



THE **STANDARD BEARER**

**A Reformed
Semi-Monthly
Magazine**

**We must not make distinction
between pleasant and
unpleasant things,
as if the appealing things
come to us from a merciful God,
but those that do not appeal
come from some other source.
No, all things are for our sakes
in God's abundant grace
in Christ Jesus!**

See "Abundant Thanks" — p. 75

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Editorially speaking ...

Extra copies of the special, Reformation issue of the *Standard Bearer*, "The Reformation of 1924" (Oct. 15, 1995), are available for 50 cents per copy. Consistories, evangelism committees, or individuals that desire copies, whether in quantities of 100 or 2, should write the business office of the SB. The issue can be used for purposes of witness and of study.



This gives advance notice of an important course that will be taught at Hope College in Holland, Michigan early in 1996. It will be a seminar on the principles and practices of Reformed education. The course has been designed to introduce students to the history and theological foundations of Reformed Christian education, as well as to show how Reformed principles of education "make a difference in our teaching."

Among the topics are the history of Reformed Christian education; the principles; the school and culture; who is the teacher?; and the Christian concept of the self.

The instructor will be Mr. Jon Huiskens, Dean of Academic Services and Registrar at Hope College and elder in the Grandville Protestant Reformed Church.

The course will be beneficial particularly (but by no means exclusively) for younger teachers in the Protestant Reformed Christian schools and for college students intending to become teachers in these schools. For all such in western Michigan the course is virtually a "must." I urge them to consider taking the course, which will be given for credit by Hope College. Our school boards should encourage the teachers to attend.

To make it possible for all to take the course, it will be offered in the evening.

For information, write Hope College, c/o Mr. Jon Huiskens, P.O. Box 9000, Holland, MI 49422-9000. Or, call (616) 395-7760

—DJE



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BOUND VOLUMES

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

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

Abundant Thanks

For all things are for your sakes, that the abundant grace might through the thanksgiving of many redound to the glory of God.

II Corinthians 4:15

"Bless the Lord, O my soul; and all that is within me, bless his holy name! Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits!"

That expression of thanks finds its echo in the text above. The keynote here is abundance.

God has prepared an abundance of things, in fact, all things, for our sakes. He also bestows an abundance of grace upon us, that the thanksgiving of many may overflow in an abundance of praise to God.

That is true thanksgiving!

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An abundance of things.

On Thanksgiving Day we count our blessings.

They are so many, but let me try to mention a few.

The Lord sustained us in health and strength and cared for all our needs during the past season. He gave to all of us our daily bread, our home, our place in our family, our place in the church. He gave us work for our hands and prospered our labors.

Besides all that, the Lord gave us numerous possessions and luxuries, many pleasant times and expe-

riences, many hours of enjoyment with our family and friends.

There were also, not to be forgotten, an abundance of spiritual blessings. God speaks to us, revealing Himself unto us through His Word and by His Spirit in our hearts. He has given us faith, a living, powerful gift of faith. He assures us: "I am thy God and the God of thy seed after thee." That includes all His blessed, glorious promises for time and eternity.

As family we could gather about the dinner table to begin with the Lord and end with devotions. We can still freely read the Word of God, hear the sound preaching of the Word, and worship in the communion of saints.

We have so much. But there is more. The text speaks of "all things." That must also include suffering, pain, trials, afflictions. That includes the attacks of Satan, the oppression and persecution of an evil world, the struggle against sin in our own lives. Yes, that includes the loss of our dear ones, the awareness of the approach of our own departure from this world.

That even includes all the events in the course of history, all man's ingenuity and resourcefulness, but also all the corruption, lawlessness, wars, and tumult of the nations. In one word, the sun rises and sets, the stars move in their courses, the day follows the night for the sake of God's church, His chosen people, and therefore for you and for me.

The list grows. It seems endless. For all things are for your sakes, and ye are Christ's, and Christ is God's!

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An abundance of grace.

All these things come to us from the hand of Almighty God, who exercises all power in heaven and on earth. We can not, we may not, we must not make distinction between pleasant and unpleasant things, as if the appealing things come to us from a merciful God, but those that do not appeal come from some other source. No, all things are for our sakes in God's abundant grace in Christ Jesus!

