



THE **STANDARD BEARER**

**A Reformed
Semi-Monthly
Magazine**

The unbelief concerning Genesis 1-11 that is a mark of theological modernism is now widespread in churches, seminaries, and colleges that have a name for evangelical and Reformed orthodoxy. If the theologians and professors do not themselves teach the mythical nature of the events in the opening chapters of the Bible, they are tolerant of the teaching — and the teachers.

See "Pulling the Plug on the Flood" — p. 509

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Editorially speaking ...

The subject of the editorial in this issue raises the distressing issue of the need for a sound Reformed college in North America. This would be a college that in every department honored the holy Scriptures as the very Word of God by the wonder of inspiration. It would sincerely and solidly base itself on the Reformed confessions. It would vigorously repudiate the critical attack on the Bible, particularly the attack on the historicity of Genesis 1-11, and roundly damn the view of Scripture as a fallible human book whence this attack springs.

The author of the book denying the Genesis flood and thereby criticizing Scripture is a teacher in a leading Reformed college. He teaches these grievous errors to many Reformed young people, including the Protestant Reformed young people who take the science courses.

I am doubtful that there is a single Reformed college in the U.S. or Canada that does not permit this denial of the historicity of Genesis 1-11. Would even one Reformed college speak out, clearly, sharply, unambiguously, and uncompromisingly repudiating Young's denial of the flood and Howard Van Till's denial of creation? Can even one Reformed college declare that such criticism of Scripture is not permitted there? We will publish such a declaration.

I fear it does not exist.

Such is the extent of the apostasy of the last days.

To establish a college today is daunting.

When a group of us looked into this some years ago, we gave the idea up, because it seemed an impossibility.

The alternative — the present reality — is that our young people are educated either by the God-denying, evolutionistic, secular colleges or by nominally Christian schools that criticize Scripture and thus subtly destroy the foundations of the faith.

When Dr. John DeVries told his physical science class the story of the Iowa preacher who called into his study the young person going away to Calvin College, so that he could pray with the youth that he not lose his faith at Calvin, I laughed with the rest of the class.

I have repented of that laughter. I wronged the Iowa preacher.

I now pray, privately and publicly, that Protestant Reformed young people not be destroyed in the Reformed colleges.

This is distressing.

—DJE

Considering the Contradiction of our Lord

"For consider him that endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds."

Hebrews 12:3

By God's grace, as we walk in faith, we face the opposition of Satan and the powers of darkness. Also the world of unbelief (the co-workers of the devil) tempts us and tries to destroy our faith. Besides this, we carry with us the old man which constantly assails us as we would walk down life's pathway as the children of God. The holy writer in Hebrews 12:3 takes note of the fact that we can grow weary or faint in the walk of faith, as we come under the continual attack of Satan and his co-workers, and he would lead us to look to Christ the author and finisher of our faith. Lest then we should grow weary and faint in our minds in this battle of faith, he would have us consider Christ our Head. In this text he says, "For consider him that endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds."

Let us consider Jesus, who goes before us and who endured the contradiction of sinners Himself. We have also the cloud of witnesses that the writer has just mentioned in the former chapter, who likewise suffered contradiction. At their head

and ours is Christ, who was contradicted above all. If we shall be contradicted for His sake, as we by grace walk as His body, then it is well that we consider Him, in order that we may be encouraged and know that we are so contradicted because we belong to Christ, and to know that even as our Head endured to enter into glory in victory, so by His grace we also shall endure.

The text teaches us that the contradiction of the sinners was against Himself. The contradiction that Jesus endured was not directed against only a particular doctrine or aspect of His walk, but against Himself, that is, against His person. It was directed against His whole appearance, all that He was. Already in the old dispensation in Israel there were many who would not be led by the law of the Lord, and who turned against the prophets that spoke in the name of Christ as it was the Spirit of Christ which was in them that did testify (I Pet. 1:11). The prophet is therefore led to say, in Isaiah 30:9-11, "That this is a rebellious people, lying children, children that will not hear the law of the Lord: Which say to the seers, See not; and to the prophets, Prophesy not unto us right things, speak unto us smooth things, prophesy deceits: Get you out of the way, turn aside out of the path, cause the Holy One of Israel to cease from before us." And as the sinners contradicted the prophets of Christ, so would the sinners contradict Christ as He came into our flesh. Thus Simeon

prophesied when holding the child Jesus, "Behold, the child is set for a fall and rising again of many in Israel, and for a sign that shall be spoken against" (Luke 2:34). Now during His whole life on earth these words were fulfilled in and against our Lord. And so it still is today as the child of God is contradicted, spoken against. It is Christ that is opposed by sinners and is the object of their contradiction, even as they bring their attack against His body, the body of believers.

Considering the contradiction of Jesus we see that, as He walked in our midst and preached the Word of His Father, they contradicted His teaching. There was never anyone who had his word more consistently contradicted than the Christ. When He preached the gospel to the poor and deliverance to the captives, the recovering of sight to the blind and the healing of the broken heart, fulfilling prophecy, they said, "Physician heal thyself." When He said, "I am the bread of life," they said, "This is a hard saying, who can hear it?" When He was teaching in Jerusalem, and they were unable to overcome His word, that is, they could not demonstrate any fault in it, they said, He is from Galilee: "Search and look: for out of Galilee ariseth no prophet" (John 7:52). This continued when our Lord rebuked the sinners. They would not hear, but accused Him of being a Samaritan, and having a devil (John 8:48). And as He replied to the unbelieving Jews that He is one with the Father, they called Him a blasphemer and plot-

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ted to put Him to death (John 10). Jesus said that the Son of man must be lifted up, that is, taken from this earth (signifying by what death he should suffer), and the sinners answered, "We have heard out of the law that the Christ abideth for ever, and how sayest thou, The Son of man must be lifted up?" (John 12:34). They took a part of the Word, took a passage out of context, to contradict the word of Christ. They refused to hear what the whole of the Word said. They contradicted the word of our Lord. And so it continues even today.

This contradiction was not directed only at a small part of His teaching, but in actual fact it was a contradiction of all His teaching. And so it is always. It is popular today to say, "O, we just have a difference of opinion." But the Word of the Scripture or the Word of Christ is not a matter of opinion! Rather, it is a question of whether we will hear the Word of God or no!

Jesus was also contradicted of sinners with regard to His works or deeds. We may take note that this also the Scripture well documents in order that we may be instructed thereby. Well known examples we can repeat. Jesus healed on the Sabbath, and the sinners said He was in transgression of the law. When Jesus sought to save that which was lost and brought the gospel to the lost, they said He was a companion of publicans and sinners. When in distinction to the Baptist, who was accused by them, Jesus came eating and drinking, they called Him a glutton and winebibber. When He cast out the devils, they said it was because He had partnership with Beelzebub, the prince of the devils. And when He performed the greatest of miracles, apart from the cross, and raised Lazarus from the dead, they said he was a danger to Israel, and plotted to kill Him. So Jesus was not only on occasion contradicted but the sinners opposed all of His mighty works.

