



THE **STANDARD BEARER**

**A Reformed
Semi-Monthly
Magazine**

God hates congregational singing, beautiful as it may sound, that does not resound in regenerated hearts. We are to put our hearts into our music, i.e., *know* the sorrow over sin that we sing in Psalm 51; *desire* the redemption that we celebrate in Psalm 107; *intend* the praise of Jehovah in Psalm 150; and *mean* the blessedness of a life of obedience to the Law in Psalm 119.

See "Music in the Church" — page 418

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June 1, 1995

CONTENTS:

June 1, 1995

Meditation — Rev. Mitchell C. Dick	
Running the Race	411
Editorial — Prof. David J. Engelsma	
What's Coming Up at the Synod of the PRC?	413
Decency and Order — Rev. Ronald L. Cammenga	
Denominational Missions	416
Bring the Parchments — Prof. David J. Engelsma	
Music in the Church (2)	418
A Cloud of Witnesses — Prof. Herman C. Hanko	
Samuel Rutherford: Westminster Divine (2)	421
When Thou Sittest in Thine House — Rev. Ronald J. VanOverloop	
An Arrow Leaving the Quiver	423
In His Fear — Rev. Arie denHartog	
Be Not Highminded but Fear	425
Day of Shadows — Homer C. Hoeksema	
The Last Four Days of Creation-Week (cont.)	428
News From Our Churches — Mr. Benjamin Wigger	431

Editorially Speaking ...

The editorial calls attention to some of the major items on the agenda of the 1995 synod of the Protestant Reformed Churches (PRC). These are matters of the seminary, missions, contact, and overtures.

But these are not the only important, or interesting, matters that the PRC will treat at their major assembly.

By proposal of a constitution, a new denominational committee comes into existence. This will be the "Catechism Book Committee." Its work will be the improvement and expansion of the materials used to instruct the children and young people.

Catechizing the children is an essential calling of the churches. In their faith concerning the covenant of God with believers and their children, the PRC take this work very seriously. Thirty weeks of every year, the pastor and elders of every congregation instruct all of the children of the church, from age 5 or 6 to the time of confession of faith and beyond, in the Word of God, in special classes. The "Catechism Book Distribution Committee," which sees to the publication and distribution of synodically approved materials, reports on its labors. It has again this year sent out hundreds of catechism books.

The PRC have a good assortment of solid biblical, Reformed books and workbooks for their thorough catechism-program. These include catechism books and workbooks on Bible history for three levels of children's development; books and workbooks based on the Heidelberg Catechism; and a book of questions and answers on Reformed doctrine. All are available to persons and churches in or outside the PRC. Write for samples to 4949 Ivanrest Avenue, Grandville, MI 49418.

A special committee on reprinting *The Psalter* (again, out-of-print) recommends certain changes in the format of the new printing. The committee also recommends a "study edition" of the creeds and "minor confessions" of the PRC.

The Stated Clerk for the past twenty years, Rev. Meindert Joostens, informs synod that he is ineligible to continue in this position, since he is moving from the Grand Rapids area. The rule requires the election of a new Stated Clerk.

From the "Yearbook Committee" comes the good news that there continues to be steady numerical growth of the PRC. The churches are now over 1,500 families.

—DJE



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

Running the Race

Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us. Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God.

Hebrews 12:1, 2

Wherefore ... run!

They ran. Now you run! They are the runners of faith as Hebrews 11 has described. Now they are a great cloud of witnesses who surround you. They ran without having received the promise. But now the promise has been fulfilled. Christ has come. Christ has run before you the race of your salvation. Now you run! Run with the full assurance that in Him the victory is certain!

On your mark!

Christianity is a race. Let us run the race, Hebrews 12:1, 2 exhorts. The comparison of Christianity to a race calls to mind the ancient Olympic games of Greece. We have modern day Olympic games. The running races are popular contests at these games. The track is at the center of the stadium. Spectators urge on the runners. Medals are given to the victors.

The Christian race is spiritual. It starts when we are born again. Along the way to the finish line we "run after" holiness in the way of thankful obedience, as athletes disciplined by the Holy Spirit. The race ends when we are summoned to heaven and given the victor's crown. The race is our striving to be godly on the way to glory.

This race, our text says, is "set before us." It is set before us in the Scriptures. There are revealed the commandments of God. We are to live by them. We are to run, with all of God's people, the way of the commandments of God (Ps. 119:32).

But more. The Word of God gives us the examples of others who have run before us the race of faith. We learn from their race. We learn how to run as they did. We are warned by their sinning how not to run. We are encouraged by the fact that by faith these all received a good report and a glorious crown through running the race set before them.

Further encouragement is found in the fact that we know that this race that we are to run has ever been set before God, ordained by Him in eternity. The beginning and the end He knew and determined. The race you have to run as a mother. The race I have to run as a father. The race one has to run alone, with no husband or wife. The race some have to run as cripples. The race covenant children must begin to run, very often before they can walk. The race of the young and of the old, of male and female, of slow runners and fast. God determined them all!

Great comfort, this, especially seeing as our race is extremely diffi-

cult. Hebrews 12:1, 2 does not kid us. It does not present the Christian race as a mid-morning stroll in the park. Rather, the emphasis of the text is that this race is very difficult. The Greek word for "race" points to this. The word is *agoon*. From this word we get the English "agony," and "anguish."

And that is our race. It is a fierce and grueling struggle. Our spiritual muscles often ache, our spiritual lungs sometimes seem about to burst. For the Christian is always to run his race — night and day. He must never let up. And daily he must exercise the most rigorous discipline of body and of soul.

Other things make the spiritual race difficult. For one thing, the race is long. It is a spiritual marathon. The marathon in the Greek games and today is 26 miles, 385 yards. But our race is longer. It is lifelong! Besides, what adds to the difficulty of our race is that we do not know exactly where we are going. An earthly runner knows every inch of the course he must run. But we do not know just exactly where the Lord is leading us to run. To be sure, we know that heaven is our final destination. But along the way God does not tell us where we will have to run tomorrow or the next day. We do not know what is around the bend or over the hill. There is grace, and light, only for each step of the race.

All these things make for a difficult spiritual race. But there is one difficulty which makes our running well nigh impossible. That difficulty is weight, as Hebrews 12:1 sets forth. Have you ever tried to run with

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weights? Weight, whether it be the weight of heavy boots or of fat, can make running difficult, even impossible. The weight referred to in our text is the weight of sin. Sin is a weight. It hinders our running.

Anxiety, fear, doubt, unbelief — these are all so many sinful weights, hindrances to our running. Who, for example, can run properly the Christian race if he is so anxious about a past of sin, always “looking over his shoulder”? A runner who looks over his shoulder will surely trip and fall!

Things, like the television, sports activities, work — these can become weights to us. They are not weights in themselves. But watch them enough, enjoy them too much, become immersed in them too often, and they will hinder your spiritual racing.

This weight, this sin, is described as something which doth so easily beset us. We may translate: sin is something which “doth so well encircle us.” We have a sinful nature. We have our besetting sins which constantly hinder our life of holiness. There is the devil, and a whole world of evil people who want to get us and our children off the track.

So many difficulties. And sometimes, dear Christian reader, fellow runner, do we not get discouraged? We experience the loneliness of the long-distance spiritual runner — sometimes it seems as if we are the only ones running and wrenching our bodies and souls. We wonder how that prize, that victor’s crown, can ever be for such poor runners as we are. We want to give up.

But the Word of God says: Run! Run to the end!

Get set!

How are we to do this? First, we are to lay aside the weight and sin which doth so easily beset us. As the runner trims off the fat by rigorous denial, as he takes off the heavy clothing or anything which would interfere with his running, so must we put off our weights, our sins, and avoid that which leads us

to sin. And we must do this completely: every weight, every sin, must go. This we do by prayer, repentance, godly self-discipline, and close attention to the race “set before us” in the Word of God.

Positively, we must run with patience, as our text says. Patience is the ability to run, but also, strikingly, to wait — to wait on God. It is the ability to run, but always to rest in God and His way for you, His will for you. Patience enables us to endure to the end, keeps us from burning out when the race gets more difficult or seems too long.

Laying aside every weight, with patience, and looking to Jesus — that is how we run!

We look to Jesus as an example to follow. He had a race to run while on earth. And He ran it perfectly, without sin. He patiently endured the contradiction of sinners and ran, despising the shame. That is, He thought so little of it while looking at the joy set before Him of victory and exaltation and the gathering of the church for His Father. He ran to the end!

We look to Him by faith. We look to Him and behold Scripture’s revelation of how He ran. We cling to Him and run to Him for help in the race we must run.

Go!

There are great incentives which our text gives to encourage us to continue the Christian race.

First, we are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses. The cloud of witnesses is reference first of all to the believers of Hebrews 11, but also, by implication, to all the saints who have run before. These witness of something they know, they tell the truth about it. They speak of God. They speak of the strength of faith to overcome all obstacles. They speak of the great victory given. Some of them witness through the record of their lives in the Scriptures. Others, familiar to us personally, witness to us in our memories of how they lived, what they said.

There is a great cloud of these witnesses, a great number. There are Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and millions more. They encompass us like spectators in the stadium, watching as we run. But they are not watching as mere spectators. For they have run the race before, and won the prize. They testify to us. They shout encouragement to us.

And they are shouting from heaven now as well, I imagine. Those Old Testament heroes of faith, and our grandparents, and parents, and others we know who have gone before us and finished their race — can we not hear them? They are saying things like: We never regret one lap we had to run! God is gracious! His reward, His heaven, is worth all the sacrifice, all the pain, all the grief, all the agony!

“Run!” the witnesses say. Run! Run! Run! To the weary these witnesses say: don’t give up! To those trying to carry weights and beset by their sinful nature they say: Lay that aside, and put on the new man in Christ! Run! Faint not!

Finally, and fundamentally, there is this incentive, this encouragement to run. Jesus, our Savior: His running is more than just an example to follow. By His running He saved us. Jesus ran, taking on Himself our weights, our burdens and sins, and the wrath of God for them. And before His race was finished He had broken His body and shed His blood on our behalf. His was the marathon of the Mediator: run from a lowly manger up the hill Golgotha and down into the gorge of hell!

Wonderfully, this One, Jesus, won His race. He satisfied completely the justice of God. He is crowned with great glory and honor. And He has, by His atoning race, earned the right to be the Author, the source of our faith.

And now from heaven He gives faith joining us to Himself. We rely on Him totally, looking unto Him all the way, confessing as we run, that “it is not of him that willeth nor of him that runneth but of God that

showeth mercy." And He finishes that faith. He perfects it and us. He preserves us in it. He will lead us along the course we must run to the finish line and perfect holiness and

inexpressible glory in heaven.

