerde Kerken*, much as we had been from the CRC in 1924, except that this was even more crassly done, in that it was brought about under the cover of a devastating war. He could empathize with them completely. And, in turn, he had a strong attraction to Dr. Schilder personally, and as a theologian. They had worked together so well and constructively during the doctor's brief visit here, and there was always that hope that someday they would be able to take up once more where they had left off. But Rev. Hoeksema was a realist; and it was evident in his reading about the theological conflict in the Netherlands, that the Liberated view of the covenant held a jarring similarity to

that of Prof. Heyns which he had rejected so emphatically in his seminary days. He wanted to believe that the Liberated theologians had some way of avoiding the clear Arminian implications of that view, but ask as he would they never came to explain how it was so.

And so he waited as patiently as he could, until the immigrants began to come over to this country. Those who came from the Liberated churches were being advised to join our churches, and it became necessary to explain to them that they should expect to hear from our pulpits a covenant view quite different from any they had been taught in the Netherlands. And then Rev. Hoeksema was silenced by his severe stroke, just at the time when Dr. Schilder was coming here for his post-war visit. The result was, of course, that they were unable to engage in the kind of theological discussions for which they had so long hoped. Little was accomplished in this regard, on a theological level, until there came the greatest shock of all. It was in the form of a brochure by Dr. C. Veenhof under the name *Appèl!* (in English, "Appeal!"). Here was a man who had corresponded with Rev. Hoeksema often, and who would have been expected to know our covenant view and at least treat it with respect. Instead, however, this pamphlet was as full of crass Heynsian statements as one could possibly imagine. Presented as an explanation of their break with the Synod of the Dutch churches, it put forth a view of the covenant expressed in statements so bluntly Arminian that one can hardly escape its implications, as can be seen from but a few quotations:

Above all we must know and maintain this; through faith we must also see that God, our God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ Himself baptizes the little children of the Church! When a child is baptized the LORD Himself comes to that child, He Himself sprinkles the water on its head and says very really and personally: *John, Mary,*

Anna, I, the LORD Himself, baptize you in my Holy Name. You are now of me!"

That baptism, which has been performed by the LORD, *always remains of power, every day, every hour, until our death, yea to all eternity.* It is essentially so that the Lord continuously baptizes us. He sprinkled us with water when we were but a few days old, He always keeps, so to speak, that water fresh and living and powerful upon our foreheads. And the Word which He first spoke, He continues to speak through our whole life! Every second Jehovah repeats: *Carl, William, Mary, I baptize you in the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.* Or, better said, Jehovah does not repeat that Word, He continues to say it. It continuously comes to us, earnestly and graciously out of His heart, in unbroken power....

It should ring in our hearts: The LORD baptizes us and continues to baptize us from day to day and hour to hour. He said once and continues to say now from day to day and hour to hour: "I am the LORD your God and you are completely mine"....

To rightly understand what this means we must surely know and always hold fast that the LORD in His wondrous love has thought it good to give all the children of believers His promise. Or, in other words: it has pleased Him to express to those children a glorious pledge. That is, He says to all those children, head for head, day in and day out, meaningfully and sincerely: "I am the LORD your God. I establish my covenant with you. I wash you from all sin in the blood of our Lord Jesus Christ; My Holy Spirit lives in you. In short: I declare to you the complete forgiveness of sins and eternal salvation: all the treasures and riches of which I can and will give to mankind....

And there was much more. These were not just passing remarks. They were put forth as the heart of the

⁷ *Ibid.* p. 136, 137.

⁸ *Ibid.* p. 150-152.

Liberated covenant view; and to us they were little short of astounding. The Liberated spoke of the dangers of baptizing on the basis of a presumption; and yet what could do more to arouse false presumptions than this blanket assurance of grace to everyone? The Liberated spoke

of the need to maintain the veracity of God; but, if this was to be given as an unwavering promise to every baptized child, when we know from Scripture, as well as from experience, that many go astray and live out their lives in unbelief and sin, how

can a divine veracity be maintained? And regardless of whether the Liberated like it or not, do not the Scriptural teachings of election and reprobation clearly state that such affirmations simply are not so? It all stood in direct conflict with everything we saw to be Reformed. □

Alexander Henderson: Covenanter

Introduction

Presbyterianism was established in Scotland only after bitter struggle. If Andrew Melville, whose life we discussed last time, was the father of Presbyterianism, Alexander Henderson, more than any other, was responsible for fixing it firmly in the kirk of Scotland — although even after his life the struggle continued for some few years.

