



THE **STANDARD BEARER**

**A Reformed
Semi-Monthly
Magazine**



**Newly organized Grace PRC — Standale, Michigan
See "Our 27th Congregation" — p. 56**

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BEARER**

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In This Issue ...

We very much regretted having to leave Rev. Arie denHartog's article on marriage out of our recent, special, Reformation issue of the *Standard Bearer*. Rev. denHartog, although a busy pastor, is always a willing, prompt writer. His articles are well received. Frequently, they are reprinted by other magazines. A recent issue of *Christian Renewal* referred to his articles on the young woman in the church (Sept. 1 and 15, 1995) with praise. Besides, we asked him to contribute to the special issue.

The main reason for our regret at leaving it out, however, is that his article shows that the doctrinal reformation of 1924 has had significant practical effect in the lives of those blessed by that reformation. Although the practice of marriage and family-life taught, nurtured, and protected in the Protestant Reformed Churches flows directly from their distinctive covenant-doctrine, ultimately it manifests the grand truth of unconditional salvation. Marriage and family exist and, even today, in the midst of the devastation of marriage by a lawless world, flourish under the gospel of unconditional grace and unswerving faithfulness.

The reformation of 1924 was profound and thorough.

Still, space forced us to leave denHartog's article out.

We have apologized privately; we now apologize publicly.

For the sake of a complete special issue, we ask our readers to cut the article, "God's truth concerning Marriage," from this issue and to staple it to the past, special issue.

Of course, after they have read it.

—DJE

Tender Mercies

"In all their affliction he was afflicted, and the angel of his presence saved them: in his love and in his pity he redeemed them; and he bare them, and carried them all the days of old."

Isaiah 63:9

Does God see me in my affliction? Has He any regard for my trouble? Does He have any time for or interest in me in my distress? Does God see those who persecute me, who bring me to shame? Does He hear their mocking insults? Does He understand the hurt it brings my soul? Does the Lord *know* the struggles that I face, that no one else seems to understand?

These are the concerns God's Israel had in Babylon. In captivity, the people are in deep distress. They are uprooted, separated from friends and family, forcibly taken from the land of promise, made captives in a strange land. Imagine: they are the people of promise. To them is given great blessing — the promise of salvation. Theirs is the powerful God who has assured them of His love and favor. But now they are here, in a strange land with a strange people.

Their temptation was to imagine that God does not see them in their affliction, or regard their trouble. Their temptation was to suppose that God does not see their enemies, is not angry with their captors, and does not hear their mocking laugh-

ter when they taunt Israel to sing them one of Zion's songs.

In Isaiah 63:9, God answers that temptation, and assures them of His concern for them (see also vv. 7, 8). The Lord explains the mercy in His heart towards His people in this distress.

We have troubles, neither insignificant nor minor. We bring them to the Lord. Jehovah responds, "I am a God who understands your troubles, has compassion towards you, wills to bless you and relieve you from your distress. I am a God of tender mercy."

Mercy felt

Mercy! God's desire that we be happy in Him, taste His blessedness. Mercy! God's leading of us through death to the highest life of His friendship. Mercy! He sees us in our needs, feels our sorrows, and powerfully comes to deliver us out of them all. "Many are the afflictions of the righteous; but the Lord (in His *mercy*) delivereth him out of them all."

Merciful in and to Himself, God wills that His beloved children know His mercy.

The description of this in Isaiah 63 is beautiful. The mercy of our God is brought very close to home: "In all their afflictions, he was afflicted." In the afflictions of the people of God, God Himself is afflicted. The sufferings that they feel, He feels. The distress they are in, He experiences.

Surprised? When the enemy oppressed Israel, God's "soul was grieved for the misery of Israel" (Jud.

10:16). Doubtful? "Like a father *pitieth* his children, so the Lord *pitieth* them that fear him" (Ps. 103:13). Incredulous? When God speaks to Moses about the suffering of Israel in Egypt, He says, "I have surely seen the affliction of my people ... heard their cries ... *know* their sorrows" (Ex. 3:7), where "know" means far more than "observe." He knows our sorrows.

This answers our question, our fear, our temptation, "Does God sympathize with me in my sufferings? Does God really have compassion on me? Is there any feeling in His heart for what I experience?" The answer of the Word of God is, "In all your afflictions, he is afflicted; in all your distresses, he is distressed."

He "loves" and "pities" His people (v. 9b), where *love* is "to breathe after," and *pity* reminds us that God is "gentle, sparing." A benevolent father looks down with troubled eyes at his wounded child, with all the compassion possible, really *feeling* the pain that his child feels.

God — really feel our distress so that He is distressed, really feel our afflictions so that He is afflicted? His own personal happiness destroyed, even wounded? God is not completely blessed?

No, the gospel here does not conflict with the perfect blessedness and unchangeableness of God. Nothing can.

Minimize not the least, though, nor take away, God's sympathy! God would have His children know His tender care, His true pity, His concern for them in their affliction.

Rev. Gritters is pastor of the Protestant Reformed Church of Hudsonville, Michigan.

How deeply He feels for His people! Our sorrow is His sorrow; our suffering is His suffering. That is what we must *think of* when we think of God's mercy towards us.

Why, then, does He permit His own to suffer, if it grieves Him to see us suffer? Except in the way of being delivered from suffering, God's people cannot know the God of tender mercy. They cannot know His grace and power except they are delivered from their sin. The God of tender mercy knows that the troubles in our life are necessary, because He sees the overall picture of our life and the world that we cannot see.

We are able to understand God's mercy better when we remember that God has made Himself one with us. Our cause is His. By the eternal decree of election God made Himself one with us, brought Himself and us into unity of purpose and cause, so that He really looks at our cause as His cause, and sympathizes with His own. We are His children. Verse 8 says, "Surely, they are *my people*...."

In Romans 9, the great chapter on God's decree of election, the apostle concludes, "So then, he will have mercy on whom he will (that is, decreed to) have mercy, and will have compassion on whom he will (that is, decreed to) have compassion."

In the eternal decree of election, God "set his heart upon us," placed His love upon us. By doing this, He made our cause His cause, the desire for His good the desire for ours.

In all our afflictions, God is afflicted. In every one of them.

Mercy shown

No bare *feeling* in the heart of God, God's mercy is not like the pretended mercy of a man who says, "Be warm and filled" but sends the needy empty away. God's mercy is not only His *desire* to bless, His *will* to relieve them of distress, His *suffering* with them. Mercy is also His *action* of delivering out of distress, the *exercise* of His mighty arm to re-

lieve of misery, to make blessed.

God's mercy is a *moving* mercy. "Because thy mercy is good, deliver thou me...." "Help me, O LORD my God; O save me according to thy mercy" (Ps. 109). Immediately Isaiah calls the attention of the Israelites to the activity of God when He feels their needs.

By the angel of His presence He saves them.

"The angel of God's face," the angel that reveals the face of God to His people. The angel appeared time and again in the old covenant to minister mercy to the people of God. Seeing the angel of God's face, anxious believers saw a benevolent face, a face of mercy and kindness, a face of love and gentleness.

Besides, the very appearance of that angel of Jehovah was the saving of them from their trouble. The angel of God's face appeared in Egypt, and saved them; appeared to Joshua outside of Jericho, and saved Israel; appeared in Canaan, repeatedly, and saved them.

God's face towards you, people of God, is a benevolent face, a merciful face, a kind, compassionate, tender face; God is your Savior, and He saved you by showing you that face. That is the face that He shows you in the gospel.

How the angel saved them is by redemption.

In God's love and pity towards His people, He redeemed them. He purchased them out of Egypt — bondage house — and rescued them with a mighty hand and stretched out arm.

Even the *judgment* of God upon our enemies is mercy to us. Verses 1-6 speak of the terrible judgment of God on Israel's enemies. God comes treading down His enemies, so that His garments are bloodstained, as though He had just finished treading the grapes in the winepress. Spattered with blood, God comes to save His people. In the context of that description of God, the prophet

describes God as a God of mercy, who takes pity on His people, and delivers them.

God's people are saved through judgment. Through the judgment of God upon His enemies, God's people are redeemed. Redeemed through judgment. Thus Psalm 143 can say, "Of thy *mercy*, cut off mine enemies, and destroy them that afflict my soul." God's mercy redeems through judgment. In the very end, when the greatest oppression is inflicted upon God's people in Antichrist's reign, it will be God's mercy upon you and your children that consumes the enemy in a fiery moment of wrath.

He bears and carries us all our days.

As an *eagle* bears her young on her wings, so God bears His people on His heart, and in His arms.

As the *Captain* of their salvation, He carries them safely to heaven, and never forsakes or leaves them. As a *mother* bears and carries her children, directing the course of their life in mercy towards them, so the Lord. As a *father*, who lifts up his injured child, and carries him until he forgets his hurt, so our Father bears and carries us all our days.

This gospel is no old covenant gospel, but a gospel that is new, new in our Lord Jesus Christ. The believer's greatest need, his deepest distress, his most painful wounds, are the wounds that he has because of sins. Sin brought into this world all the trouble — sickness and pain and loneliness.... Sinfulness wounds our conscience, so that we are miserable before God, and miserable before our closest neighbors. Guilt oppresses. The devil tries to convince (in his *greatest* temptation) that we are not God's own, because of sin.

In *that* distress God has mercy. He feels our pains, and suffers with us. He comes to us in our Lord Jesus Christ to deliver us from that greatest of all misery.

The angel of God's "face" is Jesus.

In Jesus Christ we see a benevolent face, a kind face, a face of mercy and tender compassion. When we see that face of Jesus Christ, we see the face of God towards us, and are saved. Behold Him, and be saved!!

In Him we have a merciful and faithful High Priest who can be touched with the feelings of our infirmities. In Jesus, God feels what we feel, hurts with our hurt. So that if there ever were a question whether the infinite, ever-blessed God, can sympathize with us, without damaging His blessedness, the answer is in the person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ.

By Jesus Christ He redeemed us.

By His blood He purchased us, gave His life a ransom. Jesus Christ treads the winepress. His garments are stained with blood. He wounds their hairy scalp, and brings them

into desolation as in a moment.

In Jesus' arms God bears us and safely leads His own.