But the sinner not only contra-

dicts, stands opposed to Jesus' word and deeds, but ultimately the sinner contradicts Jesus Christ Himself, as our text points out. The reason is that all of Jesus' teaching and all of His works are concentrated in Jesus Himself. They were but means of Christ's self-revelation as the Son of God, who is ever with the Father, and thus the revelation of God Himself unto man. In all that Jesus spoke and did He became revealed as the Christ who was sent into the midst of this world, sent as the anointed of the Father, sent as the promised Messiah who would redeem God's chosen people and who would establish the kingdom of God forever. He, in all that He did and said, revealed that salvation is by grace alone, has its source in God and has its end in God. To God belongs all the praise.

The opposition of sinners against Jesus' word and deeds was therefore basically this, it was an opposition to His being the Christ. The sinner does not want Him! The sinners do not want such a King over them. O, when He dwelt on this earth they wanted a king, but one who could serve all of their earthly needs and pleasure. They would not have a king who spoke of another country, and who is a heavenly one. They would not have a King that must suffer the reproach of man and die on the cross because of the sin of the people whom He would deliver. To desire such a King meant that they would have to deny themselves all glory and praise, and would require of them to confess their sin and to look only to the lowly Christ for salvation. This Jesus they hated with all of their heart. They would not be bound by the Word He brought, by the Word of God. All their opposition to His doctrine and deeds was thus aimed at Jesus Himself. They would not bow before God. And they meant in all of their attacks to remove His very name from the earth. So it is always, also today as

the sinner refuses to bow before the testimony of the Name of our Lord.

Finally, such contradiction must end in violence. They brought our Lord to the cross and crucified Him. Sinners would have, and do have, nothing to do with Christ. Throughout the new dispensation the enemies of Christ have not ceased to assail Him and the revelation of God through Him. He is yet contradicted on every hand. Again and again false teachers have arisen in the church, and, as Peter says, they are "denying the Lord that bought them" (II Pet. 2:1). As the attack is brought to the truth

*One
stands either
for or against,
not a doctrine
or truth,
but really
for or against
the Lord.*

in the church, it is a denial of Christ. Also today, He still is the sign that is spoken against. And those that would hold to the gospel of Christ and live according to the word of Christ bear that contradiction of sinners. One stands either for or against, not a doctrine or truth, but the Lord. So the sinner stands against Jesus and against all that is of Him.

But lest we lift ourselves up in pride and point our fingers at others, we must understand that by nature we too are sinners that contradict Christ. We also by nature would not bow before God and confess our sin and confess that we are in absolute need of the Christ. We by our sin really also crucify Him. This is the condemnation of sinners! This is our condemnation as we stand apart from grace, all that we desire with regard to God and His Christ is in opposition to Him. We have contradicted Christ in thought, word, and deed. This we must confess! And if we do not confess that we are those who have contradicted Christ, we are condemned already, as the Scripture says in John 3. But if by the grace of God we see our own sin of contradiction, then the blood of Him whom we have contradicted is our salvation.

The child of God confesses his own sin in this, because Christ has suffered such contradiction and en-

dured. He walked in obedience over against our disobedience, even to the death of the cross, and He endured. He satisfied God's judgment against the elect sinner, and He ascended in glory to send forth His Spirit into our hearts, that we may begin to flee contradiction and walk in the

blessed obedience of sons.

Now, as by His grace we so walk, indeed we shall also suffer contradiction. And in the battle we might grow weary. But, considering the Lord, who is our Head, we may take courage. For surely as He

has suffered Himself to endure contradiction even to death, so surely shall He sustain those that are contradicted for His sake. By His enduring contradiction, we are assured that no one can take our victory away. □

Editorial

Pulling the Plug on the Flood

What his colleague Howard Van Till did to the revelation of creation in Genesis 1 and 2 by his book, *The Fourth Day*, Calvin College professor of geology Davis A. Young has now done to the revelation of the flood in Genesis 6-9. In the new book, *The Biblical Flood: A Case Study of the Church's Response to Extrabiblical Evidence* (Eerdmans, 1995), Young denies that there ever was a universal flood that destroyed all humans and animals that were outside Noah's ark.

In addition to the wealth of geological evidence opposing the possibility of a global deluge, a variety of biogeographical evidence also counts conclusively against such an event.... There is no evidence whatsoever to indicate that human or animal populations were ever disrupted by a catastrophic global flood at any point in the past. Indeed, all the evidence indicates continuous occupation by these populations of points around the globe into the exceedingly distant past (p. 311).

The reference of Scripture in Genesis 6-9 is merely to a local flooding in the Tigris and Euphrates River valleys.

The flood account uses hyperbolic language to describe an event that devastated or disrupted Mesopotamian civilization — that is to say, the whole world of the Semites (p. 312).

The Reformed professor of geology pulls the plug on the Genesis flood. What is left is a puddle.

Sola Scientia

The reason for the rejection of Scripture's teaching of a universal flood is the alleged testimony of science. This is the "extrabiblical evidence" of the book's title. Young advances his rejection of the flood of Genesis by means of a thorough study of scientists' increasingly vocal insistence that a universal flood never occurred, indeed, is an impossibility, and of theologians' corresponding surrender of the church's faith concerning the flood of Genesis 6-9.

The justification for allowing science to set aside Scripture (Young prefers to speak of science's forcing the church to "re-interpret" Scripture) is that science is God's general revelation. General revelation is the authority by which holy Scripture must be judged.

When so many scientists of such a diverse array of worldviews are able to achieve a virtual consensus regarding a given body of evidence, we had better pay attention. When for the past two centuries thousands of geologists from around the world, including numerous Bible-believing Christians, insist from a lifetime of experience in looking at fossiliferous rocks that those rocks are extremely old and had nothing to do with a global deluge, then the church must listen (p. 310).

Reformed theology has also stressed the value and importance of God's general revelation of himself through his creation (p. xi).

The scientific evidence that Young appeals to is largely geological. The rocks do not prove a universal flood. On the contrary, they conclusively oppose the possibility of a global deluge (see Young's summary of this "extrabiblical evidence" on pp. 309-312).

Science is the authority over the faith of the church: "*sola scientia!*"

Attack on Scripture

Scripture must give way.

The book is an attack on Scripture — its clarity, its reliability, its authority, and, thus, its inspiration

by God the Holy Spirit. Scripture teaches the wonder in history of a flood of water that covered the entire world of that time, destroying all men and animals except the eight souls and the animals that were in the ark. At this point, every reader ought to re-read Genesis 6-9.

Davis Young resists the Word of God, not only in Genesis 6-9 but also in the New Testament. For the New Testament affirms the flood as a universal deluge, thus underscoring the historicity of Genesis 6-9. Upon this awesome historical event, the New Testament bases significant doctrine.

In Matthew 24:37-39, our Lord Himself accepts Genesis' account of the flood as historical. He explains it as a type of the destruction of all the wicked at the end.

In I Peter 3:19-21, the apostle asserts a real Noah, a real ark, and a real flood by which only eight souls were saved in the ark. This historical flood was a "figure" of the washing of baptism.

In II Peter 2:5 and 3:5, 6, the apostle clearly teaches that the Noahic flood destroyed the entire old world (the "world that then was"). God saved only Noah and his house (see also Heb. 11:7). II Peter 3:5, 6 brings up this historical, universal flood as the refutation of the scoffers who challenge the reality of Christ's coming and as the type of the destruction of the present world with all its ungodly inhabitants in the Day of Christ.