The Stuart kings were on the throne of Scotland, all of them strong proponents of the divine right of kings and eager to be the absolute monarchs which their predecessors had been. Specifically, after Melville died, James VI¹ pressed the claims of an absolute monarch; and his policy was followed by Charles I.

The Stuarts were convinced, and correctly so, that Presbyterianism was a threat to their claims of absolute rule. They favored what was known as prelacy, the form of church government practiced in the Anglican Church in England, a system of church government much like

Rome's with archbishops, bishops, and lower clergy. The Scottish Presbyterians were just as convinced that such hierarchical forms of church government were contrary to all Scripture, and they were determined to resist, to the death if need be, any efforts by the Stuarts to impose prelacy on their land and in their church.

With Melville out of the way, the Stuarts, though still opposed by a few,² were successful in all but silencing Presbyterian ministers. They used the threats and punishments of imprisonment and banishment; they bribed wavering ministers with promises of bishoprics; they sent recalcitrant men to remote parts of Scotland where their influence was nil.

The difficulty was that along with prelacy came other evils: the right of kings to rule in affairs of the church, episcopal liturgical practices in the worship services, and oftentimes the dreadful heresy of Arminianism. All these galled the soul of the Presbyterians, whose only desire was to worship God according to the commands of the Scriptures.

Henderson's early life and calling

Into this situation Alexander Henderson was born in Fifeshire around the year 1583. Nothing is known of his early life. He lived in obscurity until he began his studies in St. Andrews. He earned his A.M. degree in 1603, and because he soon acquired a reputation as a brilliant mind, he was given the chair of professor of philosophy in St. Andrews.

Here he might very well have lived a comfortable and settled life, enjoying the honor and income of a prestigious post and bothering very little about the life and death struggle going on in the church. He was a man who, without much thought, supported prelacy, and he really never considered that anyone could be so concerned about minute

¹ Later James I of England when he succeeded in uniting England and Scotland under his rule.

² Such men as David Dickson and Robert Bruce attempted to resist the encroachments of prelacy. Robert Bruce was the first to establish a Presbyterian Church in Northern Ireland. The ruins of his church, with appropriate signs, can still be seen in Ballymoney.

problems as to make a fuss over the question.

But God had other plans for him. These plans began to become clear when in 1615 Henderson was made a minister of the gospel in the parish of Leuchars. Even this would not have amounted to all that much if it were not for the fact that the people in this parish were strong Presbyterians and they had no intention of allowing an episcopal prelate on their pulpit. On the day of Henderson's ordination they locked the doors and forced Henderson and his party to break into the church through a window.

There was fine divine irony in the events which followed. Robert Bruce, staunchly Presbyterian, attracted such large crowds to his ministry that Henderson was of a mind to go secretly to hear him to learn if possible the secret of Bruce's popularity. After Bruce entered the pulpit, he read his text at the appropriate time, which text was: "Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that entereth not by the door into the sheepfold, but climbeth up some other way, the same is a thief and a robber" (John 10:1). Alexander Henderson could not help but recall how he had himself entered the church where he was pastor when first he came to Leuchars. He was so smitten in his conscience that he retreated from the service in shame, went to his own study to ponder what Bruce had said, and became convinced before God that Presbyterianism was the only form of church government and worship sanctioned by the Holy Scriptures.

With that remarkable conversion, Scotland gained one of her most ardent and passionate defenders of the cause of God.

Henderson's battle for Presbyterianism

Although from that time on Henderson's life was devoted to the cause of Scottish Presbyterianism, we can mention only a few outstanding events in a life of dedicated service.

At the General Assembly of 1618 the forces of prelacy in Scotland gained a victory of sorts when the Assembly decided, under pressure from the king and his ministers, to impose upon the churches various episcopal practices which included kneeling at the sacrament of the Lord's Supper, private baptism in the homes or at the church outside worship services, private administration of the Lord's Supper, episcopal confirmation of clerics, and the celebration of various Christian holidays.