So we continue to run, with courage and hope. There is still the struggle, the striving, the sin, the sorrow. But the victory is sure in Christ

Jesus. Run, believer! Look up in the race. Look to the finish line. Have hope. For with every grace-given stride your final and glorious victory draws nigh. Run! □

Editorial

What's Coming Up at the Synod of the PRC?

The synod of the Protestant Reformed Churches (PRC) will meet in Hull, IA this year, convening on Tuesday morning, June 13, God willing. The consistory of the Hull PRC will conduct a special, pre-synodical worship service on Monday evening, June 12. Rev. Ron Van Overloop, president of the 1994 synod, will preach the Word. Five ministers and five elders from each of the two classes of the denomination will deal with matters that could not be finished in the minor assemblies or that pertain to the churches of the major assembly, according to the rule of Article 30 of the Church Order of Dordt.

The stated clerk of the denomination, Rev. Meindert Joostens, has already distributed an agenda to the delegates.

An account of some of the more important matters that will be treated at the synod follows for the benefit of the members of the PRC and for the information of other interested readers.

The Seminary

One of the main tasks of this synod will be the examination of two senior seminary students, Mr. Allen

Brummel and Mr. Douglas Kuiper. Having successfully completed four years of study at the seminary, including a six-month internship, these young men will be publicly examined in dogmatics, Old and New Testament history, church polity, church history, and practical matters concerning their call to the ministry. In addition, they will preach a specimen sermon before the synod and submit written exegesis on the Hebrew text of Psalm 127:3-5 and on the Greek text of I Thessalonians 4:13-18.

Synod approving the examination, the graduation ceremony will be held on Monday, June 19, at the Hull church at 8 P.M.

Two young men from the PRC will begin their studies in the seminary in the fall, maintaining the enrollment at eleven.

The Theological School Committee (TSC) reports to synod that the addition to the seminary building is almost finished, so that occupancy is expected by the time of the meeting of synod. Cost has been kept within the original estimate of about \$440,000.

The TSC is proposing that the seminary host a public conference in Grand Rapids on September 21

and 22 on "Reformed Church Government."

The TSC recommends that Prof. David Engelsma be granted permanent tenure at the seminary. It informs synod that, since Prof. Herman Hanko will be 65 this year, the TSC must begin work on the prescribed procedure for replacing him. The synod of 1996 must appoint a new professor.

Missions

The report of the Foreign Mission Committee (FMC) concentrates on Ghana, Africa as a possible mission field for the PRC. The committee is "excited about our continuing labors in Ghana, especially in light of the very favorable report of the delegates who visited Ghana." The visit was that by Rev. Richard Moore and Elder Don VerMeer from November 19 - December 29, 1994. The FMC asks synod to approve sending another delegation to Ghana in 1995 with a view to calling a missionary to Ghana in 1996. The FMC reports that it has informed Rev. Jay Kortering, minister-on-loan to Singapore, that "we would not be able to take on the work of India which he is conducting, due to the expected

amount of work in Ghana."

The Domestic Mission Committee (DMC) reports on the two denominational works in Northern Ireland and in the San Luis Valley in Colorado. Rev. Ron Hanko serves as missionary in Northern Ireland, working with the Covenant Reformed Fellowship. This group consists of some 16 adults and 17 children. Others attend the services as regular visitors. The group informs synod that it plans on addressing synod, 1996 with a request to be organized as a church. By means of speeches, distribution of literature, and advertising, the PR mission in Northern Ireland is influential in spreading the witness to the Reformed faith throughout the British Isles. There is cooperation in this activity with the British Reformed Fellowship, sponsor of a Reformed family conference that meets every two years at different locations in the United Kingdom.

Rev. Tom Miersma has just begun his labors as home missionary in the San Luis Valley in Colorado. There is a core group of 10 adults and 9 children. In a letter to the DMC, Rev. Miersma states that "it is clear that there is a significant amount of work to be done. We have had visitors from all over the valley almost every Sunday since our arrival."

Responding to a request from a church in Spokane, WA for which several PR ministers have preached in the past year, the DMC informed the church that "unbiblically divorced and remarried persons cannot be received as members of the PRC." The reason is that "those unbiblically divorced and remarried are living in sin (Romans 7:2, 3; I Corinthians 7:39)." The church had requested to join the PRC with all its members, including those who are divorced and remarried.

The DMC is carrying out decisions of previous synods that it make special radio broadcasts "to serve in the preparation and discovery of a field or potential field of labor." Rev. Wilbur Bruinsma, Rev. Carl Haak,

and Rev. Ron VanOverloop are making these radio sermons for the DMC. The new broadcast will be called "The Word of Truth."

Contact Committee

The Committee for Contact with Other Churches (CCOC) is arranging a conference with the Evangelical Presbyterian Church of Australia (EPC). The purpose of the conference is discussion of the doctrinal differences that presently make a full sister-church relationship impossible. A main issue is the application of the "regulative principle of worship." Frank, open discussion of differences with the purpose of coming to agreement on the basis of Scripture and the confessions is the right way for churches to strive to manifest the true unity and catholicity of the church on earth. Ignoring doctrinal differences is both wrong and foolish.

In response to the decision of the PRC synod of 1994, that future observers to the Alliance of Reformed Churches (ARC) must be permitted to address the real issues between the ARC and the PRC, the mostly independent churches in the ARC recommended "to the Protestant Reformed Churches that their consistories initiate discussion with local ARC consistories." In a letter to the Contact Committee of the ARC, the CCOC of the PRC has objected to this decision of the ARC:

We object to this decision because it seems to us to reflect the very independency in the Alliance against which we have repeatedly advised. And the decision seems to presuppose that such an independency also exists among us. We want the Alliance to understand clearly that matters of inter-church relations are, in accordance with the principles of Reformed church polity, matters of our churches in common and, therefore, of our synod through its contact committee. Our churches must and do act in concert on these matters, not as individual congregations.

The Evangelical Reformed Churches of Singapore (ERCS) have asked that Rev. Jay Kortering, minister-on-loan to these churches from the PRC, remain to help them for two more years. The CCOC recommends that synod grant this request. Among his other labors, Rev. Kortering serves as pastor of First Church; conducts regular catechism classes; leads Bible study and prayer services; teaches classes for those joining the churches; helps in the evangelism work of First Church; cooperates in the mission work of the ERCS, particularly in Myanmar; is advisor to the Theological Training Committee; and teaches courses at the newly established Evangelical Reformed Bible School.

Overtures

The Council of the Doon, IA PRC brings two overtures to synod. One advocates changing the procedure for calling a professor of theology. The present procedure has synod electing a professor. Upon accepting the call to be professor of theology, the minister retains his ministerial status as minister of the Word and Sacraments, emeritus, in the congregation that he was serving when he was called to the seminary. His ministerial credentials remain with the church where he last served as pastor. Usually, he transfers his church membership to another congregation in the vicinity of the seminary.

Doon's overture finds objectionable both that the call to the seminary involves the man's becoming emeritus in the church he presently serves and that the professor likely has his ministerial credentials in a church from whose supervision he is removed by hundreds of miles.

If synod adopts Doon's overture, the new procedure will be that synod appoints the man and designates a church in Grand Rapids to call the man to the office of professor. Upon his acceptance of the call, both the man's ministerial credentials and church membership will be

transferred to the calling church.

The overture raises significant issues of Reformed church polity that synod should consider carefully. One has to do with the call itself. Is justice done to the reality of the call when a local church simply follows the instruction of synod to call Rev. So-and-So? How will the church do this? by the consistory apart from the congregational meeting? at a congregational meeting that gathers to vote for the designated Rev. So-and-So?

The problem is accentuated by the very real possibility that, once in Grand Rapids, the professor may for various reasons desire to transfer his church membership to another congregation than the one that originally called him. Classis West foresaw this possibility and amended Doon's overture to allow the transfer of the professor's ministerial credentials to another congregation in the area of the seminary. But this implies that an officebearer has his credentials, that is, office, in a church that never called him. And what if the congregation which the professor desires to join is not willing to exercise that supervision which the transfer of ministerial credentials involves?

The other issue concerns the place of the theological professor in the denomination. As both the present "Form for the Installation of Professors of Theology" and the present "Constitution of the Theological School" stress, the professor belongs to no single congregation but to the denomination. Synod elects and calls; the "curators" charge him at his installation on behalf of the churches. Synod must consider whether the appointment of a calling church does not compromise this essential aspect of the office of professor of theology.

Doon's overture regarding a change in the emeritation system would streamline the process by which emeriti ministers and widows of ministers are supported. It calls for the ministerial credentials of the retired minister to be transferred

from the church that he last served to the church where he chooses to be member. The consistory of the church where he has his membership then becomes responsible for supervising the financial support of the minister. The second important feature of Doon's overture on emeritation is its change of Article 13 of the Church Order of Dordt, making the denomination responsible for the support of all retired ministers. The original article, presently maintained by the PRC, makes the local congregation last served by the minister responsible for his support.

No doubt, there are practical advantages to this overture. Doon makes clear that the present system is clumsy. Nevertheless, also this overture confronts synod with important church political principles.

There is the same matter of the transfer of ministerial credentials and supervision of office without a call, that is part of the overture on calling professors.

In addition, changing the responsibility for support of the emeritus minister from the local church to the denomination not only makes Article 13 of the Church Order say the exact opposite of that which it taught originally but also raises the question, whether, in reality, the office of the minister is located in the local congregation or in the denomination. And this raises the question, whether the church institute is the local congregation or the denomination. The principle behind the original Article 13 is that the local congregation is the church, possessing all the privileges and the responsibilities of the church. Adhering to this principle, the present "Constitution of the Emeritus Committee" declares:

The obligation of supervision over the support of an emeritus minister rests not upon the churches jointly, but upon the local church which the minister serves or has last served.... (Art. VII).

A brother in the churches overtures synod to reexamine the relationship between the PRC and the PRC of New Zealand. He asks that synod look into the possibility of having the New Zealand church join one of the classes of the PRC.

In these and the other matters coming before this broadest gathering of the PRC, may the delegates have the Spirit of wisdom to decide all in the light of Holy Scripture and, therefore, in harmony with the Reformed creeds and the Church Order of Dordt.

Members of these churches and others who love the faith confessed by the PRC, pray for the synod! Christ is present as King of His church also in the synod of His true churches.

May the prevailing of truth and righteousness in the multitude of counselors be a blessing to the PRC and to the church catholic. □

— DJE

REMINDER:

The Standard Bearer
is published
only once a month
during the months of
June, July, and August.