Un-Reformed Interpretation of the Bible

The book is an attack upon the right, Reformed interpretation of the Bible. Scripture no longer interprets Scripture. Scripture is now interpreted by science. This is not a whit less serious than the rejection outright of the Bible's clarity, reliability, and authority, that is, its inspiration. What good is it to profess Scripture's inspiration when its meaning is determined, not by itself but by alien authorities, in this case

a horde of mainly unregenerated scientists?

Young claims to be urging, not a rejection of Genesis 6-9 but a "re-interpretation" of the passage. The claim is false. Denial of a flood that covered all the earth of that time in favor of a local overflow of some river or other — replacing the deluge with a puddle — is not re-interpretation of Genesis 7:19, 20 but flat contradiction of it. Denial of a flood that destroyed all humans and animals except those in the ark, in favor of a local catastrophe that destroyed only those in the immediate area, is not re-interpretation of Genesis 7:21-23 but flat contradiction of it.

General Revelation

Even as regards the plea for re-interpretation, Young errs. First, he is mistaken when he identifies human analysis of rocks and other physical phenomena with God's general revelation. To put it bluntly, Davis Young's reading of the rock strata is not general revelation.

Second, genuine general revelation — God's making Himself known in His creation — is not an authority over Scripture, or even an authority on a par with Scripture. The ungodly, it must be remembered, including the ungodly scientist, always holds under in unrighteousness, and can only hold under in unrighteousness, the truth that God makes known to him in creation (Rom. 1:18ff.). Seeing creation, he writes learned books in defense of evolution. Knowing the cataclysm of the universal flood, he argues strenuously that all things continue as they were from the beginning of creation (II Pet. 3:4-6). Ungodly scientists are as unreliable in their witness against the Bible's testimony to a universal flood as the men of Romans 1:18ff. are unreliable in their witness against the existence and nature of the true God.

Of course, the ungodly scientist suppresses the truth of the flood. The biblical flood condemns the ungodly scientist and warns him of the coming judgment of universal fire.

Believers know and understand general revelation only in the light of and in accordance with Scripture.

Even as regards the believers, general revelation does not control Scripture. The godly do not interpret Scripture in the light and according to the standard of general revelation. Much less do they interpret Scripture in the light of a general revelation that is completely divorced from the truth of Scripture.

Rather, they interpret Scripture in the light and according to the standard of Scripture. Every passage of Scripture is interpreted according to the "rule of faith." Believers know and understand general revelation only in the light of and in accordance with Scripture.

Davis Young may not interpret Genesis 6-9 in accordance with the prevailing opinions of unbelieving scientists, or even in the light of general revelation. But he must explain his rocks, as well as all the other data, in the light of and in accordance with the teaching of Genesis 6-9.

The Issue: Is Genesis 1-11 Historical?

The book is an attack on the historicity of Genesis 1-11. What the Spirit breathed forth in Genesis 6-9 never actually happened. It never actually happened *as described in the passage*. There never was the Noah of Genesis 6-9. There never was the ark of the chapter. There never was the wonder of the entering into the ark of the animals "two and two ... as God had commanded Noah" (Gen. 7:9). There never was the heart-shrinking judgment, but also the heart-warming deliverance, of the purging water, when "all the fountains of the great deep (were) broken up, and the windows of

heaven were opened" (Gen. 7:11). There could never have been, therefore, the offering of sacrifices by the non-existent Noah, or the giving of the cosmic covenant with its rainbow-sign by God (Gen. 8:20-9:17).

The passage is a myth.

Attack on Faith

The book is an attack on faith. As the Heidelberg Catechism states in Q. 21, true faith holds for truth all that God has revealed to us in His Word. It holds for truth all that God has revealed in His Word *because* it is revealed in His Word. God's Word is self-authenticating to faith. Therefore, faith cannot be moved to doubt or deny anything that God has revealed in His Word by any evidence, argument, ridicule, or pressure from any quarter whatever.

Young does not understand faith. He piles up his scientific proofs and authorities against the biblical revelation of a universal flood and, apparently sincerely, asks, "When will these naive, credulous fundamentalists concede?"

Leaving aside now the unkind disparagement of the Reformed believer as a naive fundamentalist, the answer is, "Never!" For faith holds for truth all that God has revealed in His Word.

Faith believes absurd things, e.g., that Jonah the prophet was three days in the belly of the great fish, just as Christ was three days in the grave.

Faith believes impossible things, e.g., that dead Abraham and barren Sarah had a son, just as the Messiah was a sprout out of the stump of Jesse. Indeed, faith holds for truth an event the impossibility of which makes belief of a universal flood with all its details mere child's play in comparison: the incarnation of

God.

Faith believes the account of the universal flood *only* because it is revealed as truth in the inspired Scriptures. Just as extrabiblical evidence does not dissuade faith, so also extrabiblical scientific evidence *in favor of the universal flood* is no part of the foundation of faith. Nor does faith try to prove the universal flood to others on the ground of alleged evidence in the rocks. In this connection, Young makes a legitimate criticism of some defenders of the literal understanding of the biblical flood:

Significantly, the literalist flood geology school has not rejected extrabiblical data. Indeed, the literalists have depended more heavily on extrabiblical physical substantiation of biblical statements than have other Christians (pp. 244, 245).

One might expect that those who endorse a strict literalistic interpretation of the flood narrative

... would be inclined simply to reject the relevance of extrabiblical data, given the fact that such data seem clearly and overwhelmingly to deny that such a planet-altering flood ever took place. One might expect that such individuals would instead make appeals solely to the Word of God as the complete and final authority in all such matters and that they would denounce extrabiblical evidence as superfluous and misleading. And yet the proponents of flood geology have moved in the opposite direction, not only showing a substantial interest in extrabiblical evidence but actually elevating it to the status of apologetic proof (p. 264).

It is one thing to point out, as Whitcomb and Morris helpfully did in their *The Genesis Flood*, that there is a great deal of evidence in the present form of the earth corroborating

the Bible's testimony to the flood. It is another thing to make this evidence even a part of faith's foundation, or to use this evidence as proof to convince the doubters.

From the science department of Calvin College have come, in quick succession, two violent assaults upon the foundation of the Christian faith in Genesis 1-11. Howard Van Till demolished the historicity of the creation-account. Now Davis Young has undermined the historicity of the account of the flood. Still to come are an attack on the origin of the nations in the account of Babel in Genesis 11 and, finally, the rejection of the historicity of the account of the fall in Genesis 3.

We expect these sequels.

A Deadly Silence

It will be instructive to pay careful attention to the reviews that *The Biblical Flood* receives in the magazines and journals of reputedly conservative Reformed and Presbyterian churches and seminaries. Likewise, it will be instructive to take note of the response to the book by supposedly conservative and even Calvinistic colleges.

Will there be a clear, sharp, unambiguous condemnation of the book from any of these institutions?

Or will there again be a telling silence?

The unbelief concerning Genesis 1-11 that is a mark of theological modernism is now widespread in churches, seminaries, and colleges that have a name for evangelical and Reformed orthodoxy. If the theologians and professors do not themselves teach the mythical nature of the events in the opening chapters of the Bible, they are tolerant of the teaching — and the teachers.

There will be no defense of the faith from them.

A puddle is fine.

— DJE

TAKE IT — or LEAVE IT?