When the pastor of Leuchars opposed these episcopal innovations, he was summarily summoned to defend himself before the imposing High Commission of the king in St. Andrews. His defense of his position was so effective that the High Commission refused to do anything further to him in spite of his defiance of Assembly decrees.

Something on the same order took place nearly 20 years later when efforts were made to force Henderson personally to make use of episcopal liturgy rather than the simple liturgy used by Presbyterians throughout the land who managed successfully to resist the king's best efforts.

On March 1, 1638 an event took place of momentous importance. This was the signing of the National League and Covenant in the Greyfriars churchyard in Edinburgh.³ It was a rather short document, signed and sworn to by large multitudes of people from all parts of Scotland and from all ranks and classes of the Scottish people. It was a solemn moment in Scotland's history, for the document bound the signers by oath to be true to the Reformed faith, to be loyal to the king and the liberties and laws of the kingdom, and to resist Popery and every effort to impose prelacy upon them.

It was this National League and Covenant which gave to those signing it and to subsequent Presbyterians the name of "Covenanters."

Alexander Henderson was chiefly responsible for the document

and was one of its signatories.

Through the efforts of staunch Presbyterians the faithful acquired a majority at the General Assembly of 1638, at which Assembly Henderson was chosen as Moderator. Although the Assembly was protested, resisted, and opposed by the bishops, and although it was officially dissolved by the king, it continued to meet until it had successfully excommunicated opposing bishops and adopted decisions favorable to strict Presbyterianism.

It was at this meeting that, in an eloquent speech, Mr. Henderson defined what in the judgment of Presbyterians, was the responsibility of the king towards the church. We quote a few snatches from this speech to give some indication of the position which these men took on the sticky question of the relation between church and state.

... to a Christian king belongeth,
1. Inspection over the affairs of the church.... 2. The vindication of religion ... he being the keeper of the first table of the law. 3. ... to confirm ... the constitutions of the kirk ... and give them the strength of law. 4. He both may and ought to compel kirk men in the performance of the duties which God requires of them. 5. The coercive power also belongs to the prince.... 6. The Christian magistrate hath power to convoke assemblies ... and in assemblies ... his power is great....

But the church also firmly believed that it had certain rights and responsibilities towards the king, which were put into practice by Henderson and the Presbyterians.

When Charles I flatly refused to give Presbyterians any leeway in their practices, war broke out in England against the king. The forces opposed to the king were directed

³ Actually this was the second National Covenant, sometimes called the Renewal of the Covenant. It included in it the First National Covenant or King's Covenant.

by Parliament in which the anti-Prelate or Puritan party had gained power. The men of Scotland were prepared to join with their brethren in England in the civil war which was sure to come. Henderson in fact became a chaplain in these forces which scored several victories over the Royalist troops.

It is not our purpose to review all the events of that war; there will perhaps be another time to do that. Any schoolboy knows how Oliver Cromwell and his Roundheads eventually defeated the king, who fled for safety to Scotland. And all know how he was turned over to the English, who promptly relieved him of his head and established the Commonwealth with Cromwell as leader.

But what is important for us to remember is that, while the courage of the defenders of biblical church government and worship against the tyranny of Stuart kings can only stir our admiration, these men were wrong — terribly wrong in their views of church and state. Not only did not Christ give the king the powers in the church which the Presby-

terians were ready to give him, but the Presbyterians could never make right their claim that Christ gave them the prerogative to overthrow a tyrannical king (no matter how grievous his offenses) with the power of the sword. It was a muddled age in this respect; we must be careful that our admiration for these men does not blind our eyes to wrong conduct.

Henderson's last years

Two more events can briefly be mentioned. As Parliament in London guided the war against Charles, so did Parliament take it upon itself to restore Presbyterianism to England and Scotland. The method used was to summon an assembly of divines to bring this about. The assembly of divines which came to London at Parliament's bidding has become known as the Westminster Assembly, that famous and illustrious assembly which will, God willing, be the subject of another story. To that assembly Henderson was sent as delegate from Scotland, and on that assembly he labored dili-

gently for Parliament's goals.