The July issue
will appear
somewhat later
in the month
than usual,
to make it possible
for us to include
in it a report
of the 1995 Synod
of the PRC.
Your patience
will be
appreciated!

Denominational Missions

"The missionary work of the churches is regulated by the general synod in a mission order."

Church Order, Article 51

The Missionary Task of the Churches

Article 51 deals with the fundamental work of the church — the preaching of the glorious gospel to the ends of the earth. To that work she has been called by the ascended Lord Jesus Christ: "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned" (Mark 16:15, 16). To that command of Christ the apostles were obedient: "And they went forth, and preached every where, the Lord working with them, and confirming the word with signs following" (Mark 16:20). And to that command of Christ the Reformed church today is obedient, bringing the good news of the sovereign grace of God in Christ Jesus far and wide.

This article makes plain that the Reformed faith is not inimical to missions. It makes plain that Reformed churches do not consider mission work a frill, an extra-curricular ecclesiastical activity that the church may or may not choose to be involved in. It makes plain that there is to be no suspicion cast upon mission work, as if missions necessarily in-

volves the church in compromise — belittling of the truth for the sake of numbers.

Missions is the task of the church. Missions is at the very heart of the work to which God calls the church. That is as much true today as it was in the days of the apostles.

The Protestant Reformed Churches consider missions to be a vital aspect of the calling that these churches have before God. They give expression to that in the "Preamble" of the "Constitution" of their denominational Mission Committee.

The Protestant Reformed Churches believe that, in obedience to the command of Christ, the King of the church, to preach the blessed Gospel to all creatures, baptizing, and teaching them to observe all things which Christ has commanded, it is the explicit duty and sacred privilege of said churches to carry out this calling according to the measure of our God-given ability.

From the very beginning of their existence, these churches have been active in performing their missionary calling, both in our own country and abroad. They have always stood ready to help any who have made pleas for help, pursuing every opportunity for witness that the Lord has provided.

The calling to missions is the calling that God has given to the

church. This fundamental principle of Reformed missions is incorporated into Article 51 inasmuch as the article speaks of "The missionary work of the churches...."

Missionary work is not the task of individuals, although certainly every believer is to be a witness for Jesus Christ and to be ready at all times to give a reason for the hope that is in him to those who might ask him concerning that hope (I Pet. 3:15). Missionary work is not either the calling of independent mission societies, not directly accountable to the church or supervised by the church. That mission societies have so much taken over mission work goes a long way to explaining why the "gospel" that is being brought on the mission fields today is not "the gospel" but is "another gospel."

But mission work is the calling of the *church*. It was the congregation at Antioch that sent out Paul and Barnabas on their missionary journey (Acts 13). It is significant that the Holy Spirit did not call Paul and Barnabas directly, but called them through the church. Paul recognized the authority of the church at Antioch, too, always returning to Antioch and reporting to them at the end of each missionary journey.

Background to Article 51

Our present Article 51 was not an original article in the *Church Order of Dordt*. Originally Article 51,

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as well as Article 52, dealt with the relationship between the Dutch-speaking churches of the Netherlands and the French-speaking churches (the Walloon churches) in the south of the Netherlands, what is now Belgium. Article 51 in the *Church Order of Dordt* reads: "Since two languages are spoken in the Netherlands, it is considered good that the churches using the Dutch and Walloon languages have their own consistories, classical meetings, and particular synods."

The original article provided for separate ecclesiastical gatherings, the Dutch and French-speaking churches to have separate consistory, classical, and particular synod meetings. The one assembly that they would have in common would be the general synod, which was to meet every three years.

This article did not apply to the situation in the Christian Reformed Church. In their 1914 revision of the *Church Order*, therefore, the Christian Reformed Church thoroughly revised Article 51. That revision, made in the Dutch language, read: "*De arbeid der kerkelijke Zending onder de heidenen and Joden wordt door de Generale Synode in eene Zendings order geregeld.*" The translation would be: "The task of ecclesiastical missions among the heathen and the Jews is to be regulated by the General Synod in a mission order."

Significantly, the new Article 51 spoke of mission work "among the heathen and the Jews," that is, foreign mission work. The reason for this is that in her earlier history the classes of the Christian Reformed Church regulated what we would call "home" or "domestic" mission work. In the revision and English translation of its *Church Order* in 1920, the Christian Reformed Church dropped the reference to "the heathen and the Jews," so that the article was now made to refer to mission work generally.

Article 51 of the *Church Order of the Protestant Reformed Churches* is substantially the 1920 revision of the Christian Reformed Church.

There is one notable difference. Whereas the 1920 version of the Christian Reformed Church spoke of the missionary work of the "church" (singular), our Article 51 speaks of the missionary work of the "churches" (plural). The explanation for this change is our conviction that missionary work, inasmuch as it is the preaching of the gospel, is the task of the local congregation, the churches, although regulated by the churches in common.

Synodical "Regulation" of Mission Work

Article 51 requires that the missionary work of the churches be "regulated" by the general synod of the denomination. What is the significance of synodical regulation of missions?

The article clearly intends to distinguish between "regulate" and "perform." Synod *regulates* denominational mission work; synod does not, synod cannot, *perform* mission work. The performance of the work of missions is by the local church.

The principle here ought to be obvious. The work of missions is the work of the preaching of the gospel. No major assembly has the right to preach the gospel and to administer the sacraments. That duty belongs to the local congregation, under the supervision of the elders of that congregation. Classis and synod are not super-churches or super-consistories. They cannot call and send out missionaries. The work of preaching the gospel, of calling and sending a missionary-preacher, that is, the exercise of the keys of the kingdom, belongs strictly to the local congregation and its consistory.

This is not to say that synod has no calling in missions, and that synodical involvement of any sort is intrusive and hierarchical. As is the case throughout our *Church Order*, so also in Article 51, the autonomy of the local congregation is preserved and at the same time the authority of the broader assemblies. Synod may not *perform* mission

work, but synod does *regulate* denominational mission work.

The principle reason for synodical regulation of missions is the unity of the churches. Bound as they are by a common faith and order, it necessarily follows that the churches express and maintain their unity in the pursuit of missions. For a congregation to go it alone, to labor in missions on its own, altogether apart from the rest of the churches of the denomination, is independentism. And independentism — however and wherever it shows itself — is anathema to Reformed churches. As churches we stand together under Christ our Head, also in the work of missions.

Besides this principle reason for synodical regulation of missions, there is also a practical reason. That practical reason is simply that what one congregation of limited means and manpower would find impossible to carry out, the churches together are able to do. The pooling of resources and the sharing of the burden of the work compel the churches to labor cooperatively in missions.

The "Mission Order"

Synod regulates the work of missions through a "mission order." The reference is to denominational committees or boards that are appointed by synod and accountable to synod. In the name of synod, they regulate the mission work of the churches.

The Protestant Reformed Churches have two such denominational mission committees, each functioning under a synodically approved constitution.

The Domestic Mission Committee oversees the home mission work of our churches, generally a work in our own country or a work among those who in their generations have had the gospel. The members of this committee are from Classis East, generally living in the Grand Rapids, Michigan area. The committee consists of ten men — five ministers and five elders or ex-elders.

Currently, the Domestic Mission Committee is busy regulating the work of two missionaries. In conjunction with the Loveland, Colorado congregation, the committee oversees the labors of missionary Rev. Thomas Miersma, who is laboring in the San Luis Valley in southern Colorado. In conjunction with the Hudsonville, Michigan congregation, the committee oversees the labors of Rev. Ronald Hanko, who is denominational missionary in Northern Ireland.

Foreign mission work is regulated by the Foreign Mission Com-

mittee of our denomination. This committee is made up of men from Classis West, ministers and elders or ex-elders from northwestern Iowa and southwestern Minnesota. For a number of years this committee oversaw the denominational mission work in the country of Singapore, work that God blessed in the organization of our sister-churches, the Evangelical Reformed Churches of Singapore. In the last couple of years the Foreign Mission Committee has aggressively been pursuing the possibilities of labor in Ghana, Africa. Recently a delegation from the For-

eign Mission Committee spent nearly a month in Ghana, preaching, teaching, and making contacts. Undoubtedly recommendations from the committee will be presented to synod 1995 regarding the future of this work.

May God continue to bless the mission labors of our churches. May He give strength and wisdom to our missionaries, to the calling consistories, and to the mission committees. May we as churches continue to be used, and be willing to be used, for the spread of the gospel in all the world. □

Bring the Parchments

Prof. David Engelsma

Music in the Church (2)*

The Importance of Music in the Church

The importance of music in the church is indicated when the apostle of Christ writes, in Colossians 3:16, that by our singing we teach and admonish one another. Probably this is not a familiar thought to us; perhaps we are not conscious of this when we sing. We are well aware, of course, that we all should teach each other, and admonish each other, as the opportunity or need arises (although our practice leaves much to be desired). But we are doing this by our singing, in "psalms and hymns and spiritual songs."

Music has great power to teach

— to drive what is sung deeply into the soul and to fasten the words that are sung in the memory. Secular education has recognized this and has always used music in teaching. The devil also knows this power of music, and he has always used it effectively to teach the lie. I have found this to be true, to my sorrow. Years ago, in order, I thought, to be able better to contend against it, I listened to the music of the Christ-denying rock opera, *Jesus Christ, Superstar*. To this day, I find myself humming, and sometimes singing, the haunting, but demonic, piece of Magdalene, "I don't know how to love Him." But Christ has redeemed God's creature, music, and God the Holy Spirit uses the singing of the congregation, or of a group of saints, to teach and admonish the people of God with the Word of Christ.

If we stop and think about this, we will find it so in our own experi-

ence. You come to church on a Sunday morning depressed, so "down" that you do not even sing yourself. Then, the congregation sings:

O my soul, why art thou grieving?

What disquiets and dismays?

Hope in God; His help receiving,

I shall yet my Savior praise.

(Psalm 43)

As the church sings, you feel *your* own soul addressed; your lips begin to move; you are taught effectively to hope in God.

Or, I come to Men's Society bitter, really against God, for some disappointment. The group sings num-

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ber 210 in *The Psalter*, from Psalm 77:

I asked in fear and bitterness,
Will God forsake me in distress?
Shall I His promise faithless find?
Has God forgotten to be kind?
Has He in anger hopelessly
Removed His love and grace
from me?

To these fearful, bitter questions
comes the calm answer:

These doubts and fears that
troubled me
Were born of my infirmity;
Tho' I am weak, God is most
high,
And on His goodness I rely;
Of all His wonders I will tell,
And on His deeds my tho'ts
shall dwell.