This is what one keen analyst of this year's synod of the Christian Reformed Church (CRC) said in reaction to that synod's decision re opening the offices of minister and elder to women, and to its decision not to break fraternal relations with the Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland (GKN). "We have only two options," said the analyst, "Take it or leave it. The CRC is not 'headed in the wrong direction'; as of Synod 1995, it is on the wrong course. Our choice is no longer to change the CRC because Synod 1995 has locked the door on the conservatives and thrown away the key. The only choice is — how to get out. Basically there are only two options for every member of the CRC: *take it* (pay all the bills and watch the tragedy of the GKN be re-enacted in the CRC) or *leave it* (the only questions being — how and with whom?)."

The CRC synod of 1995, the reader will recall, declared that 1) both views on women in office (closing the offices and opening the offices) are acceptable within the denomination; 2) the issue is not a confessional one; 3) it does not impact one's salvation; therefore synod will compromise not by changing the Church Order Article 3, deleting the word "male" which is the only legal thing to do, but by issuing a "supplement" to Article 3 which allows a classis to declare the word "male," stated in Article 3 as a requisite for office, to be "inoperative," and, in cases where a classis will not declare the word "male" inoperative, a church within that classis may do so by itself. The synod also declared

that this solution "avoids the danger of congregationalism." If allowing individual congregations to declare a part of the Church Order "inoperative" is not congregationalism, what is?

The decision is wrong on all counts. Does Scripture teach both views? Of course not! One is clearly taught, and one is by that very fact clearly forbidden. Women, the Bible says, may not preach or rule in God's church. The issue is a confessional issue, no matter what the synod may have said. In a Reformed Church the Church Order itself has confessional status. The Three Forms of Unity teach that only men qualify for the offices in the church. And, as if that is not sufficient, what does one do with the Forms for ordination of ministers, elders and deacons, missionaries, and professors of theology? All of these subordinate standards speak of the "brother" or "brothers" who are being ordained.

Does the women-in-office issue impact one's salvation? Surely it does! It does because it contradicts Holy Scripture (cf. I Timothy 2:8-13)! Besides, if the Bible does not speak clearly to this issue, how can I trust it to speak clearly on any issue, including the issue of one's salvation from sin and death through the cross and resurrection of Jesus Christ?

In the last issue we reported that the reaction to this decision on the part of three sister denominations was "strong and immediate." Such is also the reaction from within the CRC. The CRC of Escondido, California is asking its classis (California South) to "invite all classes (as well as all councils and officebearers) who share our convictions to attend an assembly in November to formulate appropriate actions and responses to Synod 1995." The Escondido church wants the decisions re women in office and re continuing the

sister church relation with the GKN changed.

Finally the decision re women is not presented as a change in the Church Order, but as a *supplement* to Article 3. Does this "supplement" clarify or further explain Article 3? No, it flatly contradicts Article 3.

All that the conservatives can do now is protest the decision of synod 1995. Assuming that the protest is not sustained, the analyst is right, the conservatives have only two options: *take it or leave it*.

*Christian Renewal
The Outlook*

SOUTHERN BAPTISTS CONDEMN SLAVERY AND RACISM

At its 150th anniversary celebration, the Southern Baptist Convention condemned slavery. The SBC, the largest Protestant church in the United States, has never officially rejected the racism in their history, but in late June they engaged in an act of confession. "We lament and repudiate historic acts of evil such as slavery from which we continue to reap a bitter harvest, and we recognize that the racism which yet plagues our culture today is inextricably tied to the past," the resolution read. "We apologize ... for condoning and/or perpetuating individual and systemic racism in our lifetime; and we genuinely repent of racism of which we have been guilty, whether consciously or unconsciously.... We ask forgiveness from our African-American brothers and sisters, acknowledging that our own healing is at stake."

The SBC resolution is the latest in a series of reconciliation efforts in American evangelical churches. Last year the mainly white Pentecostal Fellowship of North America disbanded. Its members regrouped in a new interracial body. In January of this year the National Black Evangelical Association and the National

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Association of Evangelicals formed a joint task force to promote reconciliation.

REC News Exchange

MISSIONARIES KILLED

After surviving seventeen months of captivity, two U.S. missionaries were killed July 19 during a fight between rebel and government troops in Colombia. The government troops say they were on a rescue mission and that the rebels killed the captives to aid their own escape. Some local press reports, however, allege that it was the military that killed the missionaries.

The two men, Steve Walsh and

Timothy Van Dyke, both 43, were missionaries with the New Tribes Mission. They were teachers at a school for missionaries' children. They were kidnapped January 16, 1994. Three other New Tribes missionaries are missing since their capture in January 1993, and a fourth missionary, with Wycliff Bible translators, has been a captive of the rebel forces since March 1994.

The New Tribes Mission had no comment on the charges about government responsibility. They did say that they had not requested or approved any rescue operations.

REC News Exchange

FINALLY, FAREWELL

This is the last contribution of the undersigned to "All Around Us." Beginning next month, my able colleague Rev. Gise Van Baren will return as editor of the column and I will be contributing to the rubric, "Ministering to the Saints." This change enables me to do some writing in the subject area which I teach at the seminary.

I take this opportunity to acknowledge and thank those of our readers who from time to time sent me items for the column. These were much appreciated. We encourage you to do the same for Rev. Van Baren. □

In His Fear

Rev. Arie denHartog

A Special Sermon for the Young Women of the Church (2)*

The Word of God often admonishes the Christian woman to live in submission. We are, of course, first of all to submit ourselves to God and His Word by His grace and Spirit in our hearts. If in the Lord's providence we marry some day, we are to be subject to our husbands. The role of a woman in marriage is that of obedience to the husband that the Lord has placed over her. In the church the Lord does not want women to insist on having a leadership position but rather to be subject unto men whom God has appointed to rule. This is not easy. It

is something that goes against their proud sinful nature. The women of this world are given to self-exaltation and self-promotion. They insist on usurping the role that God has given to men in marriage and the church. This is strongly encouraged by the feminist movement. But the Lord delights in godly submission. This is a virtue honorable in His sight.

You are exhorted specifically also to exercise the virtue of Christian love. All of us must walk in love. Love is the supreme Christian virtue. We are to love God and to love one another. This is not the self-seeking and immoral love of this world. The love spoken of here is not the mindless romance and passion promoted by the novels, songs, and movies of the world. Your call-

ing is to walk in the holy love of God. The love to which Scripture admonishes us is that of self-sacrifice and self-control. It is sanctified love guided by the knowledge and truth of the Word of God. It is the opposite of pride and self-seeking. It is the love of self-denial, obedience, and service. Godly love is absolutely essential for all of our Christian life. Godly love is absolutely essential for Christian marriage. God's Word exhorts Christian young married women to love their husbands and to love their children. In the love of God we are to seek His

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* This is the second installment of a sermon preached by Rev. denHartog on the occasion of the public confession of faith by three young women in his congregation.

truth and righteousness in our life. Out of love for God we seek to confess His name, and glorify Him in all our life. In love, especially for our fellow saints, we are to seek their highest good and salvation.

God's Word exhorts you to a life of good works. God has made the womanly nature in such a way that godly women are eminently suited for a life of good works in a very special way. They are able to show depths of compassion, love, tenderness, and sympathy that a man is not able to demonstrate in the same way. The great examples of godly women in the Bible are those whose lives were filled with good works, especially good works of charity, kindness, and compassion for the poor and afflicted in the world. Already now in your youth begin to practice such good works.