In Jesus Christ.

Do we see, now, why the mercy of God is "great"? "As high as the heaven is above the earth, so great is his mercy toward them that fear him..." (Ps. 103). It is "great unto the heavens" (Ps. 57).

Mercy assured

Will God really show *me* mercy? Does God sympathize with *me*? In the end, will He come to *me*? Can I be assured that mercy is for *me*?

The answer is the answer of history. God did show mercy. This answer is not in the present tense, but in the past. The prophet Isaiah refers not to what God will do for them in the future, but to what God has done for them in the past. The appeal of the prophet to their cry is, "God has shown mercy to his people of old; therefore, God will show

you mercy in your trouble."

"When you were in Egypt, I was afflicted with your afflictions; therefore I redeemed you from that bondage, saved you by the angel of my presence, bore you and carried you through the waste howling wilderness — because of my tender mercy towards you. When you came into the land of Canaan, were oppressed by Edom and all the other nations who hated me, then I came with garments stained with the blood of your enemies; I went before you and overcame your foes, delivering you from affliction, giving you rest and peace in the land of promise — because I had compassion towards you. When you were enslaved by the devil, in the most oppressive of slaveries, and it cost me the highest price — the death of my own Son — I delivered you, redeemed you, and bore you in my arms....

"I did. I also will. I am a God of tender mercy." □

Editorials

Retired, Not Dead

The old men and women in the churches may not retire from the work of these churches. The Lord Jesus Christ does not permit it.

Whether and when a man retires from the work of his job are his business. There comes the time in the life of the wife and mother that the children are grown up, so that her work of guiding the house, if it has not ended is greatly lessened. The Lord does not begrudge them their relaxation from the toils of earthly life, their relative ease, their travels, their hobbies.

But they may not retire from their labor in the church. They may

not *think* of retiring from the work of the church.

This is a danger.

They can begin to think, "We have worked hard in the church for many years. In the few years of healthy life that we have left, we will enjoy ourselves. Let others do the work now."

The man refuses to be put on nomination for elder or deacon (there is no reason why an old man cannot be deacon). Neither man nor woman attends the meetings for Bible study any longer. They never appear at the programs and lectures. They contribute money only sparingly, not because of necessity (in-

deed, they may be better off financially than ever before) but because they are retiring from the work of the church.

In the broader sphere of the covenant, the man resigns from the associations of the Christian schools, or simply fails to participate. The husband and wife agree that they will cut back, even severely, on their giving to the Christian schools. "For years," say they, "we carried a heavy load of tuition and special drives. Now it is the turn of the next generation."

It can even happen that they choose to be absent from the worship services of their church for long

periods of time. There is a semi-retirement from the most fundamental work of all: joining in the pure worship of God at church.

The Lord forbids early retirement from the work of His church. When He saved us, He set us in the body (I Cor. 12:18). He graced us with various spiritual and physical gifts (Eph. 4:7). He gave us a calling to work in our place and with our gifts for the welfare of the other members and for the good of the congregation (Eph. 4:16; Heid. Cat., Q. 55). Faithfully doing his calling, each works in and with the church to fulfill the church's grand task in history.

This calling is lifelong. Like Christ Himself, His people must work while it is day. When the night of death comes and no man can work, we are released from the work of the church by Christ Himself. Then we have rest from our labors (John 9:4; Rev. 14:13).

The able-bodied and sound-minded 65 year-old members of the church may be retired, but they are not dead.

Christ calls them to work in the labor of the church. Christ calls

them to *abound* in this work.

The church needs the work of the old members. She needs the experience, wisdom, time, and solidity of the old men in the offices. She needs the use of the gifts of the old members in her communion. She needs their money. She needs their presence at her services of worship.

God's covenant in our Protestant Reformed Christian schools needs the work of the old. (It needs the work of the young as well, but that is another story.) The schools need the presence of the old at their meetings, particularly the presence of the old men at the association meetings. How encouraging to see the gray-headed there. Their very presence bespeaks covenantal faithfulness from generation to generation, covenantal endurance, covenantal stability, covenantal power.

The schools need the work of the old that consists of giving money. Our Christian schools always struggle financially. Tuition is always rising. For many old saints, retirement is not the time to cut back on giving, but the time to give more. Why leave large inheritances only to

children, who probably are well-off without them? How do the old expect to answer for this poor stewardship of the Lord's goods to their Lord in judgment?

Work in the church is a privilege. Nothing compares with it, not all the trips to every country in the world, not all the earthly experiences, not all the pleasures of physical life.

The work of the church is the work of the risen Christ Jesus. He Himself performs it through the members of His body by the power of the Holy Spirit. It is all done for Him, the head of the body. It will have its glorious reward.

To work in the church, to work in the church *to the very end*, is God's gift to us.

The old must be allowed to work. They may not be shelved and ignored simply because they are old.

Listen to the old men's dreams!

Young women, go to the old women for wisdom regarding marriage, family, and keeping at home!

How we need their work.

They may be retired.

They are not dead. ■

— DJE

The Protestant Reformed Seminary: The Lion Still Roars (1)*

Two purposes bring us together tonight. We observe with a solemn ceremony the beginning of another year of instruction in the Protestant

Reformed Theological Seminary: convocation. This is customary.

The other purpose is extraordinary: the dedication of a large, new addition to the seminary building. The Protestant Reformed Churches have recently completed the construction of a large theological library with study-space for the students and offices for the faculty. There is

a lower level that will be used for the archives of the denomination and for the publishing ventures connected with the denomination.

The addition has freed up the present classrooms for use only as classrooms for a growing student body. It has also enabled us to expand the office and the storage-area of the existing building.

* The address given at the assembly of convocation for the 1995/1996 school-year and of dedication of the new addition to the seminary building.

We have a spacious, splendid seminary building.

Our gathering tonight rejoices over this denominational achievement — no small accomplishment for a small denomination! — thanks God for the gift of it, and publicly consecrates the new addition to the Father of Jesus Christ, the living triune God, for the training of able, godly pastors and teachers for Christ's church.

Obviously, our assembly is a joyful one.

The thought came to me that, were the founding fathers of the Protestant Reformed Churches, those men who taught in the seminary from 1925 to the late 1950s and early 1960s, able to see the present building, they would rub their eyes in amazement. Herman Hoeksema and George Ophoff taught many years in one small, spartan room in the basement of First Church in Grand Rapids. The room was barely the size of one of our classrooms. The only decoration was open plumbing running along the ceiling. One little window high up in the basement wall let in a little sunshine and, in the spring and fall, a little fresh air. A few books in cabinets along one wall comprised our library.

All of the older ministers in the Protestant Reformed Churches, including the present faculty of the seminary, got their theological education in these cramped and unattractive quarters.

What a change!

In one respect — the only ultimately important respect — there has been no change: the truth that is defended, taught, and developed in the seminary. With this, there has been no change — absolutely no change! — in the goal of the seminary: Reformed pastors and teachers, especially for the Protestant Reformed Churches. Men are being trained today, 70 years after the founding of the seminary, to preach the gospel of God revealed in Holy Scripture as that gospel is set forth in the Reformed confessions.

Men are trained today to preach this faith as the Holy Spirit has made it known in its purity and soundness in the Protestant Reformed Churches. This is the gospel of salvation by the sovereign, particular grace of God in Jesus Christ, grounded in God's eternal decree of predestination, worked out in an unconditional covenant of friendship with believers and their children, and creating lives of holiness in antithetical separation from and enmity with the world, to the glory of God.

It is, therefore, indisputably evident — none can gainsay it — that in the Protestant Reformed Seminary the lion still roars. The lion roared 70 years ago at the establishment of the seminary. His roar can be heard in the work of the seminary today.



The figure of the lion roaring is the Holy Spirit's own in the third chapter of the prophecy of Amos: "The lion hath roared, who will not fear?" (v. 8). That figure was taken from the everyday, earthly experience of Amos, the shepherd of Tekoa. More than once, as he went about his work, he heard these roarings of lions. When the lion was about to spring upon his prey, indeed in mid-leap, he roared. That awesome, unmistakable roar expressed the lion's certainty of seizing and having his way with the deer or sheep. From the point of view of the poor deer or sheep, that roar meant its certain capture. In fact, the roar paralyzed the deer or sheep, so that the roar actually accomplished the lion's success and the sheep's capture.

Something of this dread of the roar comes out in the question, "... who will not fear?"

The meaning of the figure in Amos 3 is surprising. It is not this, as we might expect, that the wrathful Word of God terrifies and then destroys hardened sinners in Israel. Rather, God's mighty Word reveals God Himself and God's will con-

cerning His chosen people to His prophets. The Lord GOD roared to His prophets, making Himself known to them. This is proved from the line that follows that about the roaring lion: "... the Lord GOD hath spoken, who can but prophesy?"

A common, important Hebrew literary device occurs in Amos 3:8, the device known as parallelism. There are two corresponding lines, the second of which states the same truth as the first, but in different words. Thus the second line explains the first line.

The roaring of the lion is, in reality, the speaking of the Lord GOD; the fear that results from the lion's roar is, in reality, the prophet's fear, which moves him to prophesy.

The effect, and purpose, of the lion's roaring is not the destruction of the wicked, but the prophesying by the prophet.

The existence and work of the Protestant Reformed Seminary are due to and in the service of the lion's roar. In the Protestant Reformed Seminary, the lion still roars. Let it be clear, I do not intend the exclusion of other seminaries. Other seminaries must also be able confidently to make this claim. A seminary that cannot claim for itself that its teaching is the roaring of the lion has no right to exist.

The Protestant Reformed Seminary makes this claim.

This makes the work of the seminary in the coming school-year worthy of a solemn convocation.

This underlies our public consecration of the building addition to God. We dedicate the building to God because He has already co-opted it, seized it, made it His own, to have His way with it. As the sheep that heard the roar of the springing lion might have dedicated itself to the lion, as there was nothing else for an Amos to do when the Lord God spoke to him, but to devote himself to God as a prophet, so we dedicate the seminary building to God. □

(to be concluded)

— DJE

Our 27th Congregation

For the third time in the past 22 years the Hope Protestant Reformed Church of Walker, Michigan has conceived and brought forth a daughter congregation. Due to the growth of the Hope congregation, and the resultant scheduling of a number of members to the monitor-room in the basement for each worship service, a small group consisting of nine families and one individual met in January, 1994 to discuss the possibility and the feasibility of forming a new congregation. After receiving the results of a survey taken by the Council, this group sent a request to the Consistory that we begin holding services in the greater Standale/Tallmadge Township area with a view to establishing a daughter congregation.