I am admonished, mightily, so that
then and there I am converted and
renewed to live in trust in the good-
ness of God.

This happens through the sing-
ing of the people of God. It makes a
difference that I do not merely read,
or think about, these words, but that
the body of believers and their chil-
dren sing them, with one heart and
one voice.

If we teach and admonish one
another in our singing, it is implied
that the words of our songs are
sound, that they are the truth of the
gospel, that they are the "Word of
Christ." The words are the all-im-
portant thing, not the melody and
rhythm. Nowadays, songs are
brought into the worship services of
churches because the tune is lively,
even though the words are frivolous
or doctrinally corrupt. This is
wrong. The tune is secondary; it
must serve the words. John Calvin
warned against melody and rhythm
that are not befitting the solemnity
of the words with which the church
praises God:

As for the music, it should not
be light and flighty like secular mu-
sic but should have weight and maj-
esty, agreeable to its subject and fit

for singing in church (cited in
T.H.L. Parker, *John Calvin: A Bi-
ography*).

Our concern about the words of
the church's songs is not imaginary.
False doctrine can be sung into the
church, as well as preached into the
church. As a matter of historical
fact, Protestant churches have been
corrupted by the gradual introduc-
tion into their worship of hymns that
increasingly have the congrega-
tions sing their own religious
experience, rather than the
faith of the church. This is
the heresy, fatal to the
congregation, of subjectiv-
ism — making man and
his religious feelings the
center of worship, instead
of God and His work in
Jesus Christ. The result is
that the church no longer looks
out with the eye of faith upon the
all-glorious God as revealed in the
person and work of Jesus Christ, so
that her worship in song is "Halle-
lujah, Hallelujah," but she now looks
in upon herself, at her own religious
navel, so that her worship in song is
"In full and glad surrender I give
myself to Thee" and "Take my life,
and let it be."

Arminian hymns that condition
salvation upon the free will of the
sinner have helped to drive the gos-
pel of salvation by free sovereign
grace out of the churches of the Ref-
ormation. Even the better hymnals
include "Jesus is Tenderly Calling,"
"Come to the Savior, Make No De-
lay," and "Softly and Tenderly." This
is an additional reason why Re-
formed churches have opposed the
introduction of hymns into their
worship: many hymns teach another
gospel of man's saving himself by
his will, and the introducing of
hymns opens the way for these un-
sound hymns.

The truth that we teach one an-
other by singing has application to
the music that we listen to in every-
day life. The music we hear is teach-
ing and admonishing us; we are
learning from it. Lyrics that pro-

mote a godless life-style — rebellion,
irresponsibility, drugs, sexual pro-
miscuity, worship of Satan, and the
like — *teach*. If you listen, you are
deliberately allowing the word of the
devil to dwell in you. Then you
must not be surprised that you be-
gin to approve these things and even
to practice them. For God's sake,
let the Word of Christ dwell in you
through the music you listen to; give
the word of the devil no place in
your soul by his music.

In the worship of the church,
since the main thing is the
words, the organ accompa-
niment must be just that:
an accompaniment of, and
an aid to, congregational
singing. The organ may
never become the preemi-
nent feature of the music of
worship. The congregation (and
visitors) may never assemble to hear
the accomplished organist. Congre-
gational singing may never become
enslaved to the great organ. And in
the organ-playing when the church
is not singing — prelude, offertory,
and postlude — the music must be
conducive to Reformed worship.
Certainly the worshiping church
must not be disturbed by excerpts
from popular, secular pieces, nor by
a tune that inevitably puts them in
mind of words that contradict the
Word of Christ, e.g., "Throw Out
the Lifeline." Since an organ does
help congregational singing, it has a
rightful place in the church; and
those able to play serve the church,
with their gift, in an important way.*

That we teach, and are taught,
by the singing at church implies also
that we sing with understanding.
We must think through words and
thoughts of our songs. Psalm 47:7
demands, "sing ye praises with un-
derstanding." In I Corinthians 14:15,
the apostle says, "I will sing with
the spirit, and I will sing with the

*False
doctrine
can be sung
into the church,
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preached
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church.*

* Cf. the article, "Congregational
Singing and Organs," in the *Stan-
dard Bearer*, Vol. 52, pp. 851, 852.

understanding also." Here is a common fault of ours, that we do not pay careful attention to the words we are singing; we utter the words in a mindless way. This shows that we are not singing from the heart, but it also hinders the work of teaching — the Holy Spirit does not bless the singing of the saints *automatically*.

A second indication, in Colossians 3:16, of the importance of music in the church is the teaching — the main thought of the text — that it is by singing that the Word of Christ dwells among us richly. It is the will of God for the congregation, that the Word dwell in her *richly*. It is not enough that the Word barely be present. And the members are called to be active in this rich indwelling: "Let the word ... dwell in you richly." How do we do this? How does it happen that the Word dwells *richly* among us?

It is significant that the related passage in Ephesians 5 speaks of being filled with the Holy Spirit in connection with the singing of the people of God: "And be not drunk with wine ... but be filled with the Spirit; Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord" (vv. 18, 19). The congregation is filled with the Holy Spirit when the Word dwells in her *richly*. The same is true of the believer personally. But how does this happen? How are we to be filled with the Holy Spirit?

This does not take place through mysterious, private, spiritual exercises, nor by the devotions of small groups of super-saints, nor even by extraordinary activities of the congregation, but it happens through *singing* — through singing the Word of Christ. The apostle aims at growth in the Christian life and experience — being filled with the Spirit and being indwelt *richly* by the Word. He plainly lays out the way: singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs.

How important, then, that we sing!

The Manner of our Singing

But we must sing in the proper manner. This is singing with the heart. The source of the music is not the voicebox, but the heart. As the mouth pours forth the psalm, or hymn, or spiritual song, the heart is in the music. This warns against lip-service in singing — a real danger, and a serious sin. God abominates and condemns all external service in which people praise Him with the lips, but their hearts are far from Him. God hates congregational singing, beautiful as it may sound, that does not resound in regenerated hearts. We are to put our hearts into our music, i.e., *know* the sorrow over sin that we sing in Psalm 51; *desire* the redemption that we celebrate in Psalm 107; *intend* the praise of Jehovah in Psalm 150; and *mean* the blessedness of a life of obedience to the Law in Psalm 119. To sing in worship is not easy, any more than it is easy to pray.

Singing with the heart will show itself in enthusiastic singing. Now, mere noise does not impress God. Besides, the Scriptures do not say, "Bellow," or "Bawl," but, "Sing." Nevertheless, the heart will make singing both lively and loud. I have heard churches sing, whose singing must have caused the angels present at the worship to weep. So lifeless! So feeble! There are members, including young people, who barely move their lips for singing, and hardly utter a peep. So unenthusiastic! So bored!

Take a psalm and shout,
Let His praise ring out,
Lift your voice and sing,
our *Psalter* admonishes us (418:2). Oh, how fervent will be the singing of the great congregation in glory: "... as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of a great thunder" (Rev. 14:2).

"Glory to our King," number 418 in *The Psalter* continues, "He is Lord of earth, Magnify His worth." It belongs to the manner of our singing

that we sing to God. Consciously the congregation at worship, or the group of saints, directs the music to God. Although we teach and admonish one another, we do not sing for each other, ultimately, but for God. A warning is in order at this point also. Fascinated by beautiful sound, we easily find ourselves singing for people. It is not impossible that, enthralled by his powerful bass, or by her lofty soprano, as the case may be, the individual singer sings for himself, or for herself. We must sing to the Lord! Not only must a congregation sing to the Lord God,

but a choral society must also sing to the Lord — not to the audience, but to the Lord.

*The source
of the music
is not
the voicebox,
but
the heart.*

All of our singing, ultimately, is to be praise. God's church is a God-glorifying church. She praises God in the preaching; she praises God in prayer; she praises God in the singing. And it is exactly the outstanding characteristic of the Psalms that they are God-centered and God-glorifying. They are the Word of Christ, to be sure; but Christ is the revelation of God, that "unto Him (may) be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen" (Eph. 3:21).

The Possibility of Such Singing

The possibility of music in the church is grace. This is not the loveliness of our singing, but the free favor of God in Jesus Christ to sinners, forgiving their sins for the sake of the cross and renewing their hearts by the Holy Spirit.

It takes grace to sing. No one can sing, or want to sing, except the man whose heart is reborn by the grace of Christ. No people will sing, save the people who hear the joyful sound of the gospel of grace.

Let there be music in the church!
God grant the church His grace!

□

Samuel Rutherford: Westminster Divine (2)

Introduction

In our last article, we left Samuel Rutherford busy with his work in the Chair of Divinity at St. Andrews College. Although he remained in that college the rest of his life, his work soon took him to London as a representative of the Scottish Churches on the Westminster Assembly.

Work at Westminster

When the Puritans in England gained the ascendancy in Parliament in England, they determined to bring true Presbyterianism to the entire realm. In order to accomplish this noble goal they called together an assembly of divines from every part of Great Britain for this work. This assembly has become known throughout subsequent history as the Westminster Assembly.

It is not our purpose in this article to give a detailed history of this Assembly. We are particularly concerned with the role played here by Samuel Rutherford — and even that only briefly. Let it be clearly said however that, with the possible exception of the Synod of Dort, no greater assembly of orthodox theologians has ever been assembled;

and, indeed, the Assembly set the confession, liturgy, and government for all true Presbyterianism throughout the world in all following generations. Its shadow has been long and universal.

To this assembly the Scottish Presbyterians were invited to send delegates. Samuel Rutherford was chosen, an indication of the high esteem in which he was held throughout the Scottish Churches.

For four years the assembly met in the Jerusalem Room¹ of Westminster Abbey in London. Here in London Rutherford remained throughout the entire time, separated from his family. It is some measure of the devotion to the cause of Christ which these men possessed that during the four years' separation from his family he did not return home when the two children he had with his second wife died; he returned to a home without children and to a wife who had grieved alone.

Sitting alongside his good friend and fellow Scotsman, George Gillespie, Rutherford rendered inestimable service to the Assembly.² The Assembly had to determine the type of church government which would prevail in England. Represented at the Assembly were not only Presbyterians, but also Independent Congregationalists and Erastians. The former proposed a form of church government in which no federation

of churches would have any authority at all, but each congregation would be something of a law unto itself. The Erastians, on the other hand, favored a state controlled church in which ecclesiastical affairs would be regulated by the king. Rutherford fought long and hard for the Presbyterian form of church government which ultimately prevailed.