In considering these Christian virtues laid out in the Word of God, we will soon realize how totally devoid most modern-day women are of any of these. Many are impudent, rebellious, and immoral to the extreme. They are devoid of all virtue and moral beauty and excellence. Though they are glamorized by the modern-day media, and appear on the front covers of women's magazines they are an abomination to the Lord. To reveal the virtues of the godly woman you need to be prepared to be radically different from the women of the world. You need also to be prepared to be ridiculed and mocked by this ungodly world. As the world grows in rebellion and wickedness over against God, the women of this world are more and more becoming the leaders in sin. Women were once called the fairer and gentler sex. They were respected even by the world for being more noble and virtuous than the rough, immoral, and brazenly wicked men of the world. That is hardly true anymore today. Today women are often leaders in basest sin and im-

morality. They are aggressive in leading men to commit more and more evil. They pride themselves in their life of immorality.

I want to call your attention yet to the fact that the matter of dress is brought up in connection with the calling of the god-fearing woman. We cannot ignore this.

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Women generally place a lot of emphasis on dress. They spend a lot of time every day in front of the mirror putting on make-up and deciding what clothes to wear for the day. The apostles of the Lord thought this whole matter to be of sufficient importance to exhort you specifically about your dress. The apostle Paul says in I Timothy 2, "In like manner also, that women adorn themselves in modest apparel, with shamefacedness and sobriety; not with broided hair, or gold, or pearls, or costly array." Peter says: Let not your adorning be the outward adorning of the plaiting of the hair and the wearing of gold, or putting on of apparel (I Pet. 3:3). The Word of God does not here forbid the moderate use of make-up, the perming of one's hair, the wearing of some jewelry, and some nice clothes. Not all concern about this is condemned. But modesty and sobriety must also govern the way the godly woman dresses. This is virtuous in the sight of God. It is possible to become legalistic and petty about these matters, so that a person is judged strictly by the way he or she dresses. This is wrong. However, there are general guidelines laid out in the Word of God that the godly woman must follow. Often the way we dress reflects the attitude of our heart. Many women of the world dress in enticing ways only to catch the eye of men. Much immoral enticement is practiced by means of women's clothing. This is quite obvious. Besides this, many dress to draw excessive attention to themselves. Godly women ought to be specially care-

ful in this area. Rather than following the world's fashions and seeing how daring one can be, the great concern about dress for the godly woman must be that of modesty and chasteness. By no means does the godly woman want to call the attention of the world to herself, and certainly not the immoral eyes of evil men.

You must be careful not to spend all your money on clothes so that you do not have sufficient resources for more important things in life, such as supporting the church and giving to the poor.

The evil that must be avoided by godly women in the area of dress is that of inordinate attention to outward adornment. What a necessary consideration this is. Virtually the total preoccupation of women of the world is with outward appearance. They want to look good, to look glamorous. They love to hear compliments about how glamorous they look outwardly.

The adornment of the god-fearing woman must be inner and spiritual adornment, the beauty of the inner man. The inner man is the new regenerated nature that we have through the operation of the Spirit of Christ in our hearts. This work in our hearts will create in us a desire to possess the beautiful virtues of God.

The apostle Peter knows what he is talking about. His words have the greatest relevance for our modern day. Who pays any attention to the great matter of the beauty of the heart before God? Yet the beauty of the heart is true beauty before God. Mere outward beauty is nothing but vanity. All the emphasis that is placed on this in the world only encourages pride and self-promotion. All the emphasis on these things by the women of the world cannot cover up the rottenness and depravity that resides in the heart of the ungodly women of the world. Would it not be wonderful if more women would be concerned about true spiritual beauty before God? What a change there would be in many

women if they would spend as much time and effort and concern to adorn themselves spiritually every day as they do in dressing themselves up and putting on make-up every day.

The virtues outlined in the passages we read this morning are the reflection of the high standard of the Word of God for you as god-fearing women. After hearing about them and considering yourself I am sure that you say within yourself, "How can I ever live up to such a standard?" And indeed, it is impossible for you by nature. We all fall far short of the standard of the Word of God. We are called to walk by faith in Christ Jesus. He alone can give us the strength to overcome the sinful inclinations of our corrupt nature and to flee from the temptations of this world. We need the power of the operation of the Spirit of God in our hearts to cleanse us from sin and enable us to walk in holiness and sanctification before God.

The principle from which the regenerated child of God must live is that of the fear of God. The apostle Peter speaks directly of this fear in connection with his admonition to women. That we fear God means that we have a profound knowledge of His sovereignty, greatness, and holiness. That we fear God means that we know of His righteous judgments. In fear of God we desire to

avoid that which displeases God and that which brings His condemnation on the wicked. We desire instead to live a life that is pleasing to the Lord. We consider His favor in our life to be greater than any glory and honor that the world may ascribe to us.

The apostle Peter speaks of being of great price in the sight of God. How we want to be accepted. Young people often have an especially strong desire for this, sometimes almost an uncontrollable desire. Our greatest concern in life, however, ought not to be that we are accepted by men — certainly not the men of the world. Our greatest concern in life must be that we are pleasing to the Lord, that we are precious in His sight. There is true joy and delight in being pleasing unto the Lord. The Lord delights in His saints. He delights in god-fearing women in whom He sees reflected His own glorious virtues, virtues He Himself has worked by His grace and Spirit in their hearts.

What a dreadful surprise the glamorous women of Hollywood and Broadway and Paris and London are going to have before the Lord, the Judge of all men, in the day of the revelation of His righteous judgment. While they were in this world they imagined that there was no one greater and more glam-

orous than they were. The world honors its own. Who, after all, is greater in this world than the glamorous movie star and the woman that has spent almost all her time on outward adornment, the physical beauty of her body, make-up, expensive perfumes, skin-oils, facial-treatments, hair dyes, and whatever else the world has invented to glamorize the physical, outward beauty of her women? But when God comes to judge, all that outward glamor is going to be stripped away to reveal the depraved and wicked hearts of the women of the world. They shall be condemned to everlasting shame and condemnation.

But the woman who fears God, she shall be praised. The woman who has the true, inner, spiritual beauty of the godly virtues outlined in the passages that we considered today, she shall be precious in the sight of God. She shall be exalted because in her shines the true glory of God in Christ Jesus. Young women of the church of Jesus Christ, strive by God's grace to show forth the glory of these true virtues before God. Always think about being truly beautiful in the sight of God, your Lord and Savior. Then you will have the great reward of His everlasting favor and blessing on your life. □

Search the Scriptures

Rev. Carl Haak

The Healing of the Nobleman's Son

John 4:43-54

Rev. Haak is pastor of Bethel Protestant Reformed Church in Elk Grove Village, Illinois.

After the two days of enjoying the spiritual harvest in Samaria the Lord returns to Galilee. It is in Galilee that the majority of the time of His earthly ministry will be spent. The reason for this move is that the

Lord Himself knew that a prophet has no honor in his own country. Some explain this to mean that the Lord knew that His ministry must be one of rejection and scorn, and He therefore labors in that country

where such rejection will be His (Heb. 12:3; Is. 49:4). Although there is truth in that idea, it seems that the meaning of verses 43 and 44 is simply that in His own country, i.e., Nazareth, He had been rejected; and so He will now center his work in the broader areas of Galilee itself. (Compare Luke 4:16ff., the incident of His rejection in Nazareth, which must have been the first thing that happened to Him when He returned from Samaria.)