Let us never forget nor ignore the fact that our God is the God of infinite perfections, the only true and living God, who lives His own blessed covenant life of intimate fellowship as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. He has no need of men's hands, to be worshiped by them. He is the God of all grace, the exalted, adorable Jehovah.

His favor is upon His people. Even as His consuming wrath burns upon all the workers of iniquity now and forever, so His love abounds upon those whom He has chosen from eternity and redeemed through the cross of our Savior Jesus Christ. The Father gave His Son, and the Son gave His life, that His glorious grace may abound in us, His chosen possession.

On such wretched sinners as we are, who deserve only everlasting condemnation, God bestows His grace, even an abundance of grace that delivers from death unto life and transforms us from children of Satan into sons of the living God. We are justified, freed from all sin

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and guilt and made worthy of eternal life. We are sanctified as saints in Christ Jesus. He bestows grace for grace, one gift of grace upon another. God is for us, nothing can be against us.

He withholds no good thing from those who fear Him. Therefore through an abundance of grace we receive an abundance of gifts which serve to bring us to glory.

The greatest of these is that we may know and confess that all these things come to us from His Father hand!

Grace abounding!



An abundance of thanks.

Thanksgiving is not a mere expression of thanks, a mere "thank you." It is not a formal prayer of an individual, or of a family, or of a congregation in a special worship service. Nor is it an attempt on our part to recompense God for all His benefits.

Thanksgiving arises spontaneously from a thankful heart. Thankfulness is also a matter of living; our life must be a life of thankfulness.

Since we know how great our sins and miseries are, and also the wonderful manner in which we are delivered from our sins and miseries, it must certainly follow that we should know how to live in thankfulness before the face of our God.

Thankfulness is a deep awareness of our unworthiness, but also of our dependence upon God. He is our God from whom all blessings flow. As dependent creatures we wait upon Him, lifting up needy hands to Him in prayer. We experience intimate communion of life in fellowship with Him. The result must be that we rejoice in God, our Maker and Sustainer, who is also the God of our salvation. We sing His praises. We worship Him in humble adoration. Even though this is still done in all the weakness of sinful flesh, thanksgiving is comely for God's children.

Nor are we alone, as individu-

als, in this thanksgiving. It is a blessed privilege that we as families may join our hearts in song, in prayer, in worship, and thanksgiving in the presence of our God.

We also have our church, the communion of saints, in which to join hearts and voices in thanks and praise to God. We worship Him with psalms and hymns and spiritual songs. In our churches the Psalms of the sweet singer of Israel are still sung. Think of that! For many, many generations, in many languages and in all sorts of circumstances, the church of God has given expression to all their experiences with the Psalms of Scripture.

God not only has preserved His church, but He has prepared many hearts to give Him thanks for all His benefits.

The abundant grace through the thanksgiving of many redounds to the glory of His Name.

O give thanks unto the Lord. For He is good; for His mercy endures forever.



An abundance of praise.

A small stream of water from melted snow trickles down from some mountain peak. It grows, broadens, and deepens until it becomes a rushing, roaring river that flows into the sea.

In that same way the grace of our God abounds through the thanksgiving of many to the praise of His Name.

All the angelic host hide their faces in worship before Him as they declare their "Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, heaven and earth are filled with Thy glory."

The heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament showeth His handiwork. Day unto day utters speech, and night unto night shows wisdom. All the works of His hands shout the praises of their Maker. His might sets fast the mountains. His hand controls the raging billows of the sea. The mighty oak, the delicate lily, and the

lowly dandelion tell of His greatness.

All history declares that He is God, and He alone. His counsel stands, and He does all His good pleasure. Nations may rage and peoples may imagine vain things, but God has set His Son as Lord of glory over all, to carry out His purpose even until He comes again with the clouds of the heavens.

Who is worthy? Who is fit to join his voice in praise to God? O the depths of the riches of the mercies of God, that we should be privileged and qualified by the Spirit of Christ to tell His praises! More amazing still is the fact that we may join our voices with all the saints, the church of all ages, to glorify our God!

Praise Him all ye myriads of angels!

Praise Him all ye vast and wide creation!

Praise Him all ye works of His mighty hands!

O church of our God sing His praises!

And thou, my soul, above all, praise thou Him.



A foretaste of an eternal abundance of joy!

Now, yes. Praise Him in a special way on Thanksgiving Day. But let us praise Him every day until we are ready to join that multitude that no man can number before the throne.