With the approval of the Consistory we began separate services, which were held in the Grand Valley Orthodox Christian Reformed Church at the corner of Lake Michigan Drive and Eighth Avenue, where we continue to meet at the unusual time of 1:00 P.M. for our first service. The group began slowly to grow, until in March of 1995 we could request of Classis East permission to organize. On May 10, 1995 this request was granted, and Hope PRC was appointed to carry out the organization. In harmony with the decision of Synod, 1994, Hope's Council proceeded to make nomi-

nations for three elders and three deacons as requested by the group.

Our goal was accomplished on July 6, 1995, when we were organized as the Grace Protestant Reformed Church. Rev. Peter Breen preached on I Thessalonians 2:13, "Preaching as a Means of Grace." The business part of the organization was conducted by Hope's pastor, Rev. James Slopsema. The officebearers were duly elected and installed in their respective offices. Elders elected and installed were John Kuiper (Vice-president), Don Lotterman (Clerk), and Gerrit VanDenTop. The deacons are Gerald Dykstra, Dave Hanko (Treasurer), and Gilbert Schimmel.

We have potential for growth both from the area and also from within. We are a congregation of 23 families and nine individuals, consisting of 55 confessing and 52 baptized members. Our ages range from infants to several elderly members. We have 34 catechumens, including 17 in the two older classes, ages from 15 and older.

We want publicly to express our appreciation to the ministers in the West Michigan area for their willingness to supply our pulpit during the time of our holding separate services and

since our organization. It should be noted that many of these ministers preached three times a Sunday during this time: They preached at their morning service, at our 1:00 P.M. service, and again at their evening service. There were others who came to us after their 5:00 P.M. evening service to help us at 7:00. We want to express our appreciation especially to Rev. Breen, who has been faithfully supplying us at our evening services three times a month, preaching from the Heidelberg Catechism; to our mother church, Hope Protestant Reformed Church, not only for her help and encouragement in our organization, but also for the financial assistance; and to our God. May He be praised for this token of His faithfulness. □



*Newly elected officers of Grace PRC,
l to r: Gilbert Schimmel, John Kuiper, Dave Hanko,
Don Lotterman, Gerald Dykstra,
Gerrit VanDenTop*

Mr. Lotterman is the clerk of the Consistory of Grace PRC.

God's Truth concerning Marriage: A Blessed, Reformed Heritage

One of the rich aspects of the heritage of the Reformation which has been graciously preserved in the Protestant Reformed Churches is the truth of marriage. We count this as no small blessing today in an age of absolute lawlessness regarding marriage and the breakdown of half or more of the marriages contracted in our land. This is the situation not only in the world in which we live but also in the churches of our nation. There are today almost as many divorces and remarriages in what calls itself the church as there are in the world at large. There is in the church a wholesale disregard for the sanctity of marriage and for what God's Word has to say about marriage.

From this debauchery of marriage follows the awful sorrow and misery of broken homes and families. Irreparable psychological and spiritual hurt is being inflicted on the children of these marriages. God is visiting the sins of the fathers on the children, so that there is a cycle of broken marriages that only grows worse and worse from generation to generation.

Church leaders are wringing their hands over what to do about the wretched consequences of broken marriages and the devastating consequences this has for the church,

but few have the courage to stand up for the truth of God's Word concerning marriage and to preach this truth boldly for the glory of God and the sanctification of God's people.

In this situation God has preserved in our midst God's truth of marriage. We believe that God has preserved this truth through great men of God who were convinced of the unchangeable and absolute Word of God and held it fast without compromise. God's truth concerning marriage is plainly written in the Scriptures (Matt. 5, 19; Mark 10; Luke 16; Rom. 7; I Cor. 7). Many writings from godly leaders in our churches have been produced and are today available. The relevant passages of Scripture have been carefully exegeted through a great amount of detailed study. Below I have listed some of the books that are available.

God's truth of marriage is that it is an absolutely unbreakable bond between one man and one woman established by God Himself. It is a lifelong bond that God Himself dissolves only at the death of one or both of the partners. Contrary to popular opinion, no action of man can dissolve marriage. It is wrong to imagine that the adultery of one or of both of the partners of marriage can dissolve the bond of marriage that God has established. It is wrong to imagine that the desertion of one of the partners of marriage dissolves the marriage bond.

It is true that the Lord allows

for divorce in the case of the adultery of one of the parties of a marriage. We do not believe, however, that this divorce dissolves the marriage bond. It allows for a legal separation of "bed and board" in a very grievous and often, humanly speaking, impossible situation. But this "permissible divorce" does not end a marriage. We do not believe that I Corinthians 7:15, when it speaks of "a brother or sister not being under bondage," means that desertion by an unbelieving partner dissolves a marriage.

In harmony with the fact that Scripture teaches that marriage is a lifelong, unbreakable bond Scripture also clearly forbids all remarriage. Not only does God forbid the remarriage of a man who committed adultery, but He forbids also the remarriage of the innocent party. This is clearly taught in the last part of verse 9 of Matthew 19: "whoso marrieth her which is put away doth commit adultery." If there is any doubt about the interpretation of the "exception clause" of Matthew 19 and its application to remarriage this is settled by the testimony of several other relevant passages of Scripture. Whoever takes another partner than the one whom God gave to him or her in marriage in the first place lives in adultery with that partner. In the words of our Lord to the Samaritan woman at the well: "the man whom thou now hast is not thy husband." We believe that remarriage before one's partner has died

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involves one in a life of continual adultery before God.

There is forgiveness for even the vilest of sins. There would be no hope for any of us if this were not the blessed truth of the gospel. But the way of forgiveness is always the way of repentance and forsaking of sin. Jesus said to the woman caught in adultery, "Go thy way and sin no more." One cannot expect that the Lord will forgive when a man continues in sin and does not even have the intention to forsake sin. No church may ever assure someone that he has forgiveness for a sin when he does not forsake that sin. Yet this is exactly what is being done in many instances to members of the church who are living in the continual impenitent sin of adultery.

Serious compromise regarding the truth of God's Word in order to allow for remarriage has done much to corrupt the truth of marriage in the church at large today. It has gone much, much farther than allowing the so-called innocent party to remarry. Church leaders today allow and even sanction remarriage in almost any situation. If there is any mention of sin as far as divorce and remarriage is concerned this is easily overlooked, or glibly confessed, while members of the church are allowed to continue in their sinful life-style without true repentance. So it is possible, sometimes even in the same church, for a brother to steal the wife of another brother and, with the blessing of the church, to continue to live for the rest of his life with this woman who is another man's wife.

The Lord led the Protestant Reformed Churches to the truth of His Word on marriage under the leadership of Rev. Herman Hoeksema. The story of how the Lord did this is particularly interesting. In his early ministry Rev. Hoeksema went along with the commonly held position that fornication on the part of one party of a marriage dissolves the marriage bond and allows the "in-

nocent party" to remarry. He confesses this in a published pamphlet called the "Unbreakable Bond of Marriage." Later, however, after a more careful study of relevant passages of Scripture, Rev. Hoeksema came to the solid conviction of what God's Word teaches regarding marriage. He outlines this conviction in the above cited pamphlet.

Rev. Hoeksema taught the truth of God's Word that marriage is a reflection of the covenant life between God and His people and between Christ and His church.

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Rev. Hoeksema gave a characteristically carefully formulated, biblically based definition of marriage. He defined marriage as: "the union between one man and one woman for life, a union that is based on a communion of nature, a communion of life, and a communion of love, which is a reflection of the covenant relationship between Christ and His church; a union, moreover, that has its chief purpose in bringing forth the seed of the covenant."¹ This truth of marriage has rich significance for the nature and warm personal blessedness of married life. This truth also has much to say about the calling of husband and wife to be faithful to each other for life in marriage. The highest calling of marriage is to reflect the glory of the covenant relationship of God and His people and the faithful love of Christ for His church. As God never forsakes His covenant people, though they often commit spiritual adultery with the world, and as Christ never forsakes His church, though they often sin against Him, so the husband and wife ought to love one another faithfully, bear with one another's sins and weaknesses, and never forsake one another.

The Protestant Reformed Churches recognize that it is true in a sense that they have broken with Reformed tradition in the stand which they have taken on marriage. They have been criticized for this. To be Reformed is to follow the tra-

dition of the great Reformers and the tradition that the Reformed churches have maintained through history. It can be shown that the great Reformers such as John Calvin and Martin Luther allowed for the remarriage of innocent parties in the case of a marriage where adultery had taken place, and also when a partner had been wrongly deserted by an unbeliever. It can also be shown that many leaders in Reformed and Presbyterian churches through history have allowed for remarriage of the "innocent party" and of deserted parties. The Westminster Confession officially states that the "innocent" party is allowed to re-marry.²

Several things, however, must be said about this. We believe that the ultimate test of truth must be the Word of God. In very rare instances, aspects of Reformed tradition have later been shown to be in error through further, more careful study of the Word of God. We believe that the tradition regarding the understanding of God's Word on the truth of marriage is one such rare instance. We by no means say that lightly. The great principle of the Reformation is the principle of the absolute and final authority of Scripture. The position of the Protestant Reformed Churches on marriage is "Reformed" according to this great principle.

Secondly, it can easily be shown that neither the great Reformers nor the Reformed and Presbyterian churches in the days when these churches were still strong and faithful to the Word of God promoted the lawless teaching on marriage that is today often promoted even by leaders in Reformed and Presbyterian churches.

Thirdly, the principle of the Reformation is that of "always reform-

¹ Herman Hoeksema, *The Triple Knowledge*, (Grand Rapids, Michigan 1972), vol. 3 page 353.