In 1645, before Charles' final defeat, Henderson spent time, at the king's personal request, in negotiations with the king in an effort to stop the civil war and bring peace to the commonwealth. Efforts proved fruitless, for the king would not surrender episcopacy. But during the negotiations, although only after it became clear that they were fruitless, Henderson asked to be excused to return to his home in Edinburgh. His constitution was broken by overwork and he was too weak to continue in these arduous struggles with England's king.

He returned home, but died eight days after his return, on August 19, 1646 in Edinburgh. He was buried in Greyfriars churchyard, where to this day a monument stands commemorating his faithful labors.

These men were tested to the limit in faithfulness to their calling to obey God rather than men. It was a faithfulness which puts them in the roll of the heroes of faith celebrated by Scripture. □

Chapter 4

The Last Four Days of Creation-Week (cont.)

God's Creation of Man (3): Created in God's Image

Adam, if we may phrase it in this way, must have had the surprise of his life on the sixth day of creation-week when he first opened his eyes upon the wonders of God's handiwork.

What we are trying to empha-

size is that Adam's experience, as he came from the hand of his Creator, was unique. There is nothing that lies within the scope of our earthly experience to which it may be compared. Perhaps we may think of that first moment of Adam's life in terms of another moment of which the Scriptures speak, when, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last

The late Homer Hoeksema was professor of Dogmatics and Old Testament in the Protestant Reformed Seminary.

trump, the dead shall be raised and the then living believers shall be changed from mortality to immortality, from corruption into incorruption, in order consciously to inherit the kingdom of God in its full perfection. But also that last moment lies beyond our present experience. It shall undoubtedly be even more full of wonderment than the first moment for Adam.

Imagine, in as far as that is possible, that Adam came suddenly into being, formed by God's almighty power. Imagine that in a flash the Lord turned on the light of Adam's consciousness, so that he might behold all the wonders of creation. Imagine, too, that when he first opened his eyes upon his surroundings, he did so with such a clear perception and penetrating understanding that he was able in and through all the wonders of creation to see the light of God's countenance. Imagine, moreover, that the first man was surrounded by God's handiwork in its pristine beauty, as it was unspoiled by sin and the curse. Imagine that all creation spoke to him, whether with silent or with audible voice, of the knowledge and wisdom and glory of the Creator. Then you can also imagine, in as far as that is possible, that the very first act of our first father must have been an act of worship and that, prostrating himself in the dust whence he was taken, he must have cried out, "My God, how great and good Thou art!"

What we have just now stated stands in unbreakable connection with the truth that God made man in His image and after His likeness. It is precisely at this point, once again, that the truth of creation and the lie of evolution come to the parting of the ways. Evolution, whether it be atheistic or allegedly theistic, cannot arrive at man, the creature

made in God's image, no matter how many stages of development from animal to Adam you allow it and no matter how many millions of years you permit it to extend the process of development. From a biological point of view, indeed, but even more emphatically from the point of view of the image of God in man, there is a chasm which evolution cannot bridge. This chasm can only be explained from creation. According to that creation-faith, man's earliest state was not that of a naked and uncivilized savage, from which he struggled upward step by step to the present level of civilization. Nor must we conceive of man's first condition as being like that of an infant, whose mind is still a blank, whose moral consciousness is undeveloped, and whose conscious contact with his surroundings is a matter of growth and development. But Adam as he came from the hand of his Creator was the perfect man, endowed with the perfections of the image of God, standing instantaneously in the bright light of the full consciousness of his relation to the world about him and to God above him.

Directly, this truth concerning man's creation is taught us in Genesis 1:26, 27: "And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth. So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them." By the terms "image" and "likeness" Scripture here refers fundamentally to the same truth. These two terms do not refer to two different parts of man, such as his visible form and his spiritual nature, but the term

"likeness" is a further definition of the term "image." God created man in His image in such a way that the image was also a likeness, so that man resembles God in a creaturely way. Just what is implied in this we shall discuss later.