The Westminster Confession was the doctrinal product of this assembly. Its sound and virile orthodoxy, however, did not come about easily. No doubt the greatest threat to a soundly orthodox position was represented by Amyraldianism, which taught a hypothetical universalism in the work of salvation and the atoning work of Christ, and which insisted on a universal love of God and a desire of God to save all who hear the gospel. Again, Rutherford was adamantly opposed to such a perversion of the gospel and fought in the vanguard for the clear and biblically sound statements of the Confession as we have it today.

¹ This room is surprisingly small, not much larger, if any, than my classroom in Seminary.

² George Gillespie was a man of ability equal to or perhaps even greater than that of Rutherford. Gillespie is known for his famous book, "Aaron's Rod Blossoming."

It was not until 1646 that Rutherford was able to leave London. So impressed was the House of Lords with his work that it sent a letter to the Scottish Churches at his departure which read in part: "We cannot but restore him with ample testimony of his learning, godliness, faithfulness and diligence, and we humbly pray the Father of spirits to increase the number of such burning and shining lights among you."

Declining Years

Upon his return to Scotland in 1648, Rutherford became Principal of St. Mary's College in St. Andrews, and in 1651 Rector of the University. His fame had by this time spread abroad and in 1648 Rutherford declined an appointment to the Chair of Divinity in Hardewyck in the Netherlands. The Dutch would have liked very much to have had him, and in 1651 he twice received the appointment to the Chair of Divinity in Utrecht. But his heart was bound to his fatherland, and both appointments were declined.

In the years following, Rutherford's life was once again filled with sorrow. Charles I had been defeated by Cromwell's armies on English soil and Charles had fled to Scotland. He was subsequently handed over to the English who beheaded him. But Cromwell's successes did not solve Scotland's problems and the Presbyterians in Scotland were bitterly divided over the question of the attitude which the Scottish Churches thought they should take towards Cromwell's forces. Presbyterians were split, many friendships were broken, and bitter acrimony and fighting followed in which Rutherford found himself in a minority position. It was no wonder that the Scottish were the first to welcome back to the throne Charles II.

Charles II came to the throne with solemn promises to observe the National League and Covenant, but as was true of the Stuarts in general, lying came easy to him. No longer than his position was secure

and he turned in fury against the Presbyterians and did all in his power to force prelacy on Scotland once again.

During the days when Rutherford was at the Westminster Assembly he had written a book entitled *Lex Rex (The Law and the King)* which had outlined carefully the position of Scottish Presbyterians towards tyrannical kings and had set forth what was the Presbyterian position on the relation between the people of Scotland, the Church in Scotland, and Scotland's king.

Quite naturally, Charles II hated this book with a passion, for it argued forcibly against all for which kings stood. In September of 1660 the book was examined by the king's commissioners. It was condemned, and the nation was ordered to turn in all copies by October 16. Those who refused to do this were declared enemies of the king. On October 16 all the collected copies were burned, with ominous implications, by the hangman in Edinburgh, and a few days later at the gate of Rutherford's own college in St. Andrews.

Rutherford was ordered to appear personally before the King's commissioners. This, however, he was unable to do because of his many infirmities and weaknesses. So he was tried, condemned, deposed from the ministry, and dismissed as professor *in absentia*. He was ordered to remain under guard in his own house until a further sentence could be executed.

It was indeed the "Killing Times." Rutherford's two colleagues were killed: Argyle was beheaded on the scaffold and Guthrie was hanged. Rutherford was next in line, but by the time his turn came around he was dying.

In fact, according to his own confession, he preferred a martyr's death: "I would think it a more glorious way of going home to lay down my life for the cause, ... but I submit to my Master's will." And when he was ordered to appear in court to have the death sentence passed on

him, he responded to the messengers: "Tell them I behave to answer my first summons, and ere your day come, I will be where few kings and great folk come."

It was the time when God's saints were called to "love not their lives unto death." Freely and joyfully they chose the way of obedience though it led across the dark scaffold, for it was for them the only way home.

Rutherford's Character

In many ways Rutherford was a man of strange paradoxes, paradoxes of character reflected in his writings. He was a man of easy anger and fiery temper before whose fierce fury bold men quailed. But he was also of infinite patience and kindness towards suffering parishioners, and they loved him for it. When Rutherford was exiled to Aberdeen from his humble parish church in Anwoth, many of his people went the entire distance with him, walking on foot 230 miles, only to have to return the same dreadful distance. And when they left him at the gates of Aberdeen, they wept as those whose hearts were broken.

His writings could be, and often were, long, tedious, monotonously argued, and filled with extensive and heavy metaphors which all but crushed his thoughts beyond understanding. He could, however, write beautiful poetry that soared with the eagles. In our home library we have a small book of his poetry that stirs the soul.

In like manner, his writings could be, and often were, bitter, angry, intolerant, filled with seeming malice — especially when enemies of the gospel were the objects of his fury. But his letters, written from Aberdeen in the days of his exile, were warm, comforting to the sorrowing, encouraging to the discouraged, filled with the overflowing of a pastor's heart.

While often times his writings sank beneath the weight of heavy and ponderous arguments and high-flown and over-blown rhetoric,

sometimes his statements could come like a rapier. To a would-be professor in the University he said: "If you would be a deep divine [theologian], I recommend to you sanctification." And on his deathbed he died with the words on his lips from which many preachers could profit mightily: "I betake myself to Christ

for sanctification as well as justification."

His forte remained his preaching. It is said of him that crowds were attracted to his preaching not so much by the persuasiveness of his argumentation, not because of the power of his oratory, not out of amazement at his exegetical skills,

but because he preached Christ — and did so with passion.

He lived a faithful servant of Christ and died escaping a martyr's death by a hair's breadth. His legacy lives on in that towering monument to orthodoxy, the Westminster Confession. □

When Thou Sittest In Thine House

Rev. Ronald VanOverloop

An Arrow Leaving the Quiver

As arrows are in the hand of a mighty man; so are children of the youth. Happy is the man that hath his quiver full of them.

Psalm 127:4, 5

Often when we see a newborn child we are amazed. We can stare at them for hours as they lie sleeping. We consider with amazement how they existed inside the mother for nine months. Often it is remarked with awe as we watch their little nostrils flair slightly with each breath, that they lived for nine months without breathing any air, but suddenly they absolutely need air to breathe. We coo and make various kinds of funny noises and faces, talking in a voice which is very different from our normal tone (we would be embarrassed to talk to anyone else the same way). We look at their tiny fingers and toes and at the wrinkles in their skin and consider how wonderfully they have been made.

Within a few weeks of their birth we begin tirelessly to try to make them to smile. And how ecstatic we are if we get a response (and we do not care if it is a genuine smile or one caused by gas). Later we cannot wait for them to take their first step, clapping our hands and shouting for joy at their "success." Later yet we are anxious to hear them speak their first word, even if the parents are the only ones who can understand what the child said.

We are often surprised at the first signs of willful stubbornness and rebellion. First we may think it is cute, but later we can easily become angry at their sin. We pray for and anxiously look for the first evidences of their interest in spiritual things. We pray fervently that any interest will be genuine and will grow.

For nine months we, as parents (and grandparents), wait for the ability to see and hold that which lived in *secret* (Ps. 139:15). And toward the end of the pregnancy it was hard to be patient. Often I think that the Lord makes us wait for several months as a gentle, but very pointed, reminder that the child is not really

ours, but His! So quickly we assume possession and ownership. God gives us responsibilities toward the child's care and training, but we often wrongly jump to the conclusion that responsibility means ownership. Or, worse yet, we often act as if we made the child, taking credit for the things they do or say which are right or popular, as if we made them to be what they are. For example, my child is cute because he or she looks like me. But God made the child fearfully and wondrously. He graciously gave to us the child He made in the dark depths of the mother's womb. When the child was still *unperfect*, then the Almighty saw and curiously wrought (Ps. 139:16).

Scripture tells us, "Lo, children are an heritage of the LORD: and the fruit of the womb is his reward. As arrows are in the hand of a mighty man; so are children of the youth. Happy is the man that hath his quiver full of them" (Ps. 127:3-5a). Children are a gift from God (a gift which keeps on giving — both happiness and heartache). They are as arrows. We did not make the wood of the arrow; God did. We did not

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make the feathers; God did. And we had nothing to do with making the stone or metal which makes the point; God did. God made and He still owns the arrows He gives to us.

We did not make up the elements of the arrow, but we do have the responsibility of laboring over the shaft to make sure it is straight and smooth. We search for feathers that their shape and placement on the shaft is just right. And we sharpen the point and firmly attach it. We did not make the child, but we do have the responsibility of raising him in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.



Growing up is tough. It is tough on the child and on the parents. And the older they are, the tougher it seems to be.

Children are not just any arrows. They are arrows in the hand of a warrior. The warrior uses his arrows to defend himself and to attack the enemy. His arrows are vital, essential to his life. Therefore his arrows must be prepared with a great deal of care.

The skilled warrior prepares his arrows carefully. He seeks out the best kind of wood, carefully making sure the grain is straight and true. He carefully cuts it to the right length. He seeks to make round the shaft, and then he polishes it for straight flight. He carefully attaches the feathers so the arrow's trajectory will be true. He affixes the sharpened tip with equal care because its weight must stabilize the arrow, so it can reach its goal. Then there comes the day when the warrior launches his arrow. He carefully aims at his target, making allowance for distance and wind. But all his skill is for nothing if the arrow has not been shaped well. Unless the arrow has been well made it will not fly true.

Once the arrow is launched, there is little the warrior can do to direct its flight (except to watch and

to pray). Everything that could be done, is done. Once it has left the bow, nothing more can be done to shape the arrow.

For years we parents devoted our time and efforts to preparing and polishing the children God gave to us. We worked to shape and to mold them in the right way. We taught, we admonished, we encouraged, we badgered, we bribed, we counseled, and we shouted. We laughed and we cried. Hardly a moment (especially for the mother) and never a day went by that we did not consider the child. In fact, in many ways our whole life changed and was affected by the presence of the child or children. Many times, far more than the child will know, we wept over their sinful actions. But more often we cried because of frustrations at our own weaknesses. And we prayed. We prayed that God would use us, the weakest of means, to work in the hearts and lives of our children, so what we taught in the home and school and what the church taught them would sink in, that is, that the Holy Spirit would speak to their hearts and minds. Though we never worked as much or as well as we should have, we did work very hard in shaping and molding the arrow(s) God gave us.

Eventually the day of launching the arrow arrives. The child may be going off to college. Years ago many parents watched their son enter into the world of the army (because of the draft), and sometimes sent them off to war. Now it is more likely that the child leaves his or her parents' home to get married.