² Westminster Confession, Article 24.

ing." This principle implies that the Reformed Church must again and again test her tradition with the infallible rule of the Scriptures. It must seek to set forth ever more clearly the truth of God's Word. She ceases to be Reformed when she forsakes that truth, but is truly Reformed when she seeks to set forth the truth of God's Word through the guidance of the Spirit more clearly and absolutely.

In connection with this last point, I want to express appreciation for one particular aspect of the story of the preservation of the truth of marriage in the Protestant Reformed Churches. Prof. David Engelsma has devoted a considerable amount of time and effort to developing and maintaining the biblical stand on marriage in our churches and in the church-world at large. He has done this through authoring two excellent books on marriage which clearly outline this stand. The first is entitled *Marriage: the Mystery of Christ and His Church*, the second is *Better to Marry*. The latter is basically a careful exegesis of the absolutely pivotal passage of Scripture in this matter, namely I Corinthians 7. I have yet to see any worthy refutation of the sound and courageous exegesis found in this book. Further, Prof. Engelsma has recently published a series of articles on the subject of the teaching of God's Word regarding marriage. The last several of these articles traces the history of the Reformed church's position on marriage. This series ends with a cry against the deplorable teaching regarding marriage and divorce being promoted today by professed Christian counselors and even in Reformed and Presbyterian churches, and the devastating consequences this has had for the membership of the church.

The truth of God's Word on marriage is hard. This was already understood by the disciples of our

Lord. When they heard Jesus' teaching on marriage they suggested in amazement that perhaps it would be better not to marry. Jesus gives answer to them in Matthew 19. Few have ever paid much attention to this part of Jesus' "hard teaching" on marriage and carefully considered the implications of this.

We do not ignore the obvious fact that the corruption of marriage has caused immeasurable pain and suffering to many, even of God's children, who have been grievously wronged. The answer to this suffering and pain is not to compromise the teaching of the Word of God, as so many marriage counselors and other church leaders are doing. Those who have done this have only contributed to the tragic situation prevalent in the church-world today. The answer to this pain and suffering is not by some human authority to give innocent and deserted Christians the right to marry. Though God's Word is hard it is always good. As difficult as the way of the Lord may be for some who have suffered the sad consequences of the corruption of the teaching of God's Word on marriage, the way of peace and blessing before the Lord is always the way of living in repentance and in faithfulness to the Word of God.

I have personally dealt with extremely difficult "marriage problems," as have most pastors in churches today, all too often. These cases must be dealt with in great compassion. But, as difficult as these individual cases may be, the solution is not compromise but maintaining the truth of God. We must have in mind not only one specific case but the welfare of the church and her members as a whole, and more important even than that, the glory of our God and His truth.

We are humbly thankful to God for preserving His truth regarding marriage in our churches. We say that not at all in boasting. We know

that the only reason for this is the amazing grace and mercy of God. We see in our church the blessing of God on this truth in the many faithful marriages and strong Christian homes in our midst and the great blessing of God that these afford for the church. □

Suggested Reading:

David J. Engelsma, *Marriage, the Mystery of Christ and the Church*, (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Reformed Free Publishing Association, 1975) paperback, 122 pages. This is a series of sermons on marriage preached in Loveland Protestant Reformed Church.

David J. Engelsma, *Better to Marry* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Reformed Free Publishing Association, 1993) paperback, 105 pages. This is an outstanding exposition of I Corinthians 7.

Andrew Cornes, *Divorce and Remarriage, Biblical Principles and Pastoral Practice* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1993) paperback, 529 pages. This is not a book written by a Protestant Reformed author. Cornes was the former director of training at All Souls, Langham Place, and is vicar of All Saints, Crowborough, England. Though we do not agree with everything in this book, it is a thorough and excellent treatment of the teaching of the Word of God regarding marriage. Though it is somewhat daunting because of its length it is easy to read and well worth the effort and time it takes to read.

William A. Heth and Gordon J. Wenham, *Jesus and Divorce: the Problem with the Evangelical Consensus* (Nashville, Tennessee: Thomas Nelson, 1985). This is another excellent book on the biblical teaching on marriage, one which has not gotten the recognition it deserves.

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Giving Thanks to God for our Protestant Reformed Young People!

When I received the invitation to speak at this year's Young People's Convention, I joyfully accepted it on account of my background and association with the young saints in Singapore. Quite honestly, however, I was also apprehensive because of some "horror stories" I had heard about our YP's conventions!

This year's YP's Convention was sponsored by Grandville Protestant Reformed Church and was held at Hope College in Holland, Michigan. As I sit back to reflect upon the blessed moments I was given to enjoy with our precious covenant youth, I am filled with thanksgiving to God. I have come away from the convention with renewed inspiration to labor as a minister.

I trust that many, if not all of those who attended this year's convention, will echo my impressions expressed here. I do not say that our young people are perfect. They are not. I cannot say there were not things I heard or saw which I did not like. There were. I also am aware that others have had different and maybe contrary experiences in past conventions. But I believe our faithful God and Father is graciously blessing our covenant children and youth, and that we can be

thankful for that. May what I write be an encouragement to the godly parents and teachers, preachers and congregations, who continue to raise and nurture sons and daughters in the fear of the Lord!

The theme of the Convention this year was "Courageous Christian Youth." Most appropriately, Grandville's Young People's Society chose Daniel as the godly example for our young people today to follow. Amidst the Babylon of this world, the remnant seed of God is called to stand by faith! I found myself first speaker on a hot Monday evening. And was it hot in Michigan! I have spoken in crowded Singapore and now I am experiencing Houston's hot and humid summers! But, quite honestly, I have never before spoken to a crowd fanning and wiping at the beginning of a speech, clearly expressing: "Let us get out of here!" As I stood before the 350 youth, I knew my speech had to be abbreviated.

The subject given to me was "Daniel — A Faithful Prayer Life." What a wonderful thing to know that our young people are interested in the subject of prayer! The discussion groups the next morning were on the related subject of devotions. The young saints struggle with this matter. In my opinion, our young people need more encouragement from our parents and teachers, both by instruction as well as by godly example, on the importance of daily personal devotions.

The fact that they honestly spoke about this lack was indication of genuine effort, and the more blessed evidence of life and spirituality.

It was not exactly fair, but the speakers that followed me were given the luxury of a fan. Pastor Terpstra gave a stirring message on "Daniel's Bold Witness." I was in seminary the same time as Pastor Terpstra some ten years ago, and it was good to be in the same convention with him now. Sitting in the audience with the young people was also a good experience for me. Except for the fanning and wiping, it seemed as if the other speakers were able to get good attention from the young people. It was an excellent idea to have a teacher give the last speech. Mr. Cal Kalsbeek spoke on "Daniel's Godly Choices." His speech was well applied to the needs of our young people, especially the temptations they face. I came to the convention hoping to learn more about the needs of our youth, and the other speakers surely enlightened me! I wish I could have spoken last, not first!

There were other things I had to learn. I had to learn fast, for example, what "Twirp Day" is. And other bizarre things like that. There were quite a few activities very unfamiliar to me. We have fewer fun activities in our camps in Singapore, but I would not say the custom here is bad as such. Just different. The YP had bowling, swimming, canoeing. It was delightful to see our

Rev. Mahtani is pastor of Trinity Protestant Reformed Church in Houston, Texas.

youth enjoy one another as covenant saints.

I had to disclose a secret to the young people. Fifteen years ago I found my beloved wife, and it was in one of our camps in Singapore. Is it so wrong to look for a mate at a Young People's Convention? Bernie Kamps, master of ceremonies at the banquet, raised the concerns of the chaperons, I think, when he detailed every aspect of his first date.

It would be a mistake to end this article without a tribute to our youth! I think we ought to encourage our young people with regard to their impressive behavior, especially in public. More than once, on-

lookers at the beach, bowling alley, wherever we went, expressed surprise at the good behavior and manners of our young people. Apparently they were listening to our talk, and watching closely our walk! And your young people surely sent a clear message! Let us continue to encourage our sons and daughters, that they show a good testimony not only in our presence but much more in our absence. Keep it up, young people! We thank God for you!

Parents, pastors, elders, teachers, let us be thankful! We, and our young people like us, are not perfect. But we may humbly rejoice in

the Lord's blessings and mercies!

I have been informed by others that this was one of the best conventions ever, and that there have been sad experiences in the past. Well, shall we forget the things which are behind and press forward?

I make bold to send in this tribute to our young people for publication. I do this with the prayer that we may all join to give thanks to God, and continue to pray earnestly for Jehovah's continued blessings!

May the Lord in His mercy keep His covenant with us, with our children, and especially with our growing young people! □

Special Article

Rev. Ron Cammenga

The *Standard Bearer* — In Defense of the Faith (1)*

For over 70 years the *Standard Bearer* has championed the cause of the Reformed faith.

Over those years the *Standard Bearer* has undergone many changes. There have been changes in the appearance of the magazine. There have been changes in format. There have been changes of rubrics and writers. There have been changes of editors.

One thing has not changed in that span of time, and that is the *Standard Bearer's* vigorous defense of the faith. Our editors, down to

the present, have led the way in this. But not only the editorials, the other departments of the magazine as well have defended the faith once for all delivered to the saints against a myriad of enemies. The *Standard Bearer* has not drawn back from engaging the enemy, whether in the world or in the church, whether he made his appearance in the Reformed churches around us or in our own churches, as was the case in the 1950s.

The *Standard Bearer* has always considered it to be its calling to engage in polemics. Polemics is the refuting of error. Polemics involves controversy. Polemics involves exposing deviation in doctrine and in practice. Polemics involves the condemnation of heresy in the light of Scripture and the Reformed confessions. The *Standard Bearer* is today and has always been polemical.

Because of this the *Standard*

Bearer has often been criticized. Frequently this criticism has come from those outside the Protestant Reformed Churches. It has come from those who are opposed to our distinctively Reformed stand. Comments are made. Letters are sent to the editor. Retorts are made in other religious papers.

This is expected! We are not surprised by it!

What is more distressing is that the *Standard Bearer* comes under criticism for this very same reason among our own people from time to time.

That is disturbing!

"Why do we always have to be negative?" it is asked. "Do we always have to be pointing out error, especially error in the other churches? Why can't we be more positive? It seems we're always finding fault."