With eager anticipation we can look forward to the day when we, without sin and with all tears wiped away, shall join that multitude to declare: "Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honor, and power, for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created!"

"And I heard the voice of a great multitude, and as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of mighty thunderings, saying, for the Lord omnipotent reigneth!" Amen. □

The Protestant Reformed Seminary: The Lion Still Roars*

(2)

To hear the lion's roar of Amos 3:8 ("the lion hath roared, who will not fear?") in a seminary that teaches the truth, more precisely, a seminary that teaches men to teach the truth to others, is not fanciful. For the figure of the lion's roar expresses the reality of revelation.

The Roar of Revelation

The lion's roar was revelation: God's making Himself known! God's making known what Amos 3:7 calls His "secret"; God's making known His will.

The Lord God made Himself known to the prophet. By means of the prophet, He made Himself known to His people. This, after all, was God's purpose. He was not mainly interested in the prophet's knowledge of God and God's will. But the prophet must prophesy, that is, he must relate what God had said to him to the people. The prophet must tell the people who God is; who they are in relation to this God; what God's judgment on them is because of their sins; and the counsel of God concerning their redemption.

Such was God's act of revelation that the prophet spoke to the

people, and he spoke what God had spoken to him. The prophet to whom God spoke necessarily prophesied. There was no "*bedankje*," no decline. The prophet spoke to the people only and exactly what God had said to him, nothing more, nothing less, nothing other.

As the roar of the lion in nature guaranteed the seizure of the sheep or deer, so the Lord GOD's revelatory roar irresistibly brought about the prophet's speaking the Word of God. The practical purpose, in fact, of Amos in chapter 3 was to insist to Israel that what they were hearing from him was not his own words but the Word of God. The roar of divine revelation brought about a wonder, a mighty wonder — the wonder of inspiration: the human prophet spoke a divine Word.

God was sovereign in revelation. *He spoke! He made Himself known! He acted with all the majesty and might of the lion.* Men did not co-operate, not even the prophets. That would have spoiled the work. The prophet was as subject to the revealing God as the sheep, frozen by the roar of the lion, was subject to the lion.

Where, the Prophetic Fear?

Involved, however, was the prophet's own personal, "experiential" fear. The lion of revelation roared, and the prophet who now must speak the Word of God feared. That was not terror inducing paralysis, but awe that galvanized the

prophet into action. Fear moved him to prophesy, whether he liked prophesying or not. Later, Amos will say, "I was no prophet, neither was I a prophet's son" (7:14). The lion had roared, and Amos left the herd and the sycamores for the work of a prophet. When his prophesying created opposition (for Amos was no smooth prophet, forever with a shiny smile on his face and always declaiming peace and love), his fear of the lion's roar put the steel in his backbone to carry on. It was that fear that moved him faithfully to speak only the Word of God without any addition of his own and without any subtraction.

It is noteworthy how often in Scripture the prophets' fear of God is stressed, particularly at their call and commission. Think of Moses at the burning bush. Hear Isaiah's exclamation, "Woe is me! for I am undone" (Is. 6:5). Recall Jeremiah: "Thou art stronger than I, and hast prevailed" (Jer. 20:7). The apostle John, though he had been the beloved disciple, fell at Christ's feet as dead (Rev. 1:17).

Where is this today? Where is this in the church's ministers? Ministerial motivations are many, some less noble, some more noble: use of gifts; desire to please; serving others; love for the people of God. Is fear of the roaring lion among them? Is it the main motivation?

Where is this at the worship services of the congregation? The great cry even in Reformed churches is that the worship services must be

* 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. This is the second installment. The first installment appeared in the November 1, 1995 *Standard Bearer*.

all happiness, gaiety, laughter. Surely the worshiping congregation is joyful in the Lord Jesus. But not without awe. The heart of worship is the church's proclamation of the Word, her prophesying. To this she has been moved by the lion's roar. She worships, therefore, with fear.

Israel Heard the Lion

From the fact that God revealed Himself to the prophet follows that in the preaching and teaching of the prophet, the people of God heard, not the prophet but the lion. The people heard the lion's roar through the mouth of the prophet. They heard God speaking. And they knew it. They all knew it.