As the arrow leaves the fingertips, all the work of shaping is completed. Now the parents can only watch (and keep praying). Children are like arrows, not like guided missiles which can receive mid-course corrections. Will the years of shaping, polishing, and balancing be sufficient? How will the scars and wounds of the warrior (parents) affect the flight of the arrow?

And how does the warrior deal

with the feelings of a lighter quiver?

The child's leaving the parental home is a powerful reminder to the parents that the child is not theirs. He or she never was. We may have thought so, or acted as if they were; but they really were not. God made the wood, feathers, and point. He fearfully and wonderfully made the child.

Our children leave our homes and we realize that our calling of shaping and molding them is now completed. We cannot undo anything we did before, no matter how hard we try. In fact, often efforts to "make it right" only do more harm than good. We let go, realizing again that they are not ours, but the Lord's. And we are made to realize that our work of Christian parenting was to nurture and shape them for the glory of God. This is humbling, because we are made to realize that constantly we have to fight the unconscious desire to raise them to be our pride and joy.

When the child leaves our homes, there may be ways in which parents can still influence the child. This however requires more wisdom than was necessary before the child left home, especially if the child left home to get married. When the arrow is launched into a marriage there is very little the parents can do (or should try to do), and they must recognize and rest in that fact. We may pray that the arrow will fly true. We know that our skills in preparing and in launching were far from perfect. In fact, sometimes we hurt more than help, and even at times we were ruinous to the shaping of a godly arrow. So we pray constantly that God will forgive, and will have worked in the hearts of our child even in spite of us. We pray that God will compensate for our inadequacies and sins, and make the flight true to the goal.

So we let the child leave our home, remembering that we were but guardians of God's child, stewards of His possession. And we let the arrow fly, putting our confidence in Him. "Being confident of this

very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ" (Phil. 1:6). The promise of God is that He will use the instruction of godly parents to work faith and re-

pentance in the hearts of the elect, spiritual seed. God usually blesses our efforts and prayers. It is His tremendous mercy that He would use weakest means to fulfill His will. Parenting is a hard work. And it is

difficult to let the child go when he comes of age. But that we must do, committing him to the Lord, who alone can care for him (after all, He did when he was under our care). □

In His Fear

Rev. Arie denHartog

Be Not Highminded but Fear

(The Proper Attitude of the Christian Toward the Truth of Absolute Predestination)

The above admonition is a quote from Romans 11:20. In the context the apostle Paul is speaking about God's sovereign purpose of predestination for both Jews and Gentiles as it is realized in the new dispensation. That this is the subject of Romans chapter 11 is evident from its opening verses. Paul in this chapter is explaining the truth that God will not cast away His people whom He foreknew. The reference is first of all to God's Old Testament people, the Jews. In spite of the falling away of many of the Jews and the fact that the majority of them rejected the Christ whom God sent to save them (for He came unto His own and His own received Him not), the purpose of God's election will stand. "Even so then at this present time also there is a remnant according to the election of grace" (Rom. 11:6).

In Romans 11 Paul sets forth the sovereign purpose of God in the saving of both Jew and Gentile. He does this by means of the figure of

an olive tree. The olive tree represents Christ. The branches in this olive tree represent not individual Jews or Gentiles but rather generations of men. If we would make these branches refer to individuals we would end up teaching the error of the possibility of the falling away of the saints. In both the old and the new dispensations the Lord is pleased to save His people in the line of generations. According to God's sovereign purpose He cut out of the olive tree the unbelieving and apostate generations of the Jews, and in their place He engrafted branches of the Gentiles. This will result finally in the saving of all the elect Gentiles and all the elect Jews ("the fullness of the Gentiles" and the saving of "all Israel"). This will take place through the history of the New Testament age until the day that the Lord returns. This is our interpretation especially of verses 25 and 26.

I want to exhort you to read the entire amazing eleventh chapter of the book of Romans. It is one of the grandest chapters in all the Bible describing the truth of God's absolute sovereignty in the saving of His people. It really shows what God's

sovereign purpose of salvation is for the entire New Testament age. The inspired apostle Paul himself is so deeply moved by the consideration of the truths of which he writes in this section of his epistle to the Romans that he ends it all by bursting forth in praise to God. "O the depths of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out! For who hath known the mind of the Lord? or who hath been his counsellor? Or who hath first given to him, and it shall be recompensed unto him again? For of him, and through him, and to him, are all things: to whom be the glory for ever. Amen" (Rom. 11:33-36).

We are not going to present in this article any kind of summary interpretation of Romans 11. In this rubric of the *Standard Bearer* we are asked especially to focus on practical issues related to the calling of God's people to walk in the fear of God. Our focus therefore is going to be on the admonition: "be not highminded but fear." This Word of God is admonishing us regarding the proper attitude that we must

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have towards the truth of God's saving His people. This admonition applies to us as we take, so to speak, an overview of the purpose of God through all history in the consideration of how God saved both Jews and Gentiles. That really is the immediate consideration of chapter 11 of Romans. But this admonition also has application to us as we consider our own particular salvation and consider the fearful truth that God has by His sovereign grace saved us, while at the same time He has sovereignly reprobated many thousands of people with whom we come in contact everyday in our life. The admonition above must direct the attitude that we have both before God and to our fellow man in the world.

To be highminded is to be proud, to boast of oneself. In the context of Romans 11 the reference is to be highminded as one stands before God. This is to imagine foolishly and wickedly that we have some special place of favor and glory before God because of who and what we are in ourselves. Our sinful nature makes us prone to such vain imagination. For this reason this admonition is cast in the negative form.

Positively there is no truth of the Scriptures that gives the true child of God more cause for deep humility and fear than the truth of God's absolute predestination, the truth of His sovereign goodness in saving His people, and sovereign severity in condemning the reprobate. We as Reformed Christians confess these truths. We above all ought to walk in deep humility and fear before our God and men. The Canons of Dordt make this point. "The sense and certainty of this election afford the child of God additional matter for daily humiliation before him, for adoring the depth of his mercies, for cleansing themselves, and rendering grateful returns of ardent love to him, who first manifested so great love towards them" (Canons I, Article 13).

There is indeed a great benefit for the Christian always to be medi-

tating on the doctrines of God's absolute predestination and the truths of God's sovereign grace. By no means do these doctrines involve mere abstract questions best left only to the theologians in our seminaries and irrelevant to Christian living. The constant diligent and prayerful consideration of these doctrines by the true child of God will do a great deal to engender in him, by the Spirit of God, an attitude of godly fear and humble gratitude to God. When God opens our eyes we see these doctrines on every page of the Scriptures. We must insist that these doctrines are clearly sounded forth in every sermon preached in our churches. We must know what our beautiful confessions have to say about these great truths. We must teach these doctrines diligently to our children. These doctrines stand at the heart of our salvation and they are the well-spring of the fear of God and humility in the life of the child of God.

We have a sinful nature that is prone to boasting and glorying in ourselves. The whole wicked world as well as the apostate church-world encourages men to boast, by their false doctrines and philosophies. But before God we have no reason to boast. Boasting is a terrible sin before God, for it is a seeking to rob God of His glory. We have only reason to fear when we consider the absolute sovereign goodness of God in saving us and His dreadful severity in condemning the reprobate.

Let us consider some of the fearful details of God's sovereignty mentioned in Romans 11. God saved us according to His own absolutely sovereign good pleasure without any regard whatsoever to what we were or are in ourselves. The Lord chose us in Christ already from before the foundation of the world in His unchangeable purpose of election. Who will ever be able to fathom the depth of this mystery! If we have even an inkling of what this is all about we

will realize how utterly foolish and evil it is for us to boast before God.

I will assume that most readers of the *Standard Bearer* are from Gentile backgrounds, though it would fill us with joy to know that a number of converted children of God from Jewish background are also reading this paper. In Paul's inspired letters he is repeatedly reminding those from Gentile background what they once

were. We were in our generations once without God, without Christ, and therefore without hope in the world (see Eph. 2:12). Romans 11 speaks of the Gentiles coming from a wild olive tree. The "Gentiles" are a people who are utterly corrupt and depraved in their nature. They live in absolute spiritual darkness and ignorance in spite of their imagined great self knowledge, learning, and wisdom. They walk, Paul says in Ephesians 4, "in the vanity of their mind, having their understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart: who being past feeling have given themselves over unto lasciviousness, to work all manner of uncleanness with greediness."

What a description that is of the modern-day "Gentiles" of the world in which we live, also of those who live in our apostate nation. But before we become so "highminded" that we imagine ourselves to be by nature better than even the worst of these "Gentiles," let us remember that we were once like them, and we are even now according to our depraved sinful nature still like them. But God in His sovereign goodness was pleased to choose His people from eternity even though He who knows all things, knew that in time this people would be nothing better than the ungodly Gentiles of the world. Where then is our reason for boasting, for high-mindedness?

Many of us, by the grace of God,

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are part of those who have already for generations been children of God. But always we need to remember our origin and what we really are by nature. We all stand by nature condemned to be worthy of everlasting hell. But God in His sovereign mercy in Christ Jesus has saved us. What a fearful truth. God will have us again and again meditate on the wonders of His sovereign grace in saving us against the dark background of what we once were and what we still are by nature. This gives us reason only for humility before God and man.

We are to fear before God also when we consider the sovereign severity of God in reprobation. We confess with fear and trembling the truth of reprobation because it is clearly taught in the Bible. The sovereignty in God's reprobating unbelieving Israel is emphasized in Romans 11, in verses 7-11, where Paul says that God Himself has blinded the reprobate. He gave them eyes that they should not see and ears that they should not hear. It is evident that reprobation is eternal and sovereign. In that respect it is parallel with election. God reprobates the ungodly in the way of their own wickedness and rebellion against God. In the end God will reveal in reprobation His own just severity. The severity of God is not cruel. The infinitely perfect holy God is not cruel. It is blasphemy to suggest that. God is severely just. He is unassailably just in all that He does. The purpose of God's reprobation according to Romans is that God is willing to show His wrath, and to make his power known, and so He endures with much longsuffering the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction (see Rom. 9:19-22). There are many fearful mysteries about reprobation that go beyond our ability to comprehend. Though we may not be able to comprehend the fearful justice of God in reprobation, we have no right as mere men to reply against God, something that we are in fact prone by nature to want to do.

The truth of reprobation is repeatedly taught in the Scriptures as the background of God's gracious election and salvation of His people. Of this also our Canons speak.