I am convinced, and I hope you are too, that the *Standard Bearer*

Rev. Cammenga is pastor of Southwest Protestant Reformed Church in Grandville, Michigan.

* The speech given by Rev. Cammenga at the annual meeting of the RFPA, held on September 28, 1995.

must continue to be polemical. I am convinced that this is her calling from God and that this is also the need of the hour. We must earnestly contend for the faith, as Jude calls us to do in Jude 3: "Beloved, when I gave all diligence to write unto you of the common salvation, it was needful for me to write unto you, and to exhort you that ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints." Verse 4 gives the reason: "For there are certain men crept in unawares, who were before of old ordained to this condemnation, ungodly men, turning the grace of our God into lasciviousness, and denying the only Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ."

As the darkness around us deepens, the darkness of the great apostasy, the faithful church of Jesus Christ, faithful members and officebearers, and faithful writers in books and magazines must not allow their voices of warning to be stilled. The trumpet must be blown! God's people must be rallied! The enemy must be confronted!

In defense of the faith

The *Standard Bearer* has always understood it to be its calling to defend the faith.

It was for this very reason that the *Standard Bearer* came into existence in the autumn of 1924. Controversy was brewing in the Christian Reformed Church, the common grace controversy. The *Standard Bearer* was founded by two key figures in that controversy, Rev. Henry Danhof and Rev. Herman Hoeksema. They had been outspoken in their opposition to the teaching of common grace, and in opposition to those who were in various ways promoting this false doctrine in the churches. The pages of the *Banner* and *De Wachter*, both official publications of the CRC, had been closed to them. There was disagreement on the editorial staff of the *Witness*, a paper of which both Danhof and

Hoeksema were editors along with a number of other ministers.

In a pamphlet entitled, "*Om Rechten en Waarheid*" ("Concerning Right and Truth"), Revs. Danhof and Hoeksema served notice of their intention to begin publishing their own monthly paper. The first issue of the *Standard Bearer* was printed in October of 1924, with an editorial staff of four: Rev. G.M. Ophoff (his name spelled incorrectly on the front of that first issue) and Mr. G. VanBeek, along with Danhof and Hoeksema. That is what the *Standard Bearer* was at first — a

monthly paper. About a year and a half later, beginning in May of 1926, the *Standard Bearer* became a semi-monthly paper, a change that occasioned the first subscription rate increase from \$1.50 a year to \$2.50 a year.

In an editorial in that first issue, Rev. Danhof explained the purpose of the *Standard Bearer*.

They (that is, the members of the RFPA) felt that they must fight for the cause of the Lord, not only against the enemies who stand outside of their own church communion, but under the present circumstances, no less against the enemy within the gates. Therefore, they desire men who will raise the standard, and instruct and lead the people of God in the battle which is inevitable and which must be fought. A need is felt for leadership in ecclesiastical questions, points of doctrine, prevalent speculations, and the practical application in life of the principles out of which men ought to live. And although they do not plan to confine themselves in this struggle to the publication of this periodical, nevertheless, they want the *Standard Bearer* to lead the way in this difficult struggle (*SB*, vol. 1, p. 3).

That the *Standard Bearer* has seen it to be its calling to defend the faith of Scripture is evident too from the "Constitution of the Reformed

Free Publishing Association." Article II, titled "Purpose," states:

The purpose of this Association shall be:

1. To witness to the truth contained in the Word of God and expressed in the Three Forms of Unity.
2. To reveal false and deceptive views repugnant thereto.

Article III, titled "Ways and Means," goes on to say:

To effectuate the purpose contained in Article II, this Association shall publish and distribute a magazine, to be known as the *Standard Bearer*....

It cannot be denied that over the years the *Standard Bearer* has exerted itself to be faithful to its founding purpose. Even those who are in disagreement with us, those who have taken issue with what has been written in the *Standard Bearer*, must acknowledge that our magazine has made a conscious effort to be polemical. The *Standard Bearer* has engaged in controversy.

In the defense of the faith, error has been pointed out.

Old errors, errors that have threatened the church for centuries, have been refuted: Pelagianism, Semi-Pelagianism, Arminianism, Amyrauldianism, Pre-millennialism, Dispensationalism, Post-millennialism, and a host of others.

New errors, especially those that have arisen in the Reformed and Presbyterian churches, have been assailed: common grace, the teaching of a conditional covenant, the well-meant gospel offer, presupposed regeneration, Pentecostalism, unbiblical divorce and remarriage, and various forms of the denial of Scripture's infallibility and authority.

The most recent errors to trouble the Reformed churches have been exposed: Theistic evolution (with its denial not only of creation but also of the flood), Feminism and the women in office advocates, the New Age, the Reconstructionists, those

advancing the allegorical interpretation of Scripture, the Independents (whom Jude refers to in v. 19, "These be they who separate themselves...").

In the defense of the faith, groups and churches either countenancing or approving of error have been addressed: The World Council of Churches, the Reformed Ecumenical Council, Reformed churches in our own country and in the Netherlands, various Presbyterian bodies. Issues dividing the PRC from the Liberated (especially the Canadian Reformed Churches), the Netherlands Reformed congregations, and the Christian Reformed Church (our mother church) have been frequently addressed. Along with this, error in the instruction of the Christian colleges and seminaries has been scrutinized in the *Standard Bearer*.

In the defense of the faith, following the example of Christ and the apostles, the false teachers themselves have been identified and their

pernicious views judged in the light of Scripture and the Reformed confessions: Barth, Dekker, Daane, Runia, Boer, Wiersinga, Kuitert, Woudstra, Schuller, Holtrop, Camping, VanTil, Menninga, Young.

In its defense of the faith, the *Standard Bearer* has been involved over the years in exchanges with other magazines: *De Wachter*, the *Banner*, the *Reformed Journal*, *Concordia*, *Clarion*, *Torch and Trumpet* (now the *Outlook*), and more recently *Christian Renewal*.

This is not to say that the *Standard Bearer* has confined itself to polemics, to defending the faith. Not at all!

There has been a great deal of positive setting forth and development of the truth over the years in the *Standard Bearer*. The great doctrines that make up the faith of the church have been explained. The holy life to which God calls His people has been set forth. And even

when error has been condemned, it has been condemned because of its attack on the truth, in the interests of the maintenance of the truth, for the sake of the knowledge of the truth among the people of God.

Think once of the many articles that have appeared in the pages of the *Standard Bearer* setting forth the doctrines of grace, the truth concerning Scripture, the covenant of grace, marriage and the home and family, Christian education, the church and her worship. There has been extensive exposition of Scripture and the confessions. Books like *Triple Knowledge* and *Behold, He Cometh*, as well as *Freeborn Sons of Sarah* and *The Glory of the True Tabernacle* appeared first as installments in the *Standard Bearer*.

It is not fair, it is simply not accurate, to accuse the *Standard Bearer* of being always negative, exclusively polemical. □

...to be continued.

Annual Report

Mr. Henry Kamps

Annual Meeting of the RFPA — Secretary's Report

Dear RFPA Members and Friends,

It is appropriate that, as we conclude the 71st year of publishing, we as an association take the time to pause and look back to the beginnings of our publishing endeavor. The publishing of the *Standard Bearer* began 71 years ago because our fathers, in the church of their day,

were denied the right to express and defend their views regarding the sovereign, particular grace of God. This issue was being hotly debated among Reformed Christians. Our fathers therefore, being determined by the grace of God to give a witness to this sovereign grace also through the printed page, began the publishing of our *Standard Bearer*. In the beginning, the original purpose and intent to publish the *Standard Bearer* was set forth in a pamphlet entitled, "For the Sake of Justice and Truth." In this pamphlet

the authors explained the purpose of this paper as follows:

We shall let scripture speak.... Scripture must teach us. In it God must speak to us. According to it, must be our world and life view. It must teach us concerning sin and grace, curse and blessing, reprobation and election, doom and bliss....The authors also pledged themselves not only to write defensively, but to be positive and constructive.

It is good for those of us who

Mr. Kamps is secretary of the RFPA board.

are involved in the support and publishing of the *Standard Bearer* to recall this history as we begin our 72nd volume year. We see today that we have been the benefactors of this publishing effort. This is because we have received a rich heritage of truth as this has been developed and preserved for us through the *Standard Bearer* itself. We rejoice that God has preserved this means of the *Standard Bearer* for the spiritual benefit and instruction of ourselves and of our children. By recalling this history, we also understand that ours is the great privilege to be able to witness to the pure Reformed faith in our times — times of turmoil and crisis in the Reformed community. Because we remember, and because we are appreciative of this heritage, we are also determined to witness to the sovereign grace of God via the printed page. Our prayer is that God will give us grace to preserve in this work, using us in behalf of His name and truth.

The board takes this opportunity to thank Don and Judi Doezema as our Managing Editor, Business Manager, and Assistant Business Manager for the excellent work they do in behalf of the *Standard Bearer*. We appreciate and value the many hours they regularly spend in connection with bringing the *Standard Bearer* to print, and seeing to it that the *Standard Bearer* makes a timely journey to our mailboxes.

We also thank Professor Engelsma for his faithful labors as our editor-in-chief. We especially thank him for his solid, clear, and unflinching editorials. Also, many thanks to our other faithful editors and contributors who write for our magazine in behalf of the glorious gospel.

The *Standard Bearer* continues to receive solid financial support. As board we are amazed by the thousands of dollars we continue to receive each year in church collections and gifts from individuals around

the globe. The board takes note that these church collections and gifts have doubled since 1988. We take this opportunity, therefore, to thank our many subscribers and friends, from various places, who have again this past year so generously supported this publication.

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The board is active in promoting the *Standard Bearer* to gain new subscribers. The number of subscribers to our *Standard Bearer* stands at 2,610, as of August 1, 1995. This subscription base includes 23 foreign countries, and all but seven states of the U.S. We note that our subscription base continues a steady increase year by year, and has grown by over 35% the last several years. This is encouraging to all of us who are involved in the work of writing and publishing the *Standard Bearer*. This indicates to us that there is desire and appreciation for solid Reformed teaching and writing. Over this past year we received 202 new gift subscriptions to our *Standard Bearer*. For new gift subscriptions, the first year is mailed at half the normal subscription rate. This is done in the hope that those who receive the gift subscription will recognize the spiritual value, enjoy the quality of our magazine, and become lifelong subscribers.