The reception He receives in Galilee is however not one rooted in the faith that He is God's Son, but rather in the things they have seen Him do in Jerusalem. His popularity with many people hinges on the signs and miracles He performs. This is why He speaks as He does in verse 48. (Note that He says "ye," plural, a reference to the Galileans. He is saying to the nobleman, Do you too belong to the company of wonder seekers?) Later in His ministry He will speak even more pointedly against those who follow Him for the external signs and not because He is the Son of God, the only Savior from sin. (See Luke 11:29; Matthew 16:1-4.)

A nobleman (royal officer) from Capernaum comes to Cana with the request that He will heal his son who is at the point of death. The man believes that Jesus is a great miracle worker and that His presence at his son's sick bed is the last and only hope. The Lord is concerned that this true child of God have his faith directed to who He is and to the Word He speaks and not be centered in Him as someone who is able to do great miracles. Thus, the Lord's mild rebuke in verse 48 is intended to drive this man's faith to something deeper than signs and wonders. This is also the result of Christ's words to him. The man obeys Christ's command to return home and believes the word that Christ has spoken to him, namely, "Thy son liveth."

Jesus reveals His divine omniscience and omnipresent power in healing the son at that very moment

even though sixteen miles separated Cana and Capernaum. When the nobleman returns home and is informed of the recovery of his son, he takes note of the fact that it happened at the very moment Christ spoke the word. Both he and his household believe.

We are taught at least two outstanding principles:

1. Faith is founded on the Word of God concerning His Son and not on signs. Signs confirm faith, they never produce faith.

2. When God saves a man He also works in covenant mercy in the lives of his household.

Outline:

1. Jesus enters Galilee (vv. 43-46).

a. The reason for His going to Galilee (v. 44).

b. The apparently eager reception the Galileans give Him (v. 45).

c. His return to Cana of Galilee (v. 46).

2. The encounter with the nobleman (vv. 47-50a).

a. The nobleman's request to heal his son who is sick in Capernaum, and the Lord's rebuke (vv. 47, 48).

b. The nobleman's repeated request and the Lord's mighty act of healing the son who was at Capernaum (vv. 49, 50).

3. The nobleman and his household believe (vv. 50b-54).

a. As the nobleman goes his way believing, he is met by his servants, who tell him his son recovered at the very moment Jesus had spoken the word (vv. 50b-52).

b. His household believes as well (v. 53).

c. The notice that this is Christ's second miracle (v. 54).

Questions:

1. Explain the reason for Christ's going to Galilee as it is given in verse 44. What "country" is referred to? (If the country is Galilee, why does the fact that a prophet has no honor in his own country serve as the reason for Christ's going into Galilee?)

2. Explain the proverb "a prophet has no honor in his own country." See Luke 4:24; Matthew 13:57; Jeremiah 11:21. What evil of the flesh is at work when we become familiar with the messengers of God's Word?

3. How must we understand the reception given Him by the Galileans? Is it of true faith in Him, or are they curiosity seekers who are interested in Him only because of the popularity He gained at Jerusalem?

4. Why does the Holy Spirit remind us that Cana of Galilee was the place where He made water wine? What are the similarities between this miracle (the healing of the nobleman's son) and the changing of the water into wine?

5. Who was this nobleman? What can we say about his position? A government official? A wealthy land owner?

6. Discuss the progression in the faith of the nobleman. In what state does he come to Jesus? Why does he come to Jesus? What does his request indicate about him? Compare him at that point to the centurion of Luke 7:1-10. Show how the Lord brought his faith to be grounded in the Word and not in signs.

7. What is the intent of the Lord's word to him in verse 48?

8. Explain how the Word always has preeminence over signs and wonders, and that faith comes by the Word and not by signs and wonders. See Romans 10:17.

9. What divine attributes does Jesus show in the way He heals this son? How does this fit in with the emphasis of John's gospel on the Deity of Christ?

10. Show the truth of the covenant from verse 53. How is the nobleman an example to us as parents to instill the truths of the gospel in our children?

11. Is there any significance in the notice of verse 54 that this is the second miracle that Jesus did since coming out of Judea? □

Subscription of Officebearers

The ministers of the Word of God and likewise the professors of theology (which also behooves the other professors and school teachers) shall subscribe to the three formulas of unity, namely, the Belgic Confession of Faith, the Heidelberg Catechism, and the Canons of Dordrecht, 1619-'19, and the ministers of the Word who refuse to do so shall *de facto* be suspended from their office by the consistory or classis until they shall have given a full statement, and if they obstinately persist in refusing, they shall be deposed from their office.

Church Order, Article 53.

Likewise the elders and deacons shall subscribe to the aforesaid formulas of unity.

Church Order, Article 54.

Historical background

The practice of requiring officebearers to express their agreement with the Reformed confessions dates back to the earliest days of the Reformed faith in the Netherlands.

The minutes of the first synod of the Dutch churches, the Synod of Emden, 1571, contain the following notice: "In order to prove the concord among the Dutch churches concerning the confession, the brethren decided it to be proper to subscribe to the Confession of Faith of the Dutch churches (i.e., the Belgic Confession of Faith)."

In this early period, subscription to the confessions was accomplished by signing one's name to the Belgic Confession, and later the Heidelberg Catechism. But as early as 1608 one of the classes, the Classis of Alkmaar, judged that merely signing one's name was insufficient. The difficulty was that there were those who had placed their signatures over the forms of unity, who later began to contradict the confessions in their teaching and writing. When confronted with the fact that they had

expressed their agreement with the confessions by affixing their signatures, they responded that at the time they had signed they had been in agreement, but since then they had come to see matters differently. In order to prevent this situation, the Classis of Alkmaar drew up a formula of subscription. Very soon other classes and particular synods followed the lead of Alkmaar.

Our "Formula of Subscription" comes down to us from the Synod of Dordt, 1618-'19. In response to numerous appeals, the Synod adopted the following: "It is decided that a standard form for subscription of the Confession, Catechism, and synodical decisions (i.e., the Canons of Dordt) be drafted by means of which all ministers clearly certify their agreement with the accepted doctrine and by which the evasions of some who try to deceive the churches are prevented." The "Formula of Subscription" drafted by the Synod of Dordt is substantially that in use in the Protestant Reformed Churches today.

Purpose of subscription

The purpose of subscription is not to elevate the confessions of the church to the level of Holy Scripture. It is not the case that in the

Reformed churches the confessions are of equal authority to the Bible. The confessions themselves appeal to the standard of the Word of God as the ultimate and only authority in the church of Jesus Christ. That the "Formula of Subscription" does not place the confessions on a par with Scripture is plain from the fact that the "Formula of Subscription" itself leaves room for revision of the confessions should anything in the confessions be demonstrated to be in conflict with the Bible.