What particularly tends to illustrate and recommend to us the eternal and unmerited grace of election, is the express testimony of the sacred Scripture, that not all, but some only are elected, while others are passed by in the eternal election of God; whom God, out of His sovereign, most just, irreprehensible and unchangeable good pleasure, hath decreed to leave in the common misery into which they have willfully plunged themselves, and not to bestow on them saving faith and grace of conversion; but leaving them in His just judgment to follow their own ways, at the last for the declaration of His justice, to condemn and to punish them forever, not only on account of their unbelief, but also for all their other sins. And this is the decree of reprobation which by no means makes God the author of sin (the very thought of which is blasphemy), but declares him to be an awful, irreprehensible, and righteous judge and avenger thereof (Canons I, Article 15).

What reason all this gives us to fear and tremble before God! Oh the severity of His perfect righteous and holy judgment of the wicked. But all this must be driven home to our heart and soul by the consideration that we are no better than the reprobate and deserve to be condemned by the same severe justice of God. If God would have dealt with us only according to His justice we would all face the eternal horror of hell. What a fearful thing! The only thing that saved us from the condemnation that the ungodly world will suffer is the sovereign grace and mercy of God. Nothing else!

Another reason for fear according to the apostle in Romans 11 is the realization that God in His se-

verity cut off many of the generations of the apostate wicked Jews who were once in their generations children of God. In the place of the Jews who were cut off, God was pleased to graft Gentile branches into His olive tree so that the rejection of the Jews became the salvation of the Gentiles. In our day we see many generations even in Reformed churches who were once children of God that have been cut off and that are completely apostate and ungodly. Their lives clearly reveal that, even though some of them still profess to be "Christian." What is our attitude over against such? Are we better than they? Again we have no reason for highmindedness. It is only the sovereign goodness of God that preserves us and our children.

The only reason why we at all continue in faithfulness to the Lord is God's sovereign goodness to us. If God would stop dealing with us according to His mercy we would also be cut off. If God cut off the natural branches from the olive tree we ought to fear that He will also cut us off who were once wild branches. If we were left to ourselves we would long ago have been cut off in our generations because of apostasy.

The only reason why we at all continue in faithfulness to the Lord is God's sovereign goodness to us.

The fear of God that the consideration of these great truths inspires in the child of God must constrain him to a life of humility, obedience, fear, and humble gratitude to God. We ought also live in humility in our attitude towards our fellow men who in their lives reveal themselves as ungodly. Without the grace of God we too would be ungodly. We are from day to day completely dependent on the grace of God and therefore have no reason to boast in ourselves.

There is a covenantal aspect to this admonition. God warns us in Romans 11 about the real possibility of the branches of the "Gentiles" also being cut off from the Lord because of pride and apostasy. We must

therefore walk in the fear of the Lord and diligently teach our children and the generations after us to walk in that same fear.

With fear and trembling we consider the wonderful way of God's sovereignty in saving His people for His own glory. We join Paul in his

doxology of praise to God. "For of him, and through him, and to him, are all things: to whom be glory for ever. Amen." □

Chapter 4

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

God's Creation of Man:

(4) Created God's Covenant Friend

It is very evident from Genesis 1:26 that there is a close relation between man's being created in the image of God and his dominion over the earthly creation. According to this Word of God, we are informed that "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." In verse 28, after we are informed that God created man in His own image, we read: "God blessed them, and God said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it: and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth." By this Word of God to man He not only gave to man an external appointment or commission to have dominion, but this dominion was something that was concreated into man's very being.

Man was made a king. It is his very nature to exercise dominion over the earth.

But as we said, this dominion is closely related to man's being created in the image and likeness of God. The connection is this, that in his dominion over the earthly creation man was not an independent king, ruling in his own right, but he represented God's own sovereignty, as God's image-bearer, in the visible and earthly creation. God's mandate to man was threefold: 1) he must propagate and fill the earth, 2) he must subdue the earth: he must discover and bring into his service the powers of creation, develop, and use them, and 3) he must have dominion over all the earthly creation, and rule over and care for all creatures. All this he must do as created in the image of God, that is, as filled with the true knowledge of God, righteousness, and holiness. This meant that man was to be busy in the earthly creation as God's friend-servant, consecrated to his Creator and motivated by the love of God. He must love God, glorify Him, and consecrate all things to Him. He was God's office-bearer, God's prophet, priest, and king — in a word, God's friend-servant. And God was his Friend-Sovereign.

We may sum this all up by say-

ing that Adam was created God's covenant friend.

It is true that in the opening chapters of Genesis no literal mention is made of this covenant relation. Yet this was man's high honor and his original distinction. The blessed life of fellowship with God was man's originally: man was created the friend of God. As often as Scripture speaks of the relation between God and man, it presents the fundamental relation as being properly that of a covenant. The Bible also presents the essence and the heart of that covenant as consisting in friendship. This is directly presupposed in a text like Hosea 6:7, where the Lord accuses His faithless and spiritually adulterous people that "ye like men (or, 'like Adam') have transgressed the covenant." Moreover, it is presupposed in all that we read of God's dealings with Adam in Paradise. God speaks with Adam as a friend with his friend. He addresses him concerning his lordship over all the earthly creation, gives him a commandment to keep and to dress the garden, as well as concerning the tree of knowledge of good and evil. And Adam hears the Word of God and understands, and he knows God in the wind of the day (Gen. 3:8).

But more than this, salvation is

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in the Scriptures always presented as the restoration and perfecting of the relation between God and man which was violated and on man's part breached through sin, and it is consistently presented as the establishment and realization of the covenant of God with man, that is, with His people in Christ Jesus. With the patriarchs, Noah and Abraham and Isaac and Jacob, and finally Israel, God established His everlasting covenant, according to the Scriptures (Gen. 6:18; 9:8-17; 17:7ff.; Gal. 3:15ff.). And His promise, according to Jeremiah 31:31ff., is that He will establish with His people a new covenant, a higher realization of the covenant, based on the blood of Jesus, according to which He will write His law upon their hearts, that all, from the greatest to the smallest, may know Him. Moreover, as often as the Scriptures refer to this covenant — and the passages of Scripture which do this are very numerous — the covenant relation is always presented as consisting essentially in the bond of living fellowship and friendship. In a word, it is this: "I will be your God, and ye shall be my people." And when that covenant of God is perfected, we read this in Revelation 21:3: "Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God."

Rather commonly this covenant with Adam is described as a covenant of works. According to this presentation the covenant relation between God and Adam is presented as an arrangement or agreement according to which the first man could have merited and attained to the higher state of eternal life and heavenly glory upon condition of perfect obedience. This covenant was really a means to an end. Adam was free, but he had not attained to the highest possible freedom. He had life, but he did not possess eternal life, the heavenly life of glory. The covenant of works was supposedly a special agreement be-

tween God and Adam like a ladder of obedience by which Adam might climb up to the higher and heavenly life of glory.

There are many serious objections to this rather cold and mechanical view of God's covenant. But we wish to mention just three. 1) The Scriptures know nothing whatsoever of such an agreement. God gave Adam a commandment, yes, but He certainly did not conclude any kind of bargain in connection with that commandment. God announced to Adam the penalty of death upon disobedience to that commandment not to eat of the tree of knowledge of good and evil. But it is a faulty inference to conclude from this announced penalty that Adam had the promise of eternal life as the wages of obedience. Conceivably, if Adam had not sinned, he could have lived everlastingly in Paradise, but this is not at all the same as the eternal life of heaven. The Scriptures, therefore, breathe not a word of such a covenant of works.

2) There is the principle objection that man can never merit anything with God, and that all religion that is based upon this notion of human merit is fundamentally corrupt. Our Lord Jesus Christ can, indeed, merit righteousness and eternal life as the Head of His people, but this is only because He is the Son of God. Man is always in a position of obligation to God. He can never merit anything for God nor bring anything to God that is not God's from the outset. How, then, can he ever claim a reward of merit from the Most High? As the Lord Jesus instructs His disciples concerning this Phariseeistic idea of work-righteousness, so it is: "So likewise ye, when ye shall have done all these things which are commanded you, say, We are unprofitable servants: we have done that which was our duty to do." Man even in the state of rectitude could never do anything extra, anything that was not required of him; and he could never, therefore, earn anything with God.

3) We must remember that

eternal life and heavenly glory and the immortality of the resurrection constitute a state of bliss that can be attained only through our Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God come in the flesh. The first man, Adam, was of the earth, earthy. He could not possibly reach to heaven. The second man is the Lord from heaven. It is only in and through Him that God's covenant is raised to the everlasting glory and perfection of heaven.

Rather than this conception of Adam as a wage-earner, we must have the proper idea of Adam as the friend of God, his Creator and Lord.

This relation of friendship between Adam and God subsisted not because of any special agreement or contract, but by virtue of man's being created in the image of God. This covenant relation was, therefore, not something incidental, and not a means to an end, but it was essential, and it was the living relation of fellowship between God and Adam. This friendship was that living bond of communion, that highest and most perfect form of the bond of love that was based upon the highest possible likeness between two personal beings. It was the reflection of God's own life. For God is the covenant God in Himself, first of all, and lives a covenant life in Himself, as the Triune God. God is one in Being, but three in Persons. All the three Persons of the Trinity are essentially absolutely alike. They are of one mind and will and love and life. Yet, they are personally distinct, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. As such they live the life of most intimate communion with one another in eternal and infinite perfection. They know one another. They have no secrets from one another. They enter perfectly into one another's mind and will and life. For God is love.

It was of this blessed life and fellowship that God purposed to give His creature a taste. It was of that divine life of perfect friendship that Adam's relation to God was a reflection. He, too, was made like

God, though in a creaturely way: for he was made in God's own image, in true knowledge of God, righteousness, and holiness. On the basis of this likeness, Adam stood in covenant relation to his Creator. He was the friend of God. His heart was knit to the heart of God. His will was in harmony with the will of God. The most High revealed Himself to Adam, and he entered into God's counsel. God spoke to Adam, and the latter heard and understood. God did not hide anything from Adam; and Adam had no secrets from God. God opened His heart to Adam, and he tasted the blessedness of God's favor and lovingkindness which is better than life. God entrusted to Adam the lordship over all the works of His hands in the earthly creation. He was Adam's benefactor, and filled him with His goodness. And Adam was of the party of the living God, knew God, and glorified and served Him in all the works of His hands. That is the living bond of fellowship in which the first man stood to his God. Adam was God's covenant friend.