The following are quotes from letters we have received from appreciative readers of our *Standard Bearer*.

From a minister in Myanmar:

I have discovered the *Standard Bearer* magazine in the library of this college. I was so happy to know there is a magazine and brethren that have the same faith, and the spirit to defend Reformed theology.

From a minister in Serbia:

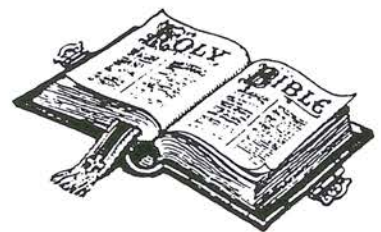
I am preparing the lessons for our catechumens class on Christian doctrine, and I am using the October 15, 1993 issue of your magazine

(The Reformation and Scripture) for lessons on the Holy Bible. Your magazine is one of the best I have ever seen. (Most of today's magazines are like bodies without bones.) I am reading, re-reading, and using for preaching and teaching, the past issues.... Keep up the good work. You are the salt and the light.

Another letter we received from a physician in Fayetteville, North Carolina reminds us how God uses a sharp presentation of the truth through the *Standard Bearer*. He says,

I will be forever grateful for this introduction to the faithful presentation of the truth in God's word as presented by the teachers in the PRC. This manifestation of God's grace in my life came about 6 months ago as I was searching for truth. I spent over 20 years walking in spiritual error ... until God in His mercy opened my eyes to the Reformed faith. Even after being saved, I took a side path in error as I followed the teaching of 1994? ... God in His mercy (and the *SB* articles) brought full recovery from this.

As we begin the new 72nd volume year, our hope and prayer is that the *Standard Bearer* may continue to be of great service and benefit both within and outside our circles in bearing the standard of truth. As board, publishing society, and editors may we pledge ourselves to renewed consecration, courage, and vigor to make the *Standard Bearer* a continuing effective witness to the truth in our time. Our confidence is that this work is not in vain, but that God will use us, and the *Standard Bearer*, as in the past, for the building up of His kingdom and the glory of His name. □



Jesus' Absolute Equality with God

John 5:19-47

The wonderful miracle of the healing of the impotent man by the pool of Bethesda serves the Lord's purpose of being the occasion for this deep and profound passage on the deity of Jesus. The miracle had been performed on the Sabbath day, and in Jerusalem, exactly so that Jesus could assert before the Jews His own divine nature and unity of essence with the Father. Aware that the Jews are seeking His life, our Lord will leave Judea, but not without testifying of His unique Sonship to the Father, and thus showing that this assertion was the heart of the reason for the Jews' opposition to Christ.

We saw in our last study that the Jews correctly interpreted Christ's words in verse 17 to mean that He claimed equality with God. When Jesus said, "My Father ... and I," the Jews had immediately understood that He claimed deity in the highest possible sense. They therefore considered Him to be worthy of death. Now if that was not what Jesus meant, He could have denied that such was the implication of His words and that they were mistaken. But He does not. Rather, He now goes on to explain and expand upon what had been implied in the statement He had made. The heart of this discourse is, therefore, the explanation of the truth of our Lord's essential equality with God.

Our Lord begins the sermon by

declaring that the Father and the Son never act or will independently of each other. Both in counsel and in action they are the same. Both Father and Son work in the very same manner, by the exercise of the same power, and for the furtherance of the same ends.

Further, the works that they perform are greater than that simply of the healing of the lame man. The Son also performs the divine works of quickening the dead (something which is the sole prerogative of the Creator God, see Heb. 1:1-3), judging men in the sense of assigning to men their eternal destiny, and raising the bodies of all men from the grave. Who but the all-wise, almighty, all-just God can do such things? Yet all these works are performed by the Father through the Son. Not only does the Son perform divine works, but He also receives divine honors (worship) and possesses the divine virtue of independency.

Jesus then goes on (v. 31) to give the fourfold witness to His Sonship. This witness begins with the Father (the voice heard at His baptism), it continues with John the Baptist, it is heard in the works which Jesus performs, and last of all is declared with authority in all the Scriptures. A plain and overwhelming witness is borne to Him, all of which the Jews had wilfully rejected.

It is then that the accused becomes the accuser. He who had been accused as the Sabbath-breaker now rises to condemn these Jews

for their unbelief and refusal to come to Him. He tells them that they have not the love of God in them, nor His Word abiding in them. Even though they said they revered the Scriptures and Moses, they did not believe the Scriptures or Moses but followed their own thoughts and fancies. They were all busy seeking the honor that comes from men and not from God. For this reason they would not receive Him who came in the name of the Father's will. And thus their condemnation is that they have rejected the witness borne to Him and would not come to Him that they might have life.

As we study these words of the Lord, let us remember that He, the person of the Son of God, who even now sits at God's right hand, speaks these words to us. It is through faith, the gift of God, that these Scriptures speak to us of His true and only Sonship to the Father. Believing these words we have everlasting life (I John 4:15).

Outline

I. The defense of Christ's essential unity (equality) with the Father (vv. 19-30).

A. The Son never acts in separation from the Father, but shares the purpose and power of the Father (vv. 19, 20).

B. The Son performs divine acts.

1. Regeneration of the dead (vv. 21-25).

2. Judgment of men (vv. 22, 27, 30).

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

3. Salvation of men by the speaking of His voice (v. 24).

4. Resurrection of all that are in the graves (vv. 28, 29).

C. The Son receives divine honors (v. 23).

D. The Son has divine attributes — Self-sufficiency, independency (v. 26).

II. The witness that is borne to the Son (vv. 31-39).

A. His own witness (v. 31).

B. The Father in Heaven (vv. 32, 37, 38).

C. John the Baptist (vv. 33-35).

D. The works that Jesus performs (v. 36).

E. The Scriptures (v. 39).

III. Jesus accuses the Jews of their wilful rejection of Him (vv. 40-47).

A. They will not come to Him because they have not the love of God in them (vv. 40-42).

B. They do not receive him as He comes in the Father's name because they seek honor of one another and not of God (vv. 43, 44).

C. They do not believe the testimony of Moses concerning Him and thus will not receive Jesus' words either (vv. 45-47).

Questions

1. Background Study Aids: Belgic Confession, Art. 10; *Reformed Dogmatics*, pages 342-348.

2. Questions over the whole passage:

a. Show from this passage that Jesus' equality with God is not

in the sense that He is a god equal to God, but that the equality is a unity of being or essence.

b. Show that Christ gives to Himself in this passage divine attributes, works, and honors. Make a list of them.

c. Discuss this proposition: The healing of the man at the pool of Bethesda was wholly a secondary matter. It was arranged and intended by Christ to bring about this public testimony of His true and only Sonship to the Father.

3. How do verses 19 and 20 show that the Father and the Son never work separately from one another but rather by the same power and out of the same purpose?

4. What is the meaning of verse 20: "greater works than these"? Greater than what works? What are these greater works which will be shown?

5. Does the quickening of the dead refer only to the final resurrection of the body, or can it refer also to the spiritual quickening of regeneration?

6. May we substitute the word "worship" for "honor" in verse 23? See John 20:28.

7. Why does the Father commit all judgment to the Son (vv. 22, 27)? Why is it fitting and proper that the "Son of man" be the one who executes the judgment of God?

8. In what way does verse 24 show the equality of Jesus with God?

9. Explain the significance of

the fact that the Son has life in Himself (v. 26).

10. How are we to understand the resurrection of the evil ones? With what body do they come forth?

11. Explain verse 31. Does Jesus mean that He may not witness to Himself concerning who He is?

12. List the four witnesses to Christ's divinity given in verses 32-39.

13. Do you sense in this passage a transition from the Lord's defense of His divinity to the Lord's offensive against the Jews for their hardness and unbelief? Where does the transition begin?

14. Verse 40 has been used as support for the well-meant offer of salvation, namely, that God intends that all who hear the gospel might believe and have life in His Son. Respond to this. What is meant by the words: "that ye might have life"?

15. What was the great obstacle in the way of their receiving one who came to them in the name of the Father (v. 44)?

16. How will Moses accuse them to the Father (v. 45)? In what sense could it be said that they trusted in Moses? Where and how did Moses write of Christ?

17. Show from verse 47 that our faith in Christ as the divine Son of God must be and can only be based on the truth of the inspiration of the Scriptures. Or: Can faith in the deity of Christ be maintained if one denies the inspiration and infallibility of the Bible? □

Apples of Gold

Strength for the Day

Deuteronomy 33:25b

Communion with my Lord —
Can aught more precious be?
Is there a joy that can compare
To fellowship with Thee?

Ah, this I truly know —
No treasure is so sweet
As that to lay my burdens
Down at the Savior's feet.

My weary, sinful heart,
So burdened and distressed —
I bring it to the Savior
And there find peace and rest.

"Dear Precious, Heavenly Father,
My haven from the strife;
Please shelter from the battle
And help me on through life.

Be Thou forever near me
To lead and guide my way;
Such blessed sweet Communion
Will keep me day by day."

Annetta Jansen
Dorr, Michigan

Chapter 4

The Last Four Days of Creation-Week

(concluded)

The Creation of the Woman (Gen. 1:27; Gen. 2:18ff.)

The narrative of the creation of the woman is introduced, first of all, by a Word of God addressed to Himself. This time the Word of God is: 1) That it is not good that man should be alone; 2) That God, therefore, would make him an help meet for him. In the second place, the narrative of the creation of the woman is introduced by the account of Adam's giving names to the animals.

As to the meaning of the statement that it is not good for the man to be alone, we may mention, in the first place, that this has reference to the fact that without a help, a companion, the man cannot realize his calling, cannot serve the purpose of his existence to be fruitful and multiply and replenish the earth, and thus to have dominion over the earthly creation (1:28). This latter Word of God to man was, evidently, spoken after the creation of the woman.