Nevertheless, it is the conviction of the Reformed churches, and of the Protestant Reformed Churches in particular, that the "Three Forms of Unity" (the Belgic Confession of Faith, the Heidelberg Catechism, and the Canons of Dordt) constitute a faithful summary of the fundamental doctrines of the Word of God. They give expression to what it means to be Reformed. With a view to the preservation of doctrinal purity in the churches, subscription to these confessions is demanded of the officebearers who serve in these churches. Such a public declaration of agreement serves to ensure the confidence of the members of the church in the orthodoxy of her officebearers.

The "Formula of Subscription"

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also serves to promote the unity of the churches. That is why in Articles 53 and 54 of the **Church Order** the confessions are referred to as the "formulas of unity." The unity of the church, in the local congregation, in the church federation at both the classical and synodical level, as well as the unity of the church catholic is in view in the "Formula of Subscription." For the basis of the unity of the church is doctrine — one doctrine. Unity is strictly in the sphere of the truth. In the interests of that doctrinal unity, subscription to the confessions is demanded of officebearers.

What is promised?

At least six things are promised by the officebearer who signs the "Formula of Subscription."

First, it is promised that one is in full agreement with the Reformed confessions: "... do hereby sincerely and in good conscience before the Lord, declare by this, our subscription, that we heartily believe and are persuaded that all the articles and points of doctrine, contained in the Confession and Catechism of the Reformed Churches, together with the explanation of some points of the aforesaid doctrine, made by the National Synod of Dordrecht, 1618-'19, do fully agree with the Word of God." No room is left for entertaining doubts, signing the "Formula" tongue-in-cheek, or with mental reservations. Signing the "Formula of Subscription" is an expression of wholehearted agreement with the confessions.

Second, the promise is made to teach and defend the confessions: "We promise therefore diligently to teach and faithfully to defend the aforesaid doctrine...." Signing the "Formula" is by no means mere passive assent. But it is the pledge actively to promote the great truths set forth in the confessions in one's labors as an officebearer in Christ's church.

Third, the promise is made to reject and refute all who oppose the truths expressed in the confessions:

"We declare, moreover, that we not only reject all errors that militate against this doctrine ... but that we are disposed to refute and contradict these, and to exert ourselves in keeping the church free from such errors." Defense of the truth is always antithetical. It is not enough — it seems there are always those in the church who suppose that it is — to be positive. It is not enough to set forth what we believe. But it is also necessary to be negative, to reject error. The churches demand this of the officebearers; but, more importantly, God demands this.

Fourth, the promise is made to report any doubts or difficulties that should arise in order that the church may pass judgment: "And if hereafter any difficulties or different sentiments respecting the aforesaid doctrines should arise in our minds we promise that we will neither publicly nor privately propose, teach, or defend the same, either by preaching or writing, until we have first revealed such sentiments to the consistory, classis, and synod, that the same may be there examined, being ready always cheerfully to submit to the judgment of the consistory, classis, and synod...." The creeds are not infallible. It is possible that an officebearer comes to disagree with a certain point in one of the confessions. This does not give him the liberty publicly to express this disagreement. Not at all! But he must inform the churches and submit the matter to the judgment of the assemblies. Ordinarily this would be done by means of a *gravamen*.

Fifth, by signing the "Formula" an officebearer agrees to submit to an examination should this be judged necessary: "And further, if at any time the consistory, classis, or synod, upon sufficient grounds of suspicion and to preserve the uniformity and purity of doctrine, may deem it proper to require of us a further explanation of our sentiments respecting any particular article of the Confession of Faith, the Catechism, or the explanation of the

National Synod, we do hereby promise always to be willing and ready to comply with such requisition...."

And finally, it is promised that should it be necessary for an officebearer to make appeal against the judgment of a minor assembly to a major assembly, during the process of appeal he will acquiesce to the judgment that has been made: "... reserving for ourselves, however, the right of an appeal, whenever we shall believe ourselves aggrieved by the sentence of the consistory, the classis, or the synod, and until a decision is made upon such an appeal, we will acquiesce in the determination and judgment already passed."

Signing the "Formula of Subscription"

All officebearers in the Reformed churches must sign the "Formula of Subscription."*

All elders, deacons, and ministers must sign the "Formula of Subscription" in the local congregation in which they are called. The "Formula" is to be transcribed into the minute book of the consistory with all the signatures of the officebearers who have signed it in that congregation. Signing of the "Formula" may take place in the consistory room, witnessed then by one's fellow officebearers, at the first consistory meeting after installation. In recent years many of our church-

* The mention in Article 54 of the signing of the "Formula of Subscription" by "the other professors and school teachers" reflects the state-church relationship that existed at the time our **Church Order** was drawn up. Although this arrangement no longer applies, the presence of this phrase in our **Church Order** does serve the purpose of affirming that the Reformed confessions are at the basis of the Reformed Christian school and that agreement with the confessions is necessary on the part of all who teach.

es have gone to the practice of signing the "Formula" publicly at the time of installation, so that the congregation as a whole can be witness. This practice has much to commend itself.

All delegates to classis must also sign the "Formula of Subscription" in the minute book of the Classis. In the case of candidates, this is to take place immediately after their successful completion of their classical examination: "In case of a favorable outcome the applicant shall sign the formula of subscription" (Church Order, Article 4, Decision C., 2., b.).

At the synodical level the "Formula of Subscription" is not signed, but the delegates arise in assent to the reading of the "Public Declaration of Agreement with the Forms of Unity."

De Facto suspension

Refusal to sign the "Formula of Subscription," either at the consistorial or classical level, results in *de facto* suspension from office: "... (those) who refuse to do so shall *de facto* be suspended from their office by the consistory or classis until they shall have given a full statement, and if they obstinately persist in refusing, they shall be deposed from their office."

Any minister, elder, or deacon who refuses to sign the "Formula" in the consistory is automatically suspended from office. This does not mean that a decision of the consistory to this effect is unnecessary. A decision to suspend must be taken, but the ground is refusal to sign the "Formula of Subscription."

At the classical level, any delegate, whether minister or elder, who refuses to sign the "Formula" is automatically suspended from office. Again, this does not mean that a decision of the consistory in which the officebearer holds his office is unnecessary. But the decision to suspend must be grounded in the refusal to sign the "Formula." In this case the delegate is not seated, is accorded no official capacity at the

classical meeting, and the classis informs his consistory of his refusal to sign the "Formula of Subscription."

Article 53 is not to be interpreted as giving to a classis the right to suspend and depose officebearers. This is not the case. Suspension and deposition of officebearers, according to Articles 79 and 80 of the Church Order, are quite different from *de facto* suspension for refusal to sign the "Formula of Subscription." Refusal to sign the "Formula" is in a class by itself. So serious is this matter that it calls for *de facto* suspension from office.

May God continue to give to the Protestant Reformed Churches officebearers who are committed to the great truths expressed in our Reformed confessions. May He give us men of courage who will defend these truths and refute the errors of our day and of the past that have militated against them. May the signing of the "Formula of Subscription" be more than a mere formality in our churches, but the solemn declaration of men who are resolved, if need be, to lay down their lives for the sake of the Reformed faith. □

Formula of Subscription

We, the undersigned, professors of the Protestant Reformed Churches, ministers of the Gospel, elders, and deacons of the Protestant Reformed congregations of _____, of Classis _____ do hereby sincerely and in good conscience before the Lord, declare by this, our subscription, that we heartily believe and are persuaded that all the articles and points of doctrine, contained in the Confession and Catechism of the Reformed Churches, together with the explanation of some points of the aforesaid doctrine, made by the National Synod of Dordrecht, 1618-'19, do fully agree with the Word of God.