Some challenged this. They denied that what the prophet said was the Word of God. These were the reprobate, carnal members of the Old Testament church. But this was a perverse, daring, stupid denial, as much as if a deer, hearing the unmistakable roar of the lion, were to say, in the last seconds of its life, "That is no lion's roar, but merely a kitten meowing."

The elect remnant melted at the roar in repentance, conversion, and renewal of covenant-love.

The Roar Inscripturated

The lion's roar is now the holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments. For the prophets not only *spoke* what the Lord God made known to them, but also *wrote it down*. The prophets (and apostles) wrote the Word of God down perfectly accurately and reliably. They did this as carried along, irresistibly, by the wonder-working power of the roar of revelation itself.

This, friends of the Protestant Reformed Seminary, is the heartfelt, sincere conviction of faith about the Scriptures that governs all the work of this seminary.

Scripture is divine, not human. It is the Word of God, not the words of men. It is the written roar of the lion, not the religious talk of the

prophets through whom the lion has roared.

Scripture governs all that we teach men to teach the church to believe and all that we teach men to teach the church to do.

Scripture is our sole and compelling interest. It is not so that we read and study nothing else but the Bible, but that all that we read and study serves our knowledge of the Bible. The Bible is the lion's roar, the only roar of the lion. All else is man's word. Besides, the roar of Scripture has laid hold on us, has captured and captivated us, has fixed our attention on itself. We can as little devote ourselves to other books or enterprises as the sheep could think about other noises when the lion roared.

This explains our requirement of the knowledge of the original languages: the lion has roared in Hebrew and in Greek.

Does the Lion Roar Today?

Does not this begin to make plain the relation of the Protestant Reformed Seminary to the lion's roar?

"What has the lion's roar to do with the church today and with the Protestant Reformed Seminary in particular?" some must be asking.

This is a sober, solid question. We must take it seriously. "How can God's revelation of Himself to the prophets and, through them, to Israel, in old time, bear on the existence and work of a Reformed seminary in North America at the end of the 20th century?"

"Does the lion *still* roar?" "Does the Lord God *still* speak?"

In the sense of direct speech to men, giving new revelation, as once God spoke immediately to an Amos, the answer is an emphatic, unqualified "no." God's work of revealing Himself by direct speech to men has been finished. In these last days, God has fully and decisively spoken to us by His Son. He roared His full revelation in and to Jesus Christ. The Spirit of Jesus Christ inspired

the apostles to write this revelation down as New Testament Scripture, which, with the Old Testament, is the full declaration to us of the secret counsel and will of God concerning our redemption. God has nothing more to say, because there is nothing of His secret counsel left hidden. In Christ, in sacred Scripture, God has told us all.

In this sense, the lion roared in the past and roars no longer.

This is a life-and-death issue for the church today. The charismatic movement is a rejection of the Scriptures by its doctrine of ongoing revelation and continued prophecy. The Protestant Reformed Seminary, like the churches whose it is, repudiates the charismatic movement as vehemently as it rejects theological modernism. The issue is the lion's roar in Scripture versus the peeping, muttering, bellowing, and braying of those whom Satan has bewitched.

Rejection of direct revelation, however, does not imply that the lion no longer roars! How could this be? Does God no longer speak? Do we no longer hear the Word of God, the very, living Word of God?

In the exercise of the office of the ministry of the Word by faithful men who preach the Scriptures, the lion still roars.

God Himself in Jesus Christ speaks today in the preaching of the holy gospel. The preacher does not merely talk about the Word of God, but the preaching of the Word is the Word of God — the living, awesome, saving and hardening Word of God. Lively preaching is the full force and reality of the roar that began with the speech to the prophets and apostles and that continued in the inspiration of Scriptures.

The roar began deep in the lion's throat in Amos' time, found full voice in the inspiration of the Bible, and resounds today in the preaching of the Word.

This is our view of preaching.

This is also the view of preaching in the Reformed tradition. The Second Helvetic Confession of 1566 declared, "The preaching of the

Word of God is the Word of God."

This is Scripture's own view of preaching. The Ephesian saints, to whom the gospel came years after Jesus Christ had ascended into heaven, heard Christ and were taught by Christ (Eph. 4:21).

Believers and their children hear the lion's roar. It is not a terrifying sound. It is the Word of pardon and gracious salvation grounded in the cross and originating in eternal love.