In the second place, the statement points to the fact that without the woman, the man alone is quite helpless. He is not complete. He cannot reflect in his life the covenant life of God. He is in need of a

companion to fill his life. For the very term "help meet for him" refers to a companion, a second being, like unto himself, that in every respect fills, supplements, his own existence: the woman is the other part, the "other half," the counterpart of man. Like the man, she is a human being, yet she is not a mere duplicate of man. She is most closely related to him, yet she is not another man. She differs from him in such a way that she fills his existence, supplements him, is one whole with him. This is true not only in the physical sense, but also in the psychological sense; and it ought to be the case spiritually. This also signifies that one woman fills the life of one man. Polygamy is a violation of the very ordinance of creation, as is also adultery.

As to the naming of the animals by Adam, this was evidently designed to awaken in Adam the consciousness of his being incomplete without the woman. The animals were created male and female at once. Man's union with his wife was to be a reflection of God's covenant, ultimately an image of the relation between Christ and His church. Even as the church is the body of Christ, His fullness, so the woman is the fulfillment of the needs of the man. He must consciously need her, want her, seek her, long for her, and discover that she is "flesh of his flesh, bone of his bone." For he must love her, even as Christ loves the church. Hence, by the naming of the animals

God awakened in Adam's heart the longing for a companion of his own.

Concerning this naming of the animals, we may note that the animals evidently were named before the creation of the woman. It is also evident from Genesis 1 that the woman, like the man, was created on the sixth day. It follows, then, that the naming of the animals also occurred on the sixth day. From the moment Adam was created, he functioned as God's friend-servant in creation.

We may notice, further, that Scripture informs us that God brought the animals to man "to see what he would call them." God's glory, revealed in creation, was to be concentrated and reflected in the mind and heart of man. Creation is a book, and all creatures are so many "words" of God. The whole creation spelled the name of God. Adam was so created that he could read the words, could know the name of God. He was God's prophet. This became manifest when he read the "word" of God in each animal, which is its name. In this, God was glorified. He saw how Adam named the animals.

This also implies that Adam's knowledge was that of intuition: he could look into the nature and essence of things and could see their true meaning. This form of knowing is lost through sin. We can attain to some knowledge only through a process of reasoning. But Adam in the state of rectitude was able to dis-

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

cern the Word of God in all creation.

Finally, it is evident from verse 20 that the result for Adam of his naming of the animals was that he realized the need of a companion of his own, a help meet for him. He found, evidently, that in the animal world there was companionship, "but for Adam there was not found an help meet for him."

Then follows the account concerning the deep sleep which God caused to fall upon Adam and the creation of the woman. The purpose of this deep sleep cannot have been that it must serve as an anesthetic. For, in the first place, Adam did not undergo an operation, even though God took one of his ribs and closed up the place thereof with flesh. But this was a creative act of God. In the second place, the marvel of the creation of the woman out of Adam certainly would not cause physical pain. Rather must the reason be found in the fact that God here resumed His work of creating, and that man could have no part in this. Man can only begin to work where the work of creation is finished. Besides, the creation of the woman must necessarily fall outside of Adam's experience. This was accomplished by that deep sleep.

God then formed the woman from a rib which He took out of Adam's side. As Scripture itself makes plain, this signifies that the woman is by creation not designed to be the head, neither the slave of man, but being flesh of his flesh and bone of his bone is a proper companion for him, standing in the closest of all relationships to him, the object of his love and care. "Therefore shall a man leave his father and mother, and cleave unto his wife, and they two shall be one flesh."

As to the significance of the creation of the woman out of Adam, Scripture teaches us: 1) That Adam was first created, and is the head of the woman (I Cor. 11:8, 9; I Tim.

2:13); 2) That Adam is the head and root of the entire human race. For given with the creation of male and female is also the potential of the whole race out of them. That race is in Adam and from Adam. Legally and organically he is the head of the race, as well as the root.

The completion of Creation and the Sabbath of the seventh Day.

At the conclusion of the account of God's creative work we read, Genesis 1:31 - 2:3: "And God saw everything that he had made, and, behold, it was very good. And the evening and the morning were the sixth day. Thus the heavens and the earth were finished and all the host of them. And on the seventh day God ended his work which he had made; and he rested on the seventh day from all his work which he had made. And God blessed the seventh day, and sanctified it: because that in it he had rested from all his work which God created and made."

We should pay special attention to the final statement of Genesis 1. Notice, in the first place, that we do not find the words, "God saw that it was good." But this

time we read: "God saw everything that he had made, and, behold, it was very good." This points us to the fact that in the light of creation all things returned to God. Secondly, it emphasizes that the whole creation as a harmonious unity was good. All

creation served the purpose of God, each creature in its own proper place contributing to this purpose. This reminds us by implication once more that creation is destined to pass through a history, and that with a view to that history and to the achievement of the God-appointed destiny, all creation was good.

In close connection with all this stands the summary statement of 2:1, "Thus the heavens and the earth were finished, and all the host of them." The word "host" occurs fre-

quently in the Old Testament. There are various shades of meaning: 1) An army as prepared and marching for war (II Sam. 8:16; 10:7); 2) The host of heaven: angels, sun, moon, and stars (Ps. 148:2; Is. 40:26); 3) All the individual creatures of the whole universe conceived as a well-ordered army that is prepared for battle. In the last sense it is used in Genesis 2:1. When elsewhere the Lord is called "Jehovah of Hosts," there is no reason whatsoever to limit the term "hosts" to angels, or to the heavenly luminaries. Our God is the Lord of all creatures, and those creatures constitute a well ordered host to fight His battle and to accomplish His purpose. When creation is completed, the whole universe stands prepared to do God's bidding and to accomplish His good pleasure in the course of history.

Finally, we read in verses 2 and 3 of Chapter 2 of the creation Sabbath. It is not our purpose at this time to enter into a complete discussion of the idea of the Sabbath. We only wish to point out, in the first place, that the "rest" of God on the seventh day is a revelation in time of the eternal rest in God. God is eternally active; yet His activity is perfect and eternal rest, because His work is always and perfectly finished in Himself. In the second place, we must remember that rest is not idleness, but the entering into the enjoyment of a perfect work. Of this eternal rest in God the seventh day is a revelation.

We must also note that God blessed and sanctified the seventh day. This means, in the first place, that He set it apart from the rest of the week as a day of consecration to a special purpose. In the second place, it implies that God filled that day with a special blessing for Adam, the blessing of "rest." Even as God works and enters into His rest eternally, and had revealed this in the six days of creation and the seventh day of rest, so Adam had to labor (multiply, subdue the earth, cultivate and keep the garden — all in the service of God) in order to

*All creation
served
the purpose
of God,
each creature
in its own
proper place
contributing
to this
purpose.*

enter into the rest of creation: the perfect development and subjection of the whole earthly creation under his feet. From this labor he might cease, and of this rest he might have a foretaste on the weekly sabbath day.

We must remember, however,

that Adam did not enter into the rest of creation. He failed. Accordingly, the number of sinful man is not "seven," but "six" — the labor without the rest. God, however, prepared another rest for His people through His work of redemption. This work was finished principally in the resurrection of our Lord Jesus

Christ from the dead. Hence, by faith the church labors to enter into that rest, and celebrates the "day of the Lord" as its sabbath. This is the rest that remaineth for the people of God, the rest in Christ, to be perfected in eternal glory (Heb. 4:6-9). □

All Around Us

Rev. Gise J. Van Baren

■ Action and Reaction to the "Women in Office" Issue

Both action and re-action were responses by various Classes of the Christian Reformed Church to the decision of last June by their Synod to the women in office issue. That Synod, as reported earlier, reversed the position of the Synod of 1994. In 1994 the Synod had declared unequivocally but hardly unanimously that women could *not* serve in positions of leadership in the CRC. Specifically, they could not be elders or ministers in the denomination. Solid grounds were given from Scripture and the Church Order.

Then in 1995, without any attempt to treat the earlier decision in harmony with the requirements of their Church Order, the Synod decided on a "compromise": those classes or churches which felt compelled to install women as elders or ministers could declare the Church Order "inoperative" with respect to this issue. The Church Order was not changed (that would have required another year's wait), but a footnote was added which was in flat contradiction to the article itself.

It did not take long for various Classes to act. The *Grand Rapids Press*, September 22, 1995, had the headline on the front page: "2 CRC

classes give women go-ahead to be ministers." The article states in part:

For the first time in the Christian Reformed Church's 138-year history, CRC churches in Grand Rapids and Holland have officially allowed women to serve as ministers in their congregations.

Action taken Thursday by two classes, or regional groups of churches, will enable churches in those groups to ordain women as pastors and send women as delegates to classis meetings.

In Classis Grand Rapids East, the unanimous vote passed quickly and without a word of discussion — which pro-women advocates felt was appropriate.

"There was something wonderful about the fact that it passed so simply and easily," said Mary Antonides, who is already functioning as an unordained pastor at Eastern Avenue CRC. "It's all been said at this point. It's good to say, 'Let's move on.'"

Immediately after the vote, two women elders were recognized as delegates among the 30-member classis....

In Classis Holland, however, some argued against dropping the CRC Church Order requirement that only males may serve as pastors, elders and delegates to classis meetings. The measure passed there by a slim 29-25.

"Are we making room for myself and others who don't agree?" asked the Rev. Ron De Young of Hamilton CRC.

After the vote, delegates made appeals to be sensitive to those who disagreed. They also recommend-

ed a letter be sent to each classis church detailing the action's implications....

Classis Pacific Northwest last week became the first CRC region to make the choice for women ministers. Other classes expected to follow suit soon include Lake Erie and Toronto....

"This issue was de facto resolved by this classis (Grand Rapids East — GVB) years ago," said the Rev. Scott Hoezee, who presided over the meeting.

He predicted more women delegates would join the 15-church classis this year, adding, "It feels good to finally start looking like the church."

Strange indeed! After nearly 2000 years of church history, the CRC Classis Grand Rapids East finally "looks like the church!" Ironical, too, is the fact that Eastern Ave. CRC has been in the forefront of the movement to force this action upon the churches. It was from this same church that the late Rev. Herman Hoeksema was cast out by action of the Synod of 1924 and subsequent action of Classis Grand Rapids East.