Let us now note also that the truth concerning man being made in God's image is not based merely on this one text from Genesis 1. In the first place, this is one of those underlying truths which is presupposed in all that the Bible teaches us concerning man. Always in the Scriptures man is presented as a creature capable of being addressed by God, as a creature who can hear and understand God's Word, as a creature adapted to have fellowship with God, to live in God's house, to know and to do the will of God, to be God's friend-servant, and to love the Lord his God with all his heart and mind and soul and strength. God deals with man as such a creature in Paradise. All this implies that close affinity between God and man which presupposes the image of God as its basis in man. For fellowship can exist only on the basis of likeness. Even in his fallen state, in which man no longer possesses the image of God, he remains a creature who in his creaturely nature is adapted to be the bearer of that image, and reveals such vestiges of that original image which he once possessed that plainly testify that he ought to know God rightly, love Him, and serve Him with all his heart and mind and soul and strength.

Moreover, the Scriptures plainly present man's redemption and salvation as consisting in the restoration of the image of God, and the elevation of that image to its highest possible level. This is the implication of Romans 8:29: "For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the first-born among many brethren." The words of Ephesians 4:24 plainly speak of this restoration of the image of God in believers: "And that

*From
a biological
point of view,
indeed,
but even
more emphatically
from the point
of view
of the image
of God in man,
there is
a chasm
which evolution
cannot bridge.*

ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness." In Colossians 3:9, 10 the image of God is literally mentioned as follows: "Lie not one to another, seeing that ye have put off the old man with his deeds; and have put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him." In I John 3:2, we read of the same restored and glorified likeness: "Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it does not yet appear what we shall be; but we know that, when it shall appear, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is." In a similar vein the apostle Peter speaks of our being made "partakers of the divine nature" (II Pet. 1:4). Moreover, as often as the Scriptures speak not only of our adoption as children of God but also of our being born of God, it suggests this same idea of the image of God: when we are born of God, this implies that we are made to look like our heavenly Father. Hence, there can be no doubt but that the Scriptures throughout teach this truth of man's creation after the image of God.

It is in the light of these same passages of Holy Writ that we must answer this question: what is the meaning of the image of God? What is the content of it? In what sense may it be said that man was created to resemble God?

In the first place, we must remember that this cannot mean that man was *essentially* like God. There is only one of whom it can be said that He is the image of the invisible God, and that is the Son of God Himself. He indeed partakes of the divine essence. But to suggest that man was originally, or may become, like God essentially is to repeat the lie of the devil in Paradise. There remains forever an infinite chasm between the Being of God and that of man. God is God; man is never God. God is the Creator; man is a creature. God is infinite; man is fi-

nite. God is eternal; man is a creature of time. God is the unchangeable and sovereign I AM; man is changeable and dependent in all his existence. It is exactly a key element in the marvel of God's covenant that the infinite and eternal and sovereign I AM would take up a little creature of His hand into the life of His friendship.

In the second place, we must not try to answer the question concerning the content of the image of God by way of philosophical reasoning.

*When we are
born of God,
this implies
that we are made
to look like
our heavenly
Father.*

Along this line, it has been taught that the image of God in man consists in certain natural characteristics of man, such as his intelligence, his rationality and morality, his power of rational speech, along with his alleged immortality. This reasoning runs somewhat as follows.

God is a Spirit; man's soul is also spiritual. God has intelligence; man also has a rational mind. God has a moral will; man also has a moral will. God is immortal; man also, they say, has immortality. These natural attributes of man constitute the image of God in him. Others claim that these natural gifts of intelligence and reason and a moral nature constitute what they call "the image of God in the broader sense," while man's righteousness and holiness and knowledge of God are what they call "the image of God in the narrower sense."

The trouble with this line of reasoning is, in the first place, that it finds no support in the Scriptures. The Scriptures plainly teach that the image of God in which man was originally created, and which is now lost, and which is restored in the believers, consists in spiritual perfection and integrity: true knowledge of God, righteousness, and holiness. Secondly, there is a danger lurking here. Usually, in connection with this explanation, it is stated that man lost the image of God in the narrower sense, but he kept the image of God in the broader sense. Right

there lies the danger. For from this presentation it is but a small jump to the idea that man, having not lost the image of God altogether, has kept part of his original righteousness. In other words, he is not totally depraved.