To the unbeliever in the sphere of the covenant, it is indeed a dreadful sound, the sound of wrath that devours the adversaries.

Admittedly, it can take on a fearful sound even for us, when it exposes our sins, rebukes us for them, and warns of chastisements. But even then, it is to us the gracious revelation of the God of our salvation.

The Roar and the Seminary

The seminary is both produced by this roar and an aspect of it. The God who speaks by preachers imperiously calls the churches to establish and maintain the seminary.

Since God uses the seminary to prepare men to voice His roar, and that, by the teaching of the truth, the seminary instruction is itself the roaring of the lion. It is the Word of God.

This, we claim on behalf of the Protestant Reformed Seminary, nothing less. Listen to the instruction; consider the doctrine it confesses and defends; hear the ministers whom it trains.

Our people have no doubt. This explains the readiness to build the addition and the fact that the addition was almost paid for, by free gifts, before it was finished.

Others too hear the roar of the lion in the churches and their semi-

nary. Almost a fourth of the cost of the new addition was donated by several men outside the churches. There is one in far-off Australia who has never set foot in a Protestant Reformed church but who, having read the literature and listened to the tapes, is convinced that the Protestant Reformed Churches are one of the last hopes of Calvinism in the world. There is another in California who remembered with gratitude how 40 years ago he and his family were blessed by the teaching of a Protestant Reformed church. There is a local man who highly regards the Protestant Reformed witness to and defense of biblical marriage.

They heard and responded to the roar of the lion.

"The Protestant Reformed Seminary: The Lion Still Roars."

What a work then is ours, esteemed colleagues and students!

Who will not fear?

— DJE

Guest Article

Rev. Mitchell Dick

God and His Farmers

This article was originally the devotional presented at the September, 1995 meeting of Classis West. The author has expanded the devotional somewhat to correspond to this season of the year in which we celebrate, in a special way, Thanksgiving.

In I Corinthians 3:7 we read the conclusion of a farmer: "So then neither is he that planteth any thing, neither he that watereth; but God that giveth the increase."

The farmer is Paul. He likens his work to planting. His co-laborer, Apollos, does the watering. They

both are spiritual farmers. Paul, in the midst of his "farming," in the midst of his preaching and shepherding God's flock, has come to this conclusion: he and other human spiritual farmers are nothing; God is everything. He plants, Apollos waters, and another farmer may fertilize and weed ... but the farmers are all nothing. God alone gives the increase — all of it.

Such a conclusion must be ours. Farmers of the soil. Farmers of the soul. All must say: God alone gives the increase! In this way only does God receive all the thanks and praise and glory.

A fundamental distinction

When Paul declares that he and

Apollos are nothing and that God giveth the increase he is saying that God is *everything* with regard to the life and health of the harvest of souls.

This is true in the "natural" realm, when farmers plant seed in the soil. God alone gives life to that seed. God alone causes it to germinate, to sprout, to develop, and to be healthy.

So in the spiritual fields, where preachers, elders, teachers, and parents all labor as "farmers" to nurture the Christian life in souls. God alone gives spiritual life. Naturally, we all are dead in sins. This is the judgment of God. And no amount of human labor can make the dead live. God must send His Son to

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make atonement, annul the condemnation of death, and earn the right to life for His elect. The Spirit of Christ must quicken the hearts of God's own to make them live. And then only God is the One who can give the increase, the health, the vigor of that life. He works faith. He quickens the spiritual seed of life planted in our hearts in regeneration. He makes the seed and the life of faith stronger. He gives fruit and health and vigor. He alone is the reason why individuals grow, families grow, churches grow in their spiritual life.

But all this means that man is nothing. Every man is nothing. No man gives life or increases life. The best of men cannot. The best tiller of the soil, the best counselor of the soul, the oldest, wisest, most experienced elder, the smartest, most eloquent and learned preacher, the most patient, loving parent — all are nothing.

Man is nothing when he farms the land. He cannot give life, nor the increase of life. He plans, he plants, he works, he worries — but nothing is of any avail without almighty help. Parents are nothing in raising their covenant seed. They love, they lead, they instruct, they encourage — but God must save the seed. So, too, when pastors and elders "farm" in the church, or on the mission field. We are nothing. We preach, we pray, we teach, we toil — but nothing is of any avail without almighty life-giving help.