We promise therefore diligently to teach and faithfully to defend the aforesaid doctrine, without either directly or indirectly contradicting the same, by our public preaching or writing.

We declare moreover, that we not only reject all errors that militate against this doctrine and particularly those which were condemned by the above mentioned synod, but that we are disposed to refute and contradict these, and to exert ourselves in keeping the church free from such errors. And if hereafter any difficulties or different sentiments respecting the aforesaid doctrines should arise in our minds, we promise that we will neither publicly nor privately propose, teach, or defend the same, either by preaching or writing, until we have first revealed such sentiments to the consistory, classis, and synod, that the same may be there examined, being ready always cheerfully to submit to the judgment of the consistory, classis, and synod, under the penalty in case of refusal to be, by that very fact, suspended from our office.

And further, if at any time the consistory, classis, or synod, upon sufficient grounds of suspicion and to preserve the uniformity and purity of doctrine, may deem it proper to require of us a further explanation of our sentiments respecting any particular article of the Confession of Faith, the Catechism, or the explanation of the National Synod, we do hereby promise always to be willing and ready to comply with such requisition, under the penalty above mentioned, reserving for ourselves, however, the right of an appeal, whenever we shall believe ourselves aggrieved by the sentence of the consistory, the classis, or the synod, and until a decision is made upon such an appeal, we will acquiesce in the determination and judgment already passed.

(Cf. Acts of Synod, 1945, Art. 40, 55.)

Congregational Activities

The Council of the South Holland, IL PRC has approved a plan proposed by their Audio-Visual Committee to make use of selected video-tapes of their services on the local South Holland cable TV station. This service is provided free to the churches in the South Holland area. South Holland has been given an hour and a half time-slot on Tuesday evenings at 7:30 P.M.

This past summer, the congregation of the Faith PRC in Jenison, MI was able to meet together for a couple of special activities. After the evening service on July 30, the congregation was invited to stay for a light lunch followed by an hour of singing and Christian fellowship led by the Voices of Victory quartet.

Also on Saturday, August 5, the congregation was invited to a beach breakfast outing at North Shore Park in Grand Haven, on the shores of Lake Michigan.

Concerning updates on the progress being made with the building of the Peace PRC in Lynwood, IL, we really have no specific information other than that it is progressing nicely and some members at Peace predict that it could be completed yet late this Fall.

The men of the congregation of the Randolph, WI PRC were called together back in July to treat three proposals, all dealing with the sewer and water extension on Adams St. behind their church. They approved proposals to install a sewer lateral stub to their church and also install sewer and water lateral stubs for use in case a parsonage would be located on the church property in future years.

With thanks to our heavenly Fa-

ther, we send our congratulations to the congregation of the First PRC in Edmonton, AB, Canada which celebrated their 20th anniversary as a congregation on September 8.

The musical group, "Make a Joyful Noise," from our Bethel PRC in Itasca, IL, were part of two special singspirations during the month of July. They took part first in a singspiration at the South Holland, IL PRC on July 2, and later, on July 23, at Faith PRC in Jenison, MI. In each singspiration proceeds were designated for Bethel's Building Fund.

Denominational Activities

Our churches' minister-on-loan to the Evangelical Reformed Churches of Singapore, Rev. Jason Kortering, with his wife Jeanette, were able to return to the United States for a month's furlough in late July. While they were here they spent time with family and were also able to visit and preach in a few of our churches. They were scheduled to return to Singapore on or about August 29.

Evidently before the Korterings left Singapore, some members there asked if there were tapes or CDs available with the Psalms, which are sung both there and here in our churches. So when the Korterings left on their return to Singapore last month they had tapes and CDs of *Psalter* selections from "Make a Joyful Noise," who just happened to have made a recent recording for a fund-raiser for Bethel PRC's building fund.

Young People's Activities

Certainly taking center stage this summer, as far as our young people were concerned, was this year's annual Young People's Convention, hosted by the young people and congregation of the Grandville, MI PRC and held on the campus of Hope

College in Holland, MI and other locations throughout west Michigan. Close to 400 of our young people came together the second week of August to enjoy this year's convention, which developed the theme, "Courageous Christian Youth." This theme was unfolded by three speeches, all dealing with Daniel and his example from Scripture. Rev. J. Mahtani, of the Trinity PRC in Houston, TX, spoke on "Daniel — a Faithful Prayer Life." Rev. C. Terpstra, pastor at the South Holland, IL PRC, spoke on "Daniel — a Bold Witness." And Mr. C. Kalsbeek, a teacher at Covenant Christian High School in Walker, MI, addressed the conventioners on "Daniel — Godly Choices."

Some comments heard from different young people and adult chaperones indicated that this year's convention was one of the best behaved ever, which suggests that no detail was overlooked by the host society, and that speeches and discussion-group topics dealing with devotions, respecting authority, and choosing friends were dealt with in an interesting and challenging way. One final note: find a young person in your church who went and ask to see this year's convention picture. What a good-looking group! And the picture even has Rev. A. Spriensma, pastor at Grandville, on one end, and his identical twin brother on the other.

Evangelism Activities

The Evangelism Committee of the Randolph, WI PRC is making available a set of tapes on the recently completed series by their pastor, Rev. S. Key, on "Reformed Worship: Fellowship with the Holy One." This set of eight tapes (16 sermons) comes in a book-type album. Cost is \$20, with checks to be made payable to the Randolph PR Evangelism Committee, 225 Pierce

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

St., Randolph, WI 53956.

Minister Activities

Rev. M. Dick, pastor of the Immanuel PRC in Lacombe, AB, Canada, declined the call he received to serve as pastor of the Byron Center, MI PRC.

Rev. W. Bruinsma, of the First PRC in Holland, MI, declined the call he received from the Hope PRC in Walker, MI.

Our newest congregation, the Grace PRC in Standale, MI, voted to extend a call to Rev. R. Dykstra, pastor in Doon, IA, to serve as their

first pastor. With Rev. Dykstra on that first trio were Rev. W. Bruinsma and Candidate Doug Kuiper.

Food for Thought

"Happy the man who sees God employed in all the good and ill that chequers life."

— W. Cowper □

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ANNOUNCEMENTS

REMINDER:

College students should let us know what their college addresses are so we can send a complimentary copy of the *Standard Bearer* to them for the duration of their year away from home in college.

NOTICE!

The issue of September 15 is the last in Volume 71. Bound volumes will be made available for \$16.00 (+ postage) each. Or, if you bring or send to the *SB* business office soon your own loose issues for binding, you can obtain the bound volume for just \$9.00. (The latter service can be provided if we have your copies by October 15.)

NOTICE!!

Annual RFPA Meeting
September 28, 1995, 8:00 P.M.
Hope PR Church (Grand Rapids)

Men, women, young people, families — you are all cordially invited to attend this meeting, the main attraction of which will be a speech by Rev. Cammenga on "The *Standard Bearer* — In Defense of the Faith."

Three new board members will be elected from a nomination consisting of Rod Brunsting, Vern Casemier, Leon Kamps, Sr., Jeff Kalsbeek, Rog King, and Bill Oomkes.