But he was not God's equal. Friend of God he was, but only as God's servant. As God's servant, Adam had work to do, as we have already noted. He was appointed lord of the earthly creation, to rule over it and to develop it in the name of God and in the service of God and to God's glory. This was his task, a tremendous cultural task in the true sense of the word. His calling was to be God's servant, God's representative, God's superintendent in all the creation — in the garden which he was to dress and to keep, but also in the whole of creation which he was to subdue and rule. But this service he was called to perform as God's friend, acknowledging God as his Friend-Sovereign. He had no sense of compulsion. There was no special reward for him, nor the need of wages. He was motivated by the willing obedience of love. He served God for God's sake. There was no conflict in him between

his obligation and his inmost desire. That service of God was his delight. The delight of that service was his reward; for in it all he tasted the favor and lovingkindness of his God. Walking with God as His friend, he walked before God as His servant. Adam was the friend-servant of Jehovah!

True, Adam was made a little lower than the angels. He lived the life of covenant fellowship with God on the earthly plane; and the heavenly things were not for him in that original state. Moreover, he was made not so that he could not fall from that blessed state. But withal, he stood originally in that position of perfect happiness with the Lord his Creator; and the consciousness and blessedness of God's favor was his delight and reward. Such was his highly exalted position.

But as highly as he was exalted, so deeply has man fallen. He did not regard his blessedness and honor. He became unfaithful to his Friend-Sovereign, violated the covenant of friendship, rejected the Word of God for the lie of the devil, and became the enemy of God and the friend of the devil, and the slave of sin.

To be sure, it is still evident that man was originally the image-bearer of God. It is still evident that he was once the lord of creation. Man still multiplies and replenishes the earth. He still attempts to press — and succeeds also in a measure — to press all things into his service. One has only to look at all the man-made wonders of modern civilization and all the accomplishments of humanistic culture in our twentieth century for evidence of this. Indeed, man still has dominion and subdues the earth. His accomplishments, even though he has but a remnant of natural light, are startling. But he is no longer the friend-servant of the living God. He exercises dominion as a usurper. He strives to subdue the earth as a rebel and as an alien in God's house. In his culture he creates for himself an entire world of the lust of the eye and the lust of

the flesh and the pride of life. There is only woe and cursing and wrath for such a world that carries out this dominion over all things, but in rebellion against the living God and in the service of sin and corruption. The end of this false culture, this culture of unrighteousness and rebellion, this culture in the vicious circle of vanity, as it shall culminate presently in the reign of Antichrist, is dreadful destruction. For God is not mocked! There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked!

Nevertheless, God maintains His covenant, and He purposes to raise it to the higher level of heavenly and eternal perfection in and through Christ Jesus our Lord. From this point of view the sin and Fall of the first man, Adam, furnishes the occasion for Christ to come, the Lord from heaven, from eternity appointed the Head of God's eternal covenant of grace with His people. That Christ is the Friend-servant of God par excellence. He became obedient unto the death of the cross, and thus He laid the foundations of God's eternal tabernacle, the basis of the eternal covenant, in perfect righteousness. He is exalted at the right hand of God, has received the promise of the Spirit, and by His almighty grace He overcomes the power of sin and rebellion in the hearts of His elect covenant people, and renews them unto the eternal life of covenant fellowship with the ever-blessed God.

The result is that they that believe on His name are through His own sovereign grace friends of God once more. They are sorry for their sins, and in this new covenant they have forgiveness in the blood of Jesus. In that same new covenant, they forsake the world, crucify their old nature, and walk in a new and holy life. They have a new delight in the precepts of their God. They again taste the lovingkindness of God that is better to them than life. They are of the party of the living God. They keep the Word of God and the testimony of Jesus in the midst of a world that rebels against

Him. They have their part not with the world that passes away. They have their expectation not of this world's sinful culture. They have their hope fixed not on the things that are below and that perish. They

look and pray for the coming again of their Lord from heaven. For they have their hope fixed upon the city that hath foundations and upon the new creation, and they are pilgrims and strangers in the earth, with no

continuing place here below. When their Lord shall come again, He shall make all things new and shall forever establish the eternal covenant of friendship in a new heavens and a new earth. □

News From Our Churches

Mr. Benjamin Wigger

Congregational Activities

On May 2 the council of the Grandville, MI PRC brought a proposal to their congregation for adoption. The council, through its Long-Range Planning Committee, was looking for authorization to proceed with construction of a 3,900 square foot addition to their church. This proposed addition will include a large meeting room capable of seating 200 people around tables. The room will contain movable partitions, so that it can be divided into six classrooms. Also included in the proposed addition are a kitchen, a pastor's study, a council room, and two nurseries with adjoining bathroom. The council recommended also that part of the funds for the project be used for the repair of the existing church building, primarily damage that has been done in the past as a result of a water leak.

Writing this a couple of days after this meeting makes it possible for me to tell you that the proposal was approved by the Grandville congregation, and that the project is scheduled to begin after this year's Young People's Convention in August, hosted, as you know, by Grandville. A six-month construction period is anticipated.

While our Grandville congregation is gearing up for a much-needed addition to their church home, the Peace PRC in Lynwood, IL continues to mark weekly progress in the construction of their eagerly antici-

pated new church home. This update will not be current but will still give you a feel for the progress being made. As of late April, the plumbing and electrical roughing-in work was done and the block walls were up displaying the locations of doors, windows, and rooms.

The congregation of the Faith PRC in Jenison, MI was invited to stay after their evening service on May 7 for a light supper and a song service.

Recently we were informed that the area code for part of Colorado, including the city of Loveland, where our Loveland PRC is located, has been changed to 970. Currently you can still use either the existing area code of 303 or the new code 970, but after October 1, 970 must be used or your call will not go through. Please make a note in your copy of the 1994 Yearbook of our churches.

Evangelism Activities

The Peace PRC in Lynwood, IL sponsored their annual Spring Lecture on April 21 at the Illiana Christian High School. Rev. Haak, pastor of the Bethel PRC in Itasca, IL, spoke on the topic, "Personal Evangelism: A Desire for the Glory of God in the Salvation of Souls."

Monthly meetings of the Christian S.I.N.D.H.I. group continue to be held in the Trinity PRC in Houston, TX. These meetings continue to be a blessing. A dozen or more Hindus regularly attend and show interest in the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. Let us continue to pray that God will bless these labors as well as all our churches' evangelism efforts and that He will add to His

church such as should be saved.

School Activities

At this time of year our Christian schools usually meet to adopt budgets for the coming school year. In order to educate the anticipated 410 students at our Heritage Christian School in Hudsonville, MI for the school year 1995-1996, their budget topped the \$1,000,000.00 mark. We would assume that this is the first time that that has happened in the history of the PR schools.

Despite this figure, we can also report that tuition costs at Heritage have not changed for the last two years, nor will they next year, D.V.

Denominational Activities

This year's Spring Mass Meeting for all Mr. & Mrs. and Adult Bible Societies of our west Michigan churches was held on April 25 at the Southwest PRC in Grandville, MI and featured Prof. Hanko, of our seminary, speaking on the subject, "The Importance of Prayer, and Teaching our Children to Pray."

Young People's Activities

In a fund-raiser for the up-coming convention in August, the Young People's Society of the Peace PRC sponsored a travelogue on May 5 in the auditorium of the South Holland, IL PRC. Mr. and Mrs. Hank Brands showed slides of their 1994 trip to Alaska.

The Young People's Society of the Lynden, WA PRC met earlier this year for an evening to discuss the topic, "What makes the PR churches different?"

The Young People's Societies of the Hudsonville, MI PRC hosted a

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

combination pancake-breakfast/car-wash at their church in late April.

Minister Activities

Rev. M. Joostens, who just accepted a call to serve as pastor of the Lynden, WA PRC, will be preaching his farewell sermon at First PRC in Grand Rapids, MI on May 21, D.V.

First PRC in Grand Rapids has

extended a call to Rev. W. Bruinsma, pastor at First PRC in Holland, MI, to serve as their next pastor.

The Byron Center, MI PRC has extended a call to Rev. A. denHartog, pastor of the Hope PRC in Redlands, CA, to serve them as their next pastor.

At a congregational meeting on April 30, the members of the

Edgerton, MN PRC called Rev. A. denHartog to serve as their next pastor. With Pastor denHartog on that trio were the Revs. Flikkema and Koole.

Food for Thought

"The great weight of eternity hangs upon the small wire of time."

— Thomas Brooks □

ANNOUNCEMENTS

WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

The Lord willing, on June 9, 1995,

MR. and MRS. MARTIN DOEZEMA

will celebrate their 75th wedding anniversary. We are thankful to our heavenly Father for giving us God-fearing parents and for blessing them with many years together. It is our prayer that God will continue to bless them and keep them in His care in the years ahead.

"For this God is our God for ever and ever: he will be our guide even unto death" (Psalm 48:14).

✿ June Timmer, in glory

✿ son-in-law John and

Margaret Timmer

✿ Jay and Ruth Doezema

✿ Kenneth and Gloria Doezema

9 grand children (Sandra

Timmer in glory)

24 great grand children

1 great-great grand child

Grand Rapids, Michigan

RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The Ladies' Aid Society of Hope Protestant Reformed Church in Grand Rapids expresses its heartfelt sympathy to a former member, Mrs. Herm VanDyke, in the passing of her husband,

MR. HERM VAN DYKE.

May the family find comfort in these words from Psalm 116:15: "Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints."

RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The Consistory and congregation of the Randolph Protestant Reformed Church express Christian sympathy to Kathryn and Timothy Tamminga and family in the death of their mother and grandmother,

RUBY RIPPLE.

"For all flesh is as grass, and the glory of man as the flower of grass. The grass withereth and the flower thereof falleth away. But the Word of the Lord endureth forever" (1 Peter 1:24, 25).

Rev. Steven Key, President
Berwyn Huizenga, Clerk

NOTICE!!!

The Federation of Protestant Reformed Christian Schools is seeking applicants for the new position of Executive Director of the Federation. For more information, please telephone Gene DeBoer at (616) 669-2835 or mail to

Gene DeBoer

4702 40th Ave.

Hudsonville, MI 49426.

NOTICE!!!

The seminary needs a copy of the video and of the audio tapes of Prof. Decker's lectures on the office of elder in the church. Anyone willing to loan the tapes, so that we can make copies from them, is urged to call the seminary at (616) 531-1490.

RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The Council and congregation of the Loveland Protestant Reformed Church express sympathy to Mr. and Mrs. Robert VanUffelen and their children in the death of his father,

MR. DICK VAN UFFELEN.

May they continue to be strengthened by the arm of Him who declared through the psalmist, "Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints" (Ps. 116:15).

Rev. G. VanBaren, President
Mr. David Poortinga, Clerk