That then is the fundamental distinction made in our text: God is everything, and man is nothing. Farmers of every sort must remember this. Those farmers who blur the distinction, who imagine that God is less than He is and man is more than he is ... are themselves a blight in the land; they are destructive farmers.

The appropriate response

If truth is really before believing minds there will be a believing response. Truth works good things in God's elect. There will be sanctification. There will be a holy, living response by a people who know that the Lord, He is God, and not we ourselves. What is that response?

First of all, there will be pondering. In the special season of thanksgiving upon us, and at all times, we ponder daily and anew what the Almighty can do ... and what we can not do! What are farmers and plants? What are our sermons, what is our counsel, what are all our efforts without the God who gives the increase? How great is God, how great is His power, how marvelous the mystery especially of the life He gives from the dead! And how great is the mystery of this: that for there to be such life, such spiritual life, God's own Son, His eternal Son in the flesh, had to die.

All this is deep. Too deep for finite minds to go. We ponder in humble adoration and delight.

Then we pray. Knowing God is everything and we are nothing, we pray. We do this exactly because we know we need, desperately, the blessing of God, if there is to be increase upon our efforts. In prayer we express our dependence on God. Through prayer God showers and shines the life-giving Spirit and grace upon the field of our labor, energizing the crop of His good pleasure.

Ponder. Pray. Then ... we put our hand to the plow. *Ora et Labora!* We pray, then work! God is sovereign indeed! Man is nothing indeed! And yet God uses even men who are nothing! Sinful men, nothing men. A sinful church, a nothing church ... God uses us, as tools in His hand, to bring the Word of life, to nurture and preserve the life.

Solemn responsibility we do have! Farmers of the soil must do their work, or they may not eat.

God's farmers must work — while it is yet day, before the frost comes, before the killing Antichrist comes. Work we must — at home, and in the field of the world, wherever the Lord sends us. And work we must — together. As co-laborers, helping and not hindering the work of one another. One will plant. Another will water. Let us not trip over one another in the process!

Work, plow, with the Word! This is our plow, our water, the nutrients, the sunshine ... all that the people of God need! The Word, God's Spirit and grace working through it, saves, builds up, encourages, defends, rebukes, comforts. That Word is the gospel of our salvation, God in Jesus Christ revealed, our Savior who dies on the cross, who is risen and ascended, who justifies, sanctifies, and glorifies His elect.

Plow — zealously, understanding that God's usual way is to give the increase of the harvest through the faithful labors of His farmers.

Then praise. Praise Him for the revelation that the harvest is all in His hands. Praise Him for the privilege of being used of Him in such an honored occupation. Praise Him, and Him only! For though we are God's farmers, still we are nothing. God is everything. Wholehearted thanksgiving to Him let us bring!

Our believing anticipation

Anticipate, then, a blessed increase! Earthly farmers do. When they have good weather, good soil, good machinery, and expertise, what else can they expect? So must we, and for this reason: we have a good God. And He has promised: the harvest is plentiful.

To be sure, the harvest God reaps through us is not plentiful as men count this. There is no scriptural ground for our anticipating the conversion of the majority of the world. We may not expect that sowing the true gospel is going to earn us mega-church status. Plentiful, indeed, is the promised increase. But let us be duly warned about the

*Through prayer
God showers
and shines
the life-giving
Spirit and grace
upon the field
of our labor,
energizing
the crop
of His good
pleasure.*

numbers game. Let us leave the numbers to the God of election.

However many God is pleased to add to the field in which we labor, let us farmers, and all the rest of us, look at it this way: that just one sinner is saved in our midst is a wonder. That one child is nurtured and built up in the faith is a blessed increase indeed. Life from the dead, even one such life, is great enough reason for thanksgiving!

Received such increase lately? Fellow farmers under God, may the

increase God gives prompt us to ponder anew, to pray more fervently, to work all the harder, and to praise and thank our God more wholeheartedly.

Has the increase seemed rather "sparse" lately? Have there been disappointments, trials, heartaches, and very little response to and fruit upon your labors? Then remember this: there will be a time when all the work here below will be done, all the rocks cleared out of the field, the weeds killed, the diseases shall

be no more, and all the hail — not even a memory of it! Then all our doubts and fears about the fields in which we labor shall be laid to rest. That will be the day of the final harvest, when God will come again to bring in the sheaves.