It is more accurate, therefore, to distinguish between the image of God and the creature adapted to bear that image, between the image and the image-bearer. That man is a rational and moral being constitutes him as the *bearer* of God's image. It requires a being with intelligence and will to reflect the virtues of the knowledge of God, of righteousness, and holiness. Man's rational, moral nature belongs, therefore, to his being the image-bearer. This, man never loses. Whether in the state of righteousness in Paradise, or in the fallen state, or in the redeemed state in Christ Jesus, man always remains a rational, moral being, a creature with intelligence and will, a creature who, as far as his nature as such is concerned, is image-bearer, that is, adapted to bear the image of God, and a creature who ought to reflect the virtues of God. Of this, man cannot possibly rid himself. For this reason also he can never shed his responsibility, or accountability. He can and does lose the image of God, even to such an extent that the natural man reflects not the image of God but the image of his father, the devil. For as the Lord says to the unbelieving Jews in John 8:44, "Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do." But while the image of God is wholly corrupted in him, perverted into its very opposite, so that he loves the lie, unrighteousness, and corruption, and is become the enemy of God, he always remains a responsible and responding creature, with intelligence and will.

But the image of God itself consists in the true knowledge of God, righteousness, and holiness. It is man's original integrity. Man could rightly know God with the spiritual knowledge of love. That knowledge consisted of his constant and clear

apprehension of the revelation of God in the things that are made, in the hearing of the Word of God, and of his tasting of the lovingkindness of God which is better than life. His righteousness was not an imputed righteousness, as is the righteousness by faith in Christ; nor was it an acquired righteousness, established by works of the law; but it was that concreated integrity of his will and his whole nature according to which from the instant of his creation it was his meat to do the will of God. Man's holiness was not the result of a constant battle of sanctification, but it was that increased virtue of his whole nature according to which he longed and thirsted for the living God and consecrated himself to his maker. To know the living God in love, to thirst for Him as the hart panteth after water-brooks, to taste that He is good, to know His will and to be in full agreement with it in his inmost heart and in all his

thinking and willing and longing, to be consecrated to the living God with all that he is and possesses in perfect devotion — these spiritual perfections constitute the image of God in man. Thus, Adam was made. From his very first breath he stood in conscious relation to God and to all things, and he tasted the goodness of God's house and was filled with the pleasures there are in God's right hand.

This, moreover, was life for man. Life in the true sense of the word, for man who is made after the image of God, is not simply to eat and to drink and to be merry, like the beasts that perish. But it is to live in intimate fellowship with the Fountain of all good, to walk with Him and to talk with Him, to taste His blessed favor, to delight in the doing of His will, to serve and to love Him with all our heart and mind and soul and strength. Death is the very opposite of this. Life is

not in mere bread, in mere things, but in the favor of God; death is in the wrath of God.

Finally, we must remember that Adam possessed the image of God in such a way that he could and did lose that image and in such a way that he could pervert that image of God into its very opposite. Herein, from the point of view of his constitution, lies the possibility of the fall. Moreover, we must remember that this was not accidental. Man was created in this way with a view to the revelation of the wonder of grace in Christ. For, presently, Adam must fall in order to give way to Christ and in order to make room for the entire history of sin and grace. For it was God's purpose to raise that image of God in man to the higher and heavenly level according to which as sons of God we shall be conformed perfectly to the image of His Son, that He may be the First-born among many brethren. □

News From Our Churches

Mr. Benjamin Wigger

Evangelism Activities

The Evangelism Society of the Randolph, WI PRC sponsored a recent lecture at the Central Wisconsin Christian High School in Waupun, WI. This lecture, entitled "Enduring the Great Tribulation," was given by Rev. Ron VanOverloop, pastor of the Georgetown PRC in Bauer, MI, and was a follow-up of a lecture he gave there last April 15, entitled, "The Lord's Return, Is It Near?"

The Church Extension Committee of the Loveland, CO PRC made a recent request to their fellow church members to supply names and addresses of those who might be interested in seeing the *Standard Bearer*, as well as names of places where the *SB* might profitably be distributed.

The two Bible classes of the Covenant PRC in Wyckoff, NJ have departed from their usual format these past couple of months so that they could meet together to see three video tapes of a Conference on Reformed Evangelism which was hosted by and held at the Byron Center, MI PRC in 1989. The first tape consisted of a speech given by Prof. D. Engelsma, of our seminary, dealing with the necessity of evangelism by the local congregation, followed by a short speech by Rev. J. Kortering, presently serving as minister-on-loan to the Evangelical Re-

formed Churches of Singapore, explaining how to organize an evangelism committee.