Opposition also appears to be growing against the action of a Synod which no longer regards its own rules as binding. Classis California South, after a very contentious special classis' meeting on August 26, 1995, decided narrowly to call all the churches and classes of the CRC to a meeting to discuss the course of action which must be taken in light of the recent Synodical decision. Rev. John Berends, classis' president,

Rev. VanBaren is pastor of the Protestant Reformed Church of Loveland, Colorado.

had ruled the overture to hold such a meeting to be out of order. He based his ruling on advice he received from the board of trustees of the CRC and from Dr. Henry De Moor, professor of church polity at Calvin Seminary. He had asked them to review the overture and send him "an official ruling or finding as to its admissibility or legality." Their advice was that the overture violated the CRC Church Order, Article 44! Strong opinions were spoken both for and against the ruling of the chair. One, Rev. Randy Lankheet, objected, according to the report from Darrell Todd Maurina:

"We are increasingly having chairmen of the day call Grand Rapids, get opinions from the board of trustees, and not discuss or deliberate," said Lankheet, noting that a representative was present at the meeting from the denominational board of trustees.

"Next time you're going to be chair, and you see something on the agenda that you don't like, so will you call Grand Rapids and say, 'Can you give me six points to rule this out of order so that I can get out on time to go to my church picnic?'" Lankheet asked the assembled delegates. "We need to prevent chairmen of the day from doing these things."

The chair was overruled by a 9 to 7 margin and the overture was

treated and, in its essence, adopted. The following invitation has been sent to the churches:

1. Believing that the Scripture prohibits the ordination of women to the offices of elder, minister, and evangelist;

2. Convinced that Synod 1995 failed to follow the Scripture and violated Church Order Articles 3, 31, 47, and 86;

3. Committed to preserving the biblical principles of our Church Order;

4. Devoted to maintaining the historic Reformed character of our churches, for example in rejecting ecclesiastical fellowship with denominations that permit and encourage homosexual practice;

Classis California South invites all classes (as well as all councils and officebearers) who share our convictions to attend a conference in November to formulate appropriate actions and responses to Synod 1995. Classes, councils, and officebearers are encouraged to submit agenda items and motions to this conference. The conference will seek ways to:

1. Address the decisions of Synod 1995 relative to women in ecclesiastical office and relative to its failure to break relations with the GKN despite their unbiblical approval of homosexual practice;

2. Protect congregations which differ with their classis where women serve as officebearers;

3. Seek to ensure that the historic Reformed commitments of our churches will be maintained in coming generations.

All decisions of this conference may be presented to the councils and subsequently to the classes represented at the conference for approval for submission to Synod 1995.

Classis California South, if it approves this request, should appoint a committee on arrangements to see that the invitations are mailed out and that local arrangements and an agenda are prepared.

The cost of such a meeting, transportation, housing, etc., shall not be borne by Classis California South, but by those in attendance.

(Above-quote is also from a report of Darrell Todd Maurina.)

Classis Illiana encouraged the churches of this classis "to encourage our councils to send their own participants" to the Conference. The conference is scheduled for November 6 and 7 at the First CRC in South Holland, Illinois.

Meanwhile: There is a growing sentiment within WARC (World Alliance of Reformed Churches) to exclude from its membership those denominations which refuse to ordain women as ministers of the Word of God in their churches. The claim is that such refusal is violation of the teachings of Scripture. The circle seems almost to be completed. □

Report of Classis West

The September meeting of Classis West was held in South Holland, IL on Wednesday, September 20. Classis was scheduled two weeks later than is customary, in order that the delegates could attend the Conference on Reformed Church Government held in Grand Rapids on September 21 and 22.

Rev. Mitchell Dick opened the session of Classis with a devotional based on I Corinthians 3:7. Rev.

Russ Dykstra presided at this session of Classis.

The agenda of Classis was brief. There were regular reports from the Classical Committee, the Stated Clerk, and the Reading Sermon Committee. Mandates were given to the Stated Clerk concerning the copying and preservation of the archives of Classis West, and there were a few rule changes made to the Rules of Order of Classis West. No classical appointments were nec-

essary at this meeting, a rather unusual occurrence for Classis West. There was also one discipline matter dealt with in closed session, where approval was given to one of the consistories to proceed with the erasure of a baptized member.

The next scheduled meeting of Classis is to be held in Pella, IA, on March 6, 1996, the Lord willing.

Respectfully submitted,
Rev. Steven Key, Stated Clerk

Report of Classis East

Classis East met in regular session on Wednesday, September 13, 1995 at the Hudsonville PRC. Each of the churches was represented by two delegates; Grace PRC had delegates at classis for the first time. Seminararians DeJong and Smit, both serving internships in local churches,

were present as observers. Rev. B. Gritters was the chairman for this session.

There was only routine business before this session. Classis heard the reports of the Stated Clerk and of the Classical Committee. Classical appointments were granted to Byron Center, Grace, and Hope. The

schedule of these appointments was sent to all the churches.

The expenses of classis amounted to \$1,006.80. Classis will meet next at Southeast PRC on Wednesday, January 10, 1996.

Respectfully submitted,
Jon J. Huiskens, Stated Clerk

News From Our Churches

Mr. Benjamin Wigger

Young People's Activities

From all accounts, the "annual bowling invitational" of the young people from the First PRC in Edmonton and the Immanuel PRC of Lacombe, AB, Canada held in mid-summer was a great success. Reportedly there was a great turnout from both churches and an evening of fun and fellowship was the end result.

In mid-September the Young People's Society of the Hull, IA PRC, with a little help from the young adults of Hull, took on their parents in a game of softball. Confidently, the young people invited their entire congregation to witness the event. Unfortunately, no mention was made in any later bulletin concerning the outcome of that game.

This year's recently concluded Young People's Convention has now taken its place in the history of our churches. This event remains a tremendous undertaking for any young people's society, and its success each year depends upon the help and support of the entire congregation. Signs of this happening are starting to be seen in bulletins from the South Holland, IL PRC, next year's host of

the annual young people's convention. Recently their Program Committee for the 1996 convention presented three themes and six speakers, from which the young people, at their first meeting this season, would select one theme and the appropriate number of speakers. Their congregation was encouraged to look for notices concerning committee activities and fund-raisers in the near future. Good advice for all of us to consider with regard to our own young people. Whether hosting a convention or not, they need our help and prayers.

Congregational Activities

The congregation of the South Holland, IL PRC is involved with a Secret Pal program for all their college students this year. Any college student who was interested could simply fill out a questionnaire and turn it in, and he or she would be assigned a secret pal for that school year.

This fall's society and catechism season at the First PRC in Holland, MI was begun with their annual Inspirational Meeting. This year Seminararian Richard Smit was the featured speaker. His message served to set the tone for First's society and catechism life.

As of this writing, being early October, all signs point to the soon completion of the church building of the Peace PRC in Lynwood, IL.

The latest information indicated that early October seemed to be a likely date for completion. Peace was even busy looking for a good used piano for use in their new church building. Stay tuned for further details, quite possibly including news about a dedication for Peace.

Denominational Activities

The Eastern Men's and Ladies' annual League Meeting was recently held at the Hudsonville, MI PRC. Rev. R. VanOverloop, pastor of the Georgetown PRC in Hudsonville, MI spoke on, "Is revitalization of our society life necessary in light of the para-church movement?" The collection was to aid Rev. Kortering in his Asian contacts.

On October 8 Rev. C. Haak officially took up his work as the full-time radio pastor of the Reformed Witness Hour. His first message was entitled, "Faith Comes By Hearing." Let's remember Rev. Haak and the Reformed Witness Hour in our prayers as they make this new beginning in their work on behalf of our churches.

School Activities

The holiday season will soon be here, and perhaps you will be looking for the perfect gift, for that special someone in your life. Well, the Ladies' Aide of our Covenant Christian School in Lynden, WA may be able to help. They are making avail-

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

THE STANDARD BEARER

P.O. Box 603
Grandville, MI 49468-0603

SECOND CLASS
Postage Paid at
Grandville, Michigan

able "The Psalter" in 3-ring binder form for the cost of \$19.95. If you have any questions or would like to order a copy, simply contact the Ladies' Aide of Covenant Christian School,

c/o 605 Brook Ct.
Lynden, WA 98264.

Evangelism Activities

The Evangelism Committee of the Randolph, WI PRC is making available a recent five-sermon series given by their pastor, Rev. S. Key, entitled, "Our Trials: God's Handiwork." This set is in an audio-tape album and is available for \$9, payable to the Evangelism Committee of Randolph, 225 Pierce, Randolph, WI 53956.

Prof. H. Hanko, of our Seminary,

was in Randolph on October 2 as the featured speaker for a lecture sponsored by the Randolph congregation. His topic was "Justification by Faith: The Pillar of the Reformation." Prof. Hanko hoped to emphasize Martin Luther's development of this truth, and its importance not only for the Reformation but for today.

The Evangelism Committee of the Peace PRC in Lynwood, IL recently planned a work-night and asked members of their congregation for help. They planned to stuff, address, and seal 5,000 envelopes for mailing to the Lansing, IL community.

Food for Thought
"The Devil is not afraid of a Bible that has dust on it."

— Author Unknown □

ANNOUNCEMENTS

NOTICE!!!

Hope Protestant Reformed Christian School will be in need of a principal for the 1996-1997 school year. Those interested should contact the school at:

1545 Wilson Avenue S.W.
Grand Rapids, MI 49544
(616) 453-9717;
or John VanBaren
(616) 532-7367.

NOTICE!!

Special meeting of Classis West, in Edgerton, MN, for the purpose of examination of pastor-elect Allen Brummel, November 8 and 9. Those in need of transportation and lodging, please contact the clerk of Edgerton PR consistory, Ron Brands.

RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The Council of the Grandville Protestant Reformed Church expresses its heartfelt sympathy to its fellow officebearer, elder Jon Huiskens, in the death of his sister,

BETH HUISKEN.

"Truly my soul waiteth upon God: from him cometh my salvation. He only is my rock and my salvation; he is my defence; I shall not be greatly moved" (Psalm 62:1, 2).

Rev. A. Spriensma, Pres.
Cornelius Jonker, Clerk

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Don Doezema, Business Manager, October 11, 1995

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