In other related matters the Evangelism Committee of Covenant is presently working on various projects such as a spring lecture and the publication of a pamphlet to be used as a mailer.

They have also received approval of a proposed plan for the building of a pamphlet rack on the wall in the narthex of their church for the better display and distribution of our churches' pamphlets.

Congregational Activities

While in Loveland, CO for the recent meeting of Classis West, Rev. R. Moore, pastor of Hull, IA PRC, was able to present slides of the recent trip to Ghana. This program was sponsored by the Men's Society of Loveland, in the hope that

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

through this means the congregation in Loveland would be made more aware of the work going on in Ghana by our churches through the Foreign Mission Committee.

The combined choirs of the Doon and Hull, IA PRCs presented their Spring Concert on March 5 in the Doon Church.

In early March, a classical appointment to the then vacant congregation of the First PRC in Edmonton, AB, Canada brought Rev. A. denHartog to Edmonton for two Sundays. While there he presented a program of slides on Singapore and our sister-churches there, taken when Rev. and Mrs. denHartog were able to visit Singapore once again in January.

Mission Activities

In a recent letter addressed to his congregation Rev. B. Gritters, pastor of the Hudsonville, MI PRC, writes about his and Rev.

Spriensma's recent trip to Northern Ireland to spend time with missionary Rev. R. Hanko and the Covenant Reformed Fellowship. "As much as Rev. Hanko's schedule permitted, we tried to spend time with him discussing the work and carrying out the mandate of the Consistory and Mission Committee. We were asked to observe the work, ask about goals, look into the welfare of the missionary and his family, etc...." And he adds, "Probably the main purpose of our visit was to analyze the desires of the CRF to organize into a church." "The CRF hopes to begin the process of making a request; and the Lord willing, if things continue to progress, make a request at the Synod of 1996."

School Activities

At a school society meeting held March 6, the membership of the Hull PR Christian School Society approved plans to add two classrooms,

along with restrooms, to their school building.

Minister Activities

We send our congratulations to Rev. Jai and Esther Mahtani on the occasion of the birth of their sixth son, Titus, born February 25.

Rev. R. Dykstra, pastor of the Doon, IA PRC, declined the calls he had been considering from the Byron Center, MI and Edgerton, MN PRCs.

Directly related to the above, the Edgerton Church will next call a pastor from a trio consisting of the Revs. A. denHartog (Hope PRC, Redlands, CA), K. Koole (Faith PRC, Jenison, MI), and C. Terpstra (South Holland, IL PRC).

Food for Thought

"One breath of paradise will extinguish all the adverse winds of earth."

— A.W. Pink. □

ANNOUNCEMENTS

RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The consistory and congregation of Southwest Protestant Reformed Church expresses its heartfelt sympathy to Mr. and Mrs. David Reitsma in the sudden death of his younger brother,

JONATHAN.

May the bereaved family be comforted by the promises of God's Word and may their confession be that of Job, "The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord" (Job 1:21).

Rev. Ron Cammenga, President
Clare Kuiper, Clerk

TEACHER NEEDED

The Free Christian School of Edgerton, MN is in need of a teacher for grades K-4. Please contact Allen Hendriks at (507) 442-5221 or Dennis Bleyenburch at (507) 442-7551 or write to the school,

Free Christian School
P.O. Box 431
Edgerton, MN 56128.

NOTICE!!!

Classis East will meet in regular session on Wednesday, May 10, 1995 at the First Protestant Reformed Church, Grand Rapids, MI.

Jon J. Huiskens,
Stated Clerk

RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The Bible Study Group of Bethel Protestant Reformed Church in Elk Grove Village, IL expresses their deepest sympathy to their pastor, Rev. Carl Haak, and his family in the loss of their father and grandfather,

MR. BARNEY HAAK.

Our prayer is that they may be comforted with the word of God in Lamentations 3:22, 23: "It is of the Lord's mercies that we are not consumed, because his compassions fail not. They are new every morning: great is thy faithfulness."

Bethel PR Bible Study

WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

On April 21, 1995 our parents,
**ROBERT and DOROTHY
NOORMAN,**

will celebrate, the Lord willing, their
40th wedding anniversary.

We are grateful to our heavenly
Father for giving us parents who fear
Him. We give thanks for the good
example, the covenant instruction,
the love, and the guidance He has
given us through them. We pray
for God's continued blessing on
them in their life together.

"But the mercy of the Lord is
from everlasting to everlasting upon
them that fear him, and his righ-
teousness unto children's children;
to such as keep his covenant, and
to those that remember his com-
mandments to do them" (Psalm
103:17-18).

- ✿ Rick and Sue Noorman
Michael, Joel, Denise, David,
Taylor
- ✿ Gary and Joyce Noorman
Lisa, Chad, Paul
- ✿ Jim and Faith Noorman
Alison, Elizabeth, Benjamin
- ✿ Keith and Sara Noorman
Kyle, Jared

Jenison, Michigan

NOTICE!!

Hudsonville Protestant Re-
formed Evangelism Committee has
available a two-tape set (audio or
video) of the two-day Evangelism
Conference held April 29, 30, 1994.
Three interesting and informative
speeches on evangelism and wit-
nessing by Revs. Terpstra, Mahtani,
and Bruinsma are included. The
cost is \$4.00 for audio, \$7.00 for
video. If you are interested, please
contact Hib Kuiper, Jr., at (616) 669-
1993 or Pete Kamps at (616) 249-
7314.

NOTICE!!!

The Hull Protestant Reformed
School has the following teaching
positions available for the '95-'96
school year: Kindergarten (3 days
a week), 1/2 time teacher for grade
2, Band and Choir. Please contact
Peter Brummel at home: (712) 439-
1308 or school: (712) 439-2490, or
Alvin Kooiker: (712) 725-2491, or
write the school:

Hull Protestant Reformed School
218 Second St.
Hull, IA 51239

WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

On April 29, 1995, our parents
and grandparents,
ERNEST and GRACE MEDEMA,
will celebrate their 35th wedding an-
niversary.

We rejoice with them in this time
of celebration of God's faithfulness
and His care of them and give
thanks to our heavenly Father for
having given us God-fearing par-
ents. We thank our parents for their
love and commitment to rearing us
in godliness and pray that the Lord
will continue to bless them and keep
them in His care.

"But the lovingkindness of the
Lord is from everlasting to everlast-
ing upon them that fear him, and
his righteousness unto children's
children" (Psalm 103:17).

- ✿ Thomas and Brenda Medema
Amanda and Trisha
- ✿ Peter Medema
- ✿ Nancy Medema
- ✿ Ralph Medema
- ✿ Matthew Medema
- ✿ David and Kimberly Moore
Kelsey
- ✿ J. Scott Medema

Lansing, IL

WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

On April 13, 1995, the Lord will-
ing, our parents,

**MR. and MRS. GILBERT
SCHIMMEL,**

celebrated their 45th wedding anni-
versary.

We with them, are grateful to
our heavenly Father for bringing
them together and blessing them
through these years of Christian love
and instruction they have shared
with us. We pray that the Lord will
continue to hold them in His care.

"But the mercy of the Lord is
from everlasting to everlasting upon
them that fear him, and his righ-
teousness unto children's children"
(Psalm 103:17).

- ✿ Jim and Carol Schimmel
- ✿ Dan and Judy Schimmel
- ✿ Hank and Deb VanderWaal
- ✿ Ruth Kerkstra
- ✿ Dave and Shelly Schimmel
- ✿ Tim and Yvonne Schimmel
- ✿ Tom and Beth Schimmel
25 grandchildren

Grand Rapids, Michigan

ATTENTION!

Bethel Protestant Reformed
Church has changed the location of
its worship services to the Holiday
Inn, 680 Irving Park Rd., Itasca, IL.
All visitors, friends, and Protestant
Reformed brethren please take note!
Take Exit 290 west on Thorndale
Rd. Take Rohling Rd. south to Ir-
ving Park. Turn east and go 1/4 mile
to the Holiday Inn.

"For the Lord's portion is his
people; Jacob is the lot of his inher-
itance" (Deuteronomy 32:9).