What a great day! Then the church shall be taken to glory and we who are nothing in ourselves but loved of God in Christ shall have the delight of praising perfectly and forever the God who is all in all. Our Lord of the harvest! □

Ministering to the Saints

Prof. Robert Decker

Christ Jesus, our Minister

In our first installment we presented the truth that Christ Jesus is the minister of His church. He is the Head and King of the church. Moreover, Christ functions through those whom He has lawfully called to office: the ministers of the Word, the elders, and the deacons. Furthermore, Christ also ministers to the saints through the saints themselves. All this is clearly taught in our Reformed confessions.

These confessional principles are clearly taught in Holy Scripture. That Christ is *the* minister of the church is evident from His own Word. Just prior to His ascension into heaven Jesus said, "All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth" (Matt. 28:18). The word translated "power" means, 1) the power of choice, liberty of doing as one pleases; 2) physical and mental power, ability; 3) power of authority or of right; 4) the power of rule or government. Putting these to-

gether, the word "power" means both the right and the ability to do something. Jesus is saying, therefore, that all authority and ability is given to Him in heaven and in earth. Christ has the right to minister the Word, administer the sacraments, exercise discipline, and minister His mercies to the poor. And Jesus has the ability to perform these functions in the church.

Scripture, quoting Psalm 8:7, says in I Corinthians 15:27, "For he hath put all things under his feet..." God has arranged all things, put all things in subjection to Christ. Surely, the "all things" includes His church. That the church is not only included, but is at the center of Christ's rule is evident from Ephesians 1:20-23: "Which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in heavenly places, far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come: And hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head of all things to the

church, which is his body, the fullness of him that filleth all in all." God exalted His Christ to His own right hand in heavenly places.

Scripture tells us that Christ Himself gave pastors and teachers to the church (Eph. 4:11), that Christ is the Shepherd and Bishop of the souls of the saints (I Pet. 2:25), and that Jesus is the Chief Shepherd of the flock of God (I Pet. 5:1-4).

Jesus used the same metaphor of the shepherd and the sheep in John 10. "I am," said the Lord, "the good shepherd" (v. 11). The Savior teaches that He is the Good Shepherd who knows "my own sheep" (vv. 14-16); that His sheep hear His voice; and that He knows them and they follow Him. Still more, those sheep were given to Jesus by His Father and, says Jesus, "I and my Father are one"; and, for that reason, no one can pluck those sheep out of Christ's hand (vv. 16-30).

There can be no doubt about the fact that Holy Scripture teaches that Christ Jesus is *the* minister, *the* officebearer of the church. Christ saved the church through His death on the cross and His resurrection

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from the dead. Christ rules and governs the church. Christ gathers and preserves the church. Let not the force of this escape us. Christ has all authority and power over all things for the sake of the church. No matter how furiously the devil and the world may rage against the church, they cannot destroy or hurt the church in the least. Even their persecution of the church serves the good of the church. Christ is on the throne. What marvelous comfort belongs to the church as she engages in the battle of faith! Not only is it so that nothing can possibly separate her from the love of Christ or be against her, but it is true as well that because Christ is her minister the church will be instructed by His Word, be corrected by His rule, receive His mercy in her need, and be preserved unto life eternal by His Word and Spirit. The church belongs to Christ, she is His bride.

Christ exercises His authority through men who are lawfully called by Him to serve the church. When Jesus told His disciples that all power was given unto him in heaven and in earth, He told them, and thus His church, to teach all nations and make disciples of them, promising to be with them even unto the end of the world (Matt. 28:18-19). Christ "gave some apostles, and some prophets; and some evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of

the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ" (Eph. 4:11-12).

The inspired apostle Peter writes, "The elders which are among you I exhort, who am also an elder, and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that shall be revealed: Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind; Neither as being lords over God's heritage, but being examples to the flock" (I Pet. 5:1-3). As is obvious from the fact that Peter the apostle counts himself also an elder, the reference here is both to the ministers (teaching elders) and the ruling elders of the church. These must shepherd the flock of God and must do so in a proper way. The apostle assures these through whom it pleases Christ to minister to the flock of God that in the way of obedience to this exhortation they may expect to receive "a crown of glory that fadeth not away" when the chief Shepherd appears (v. 4). Christ, therefore, the chief Shepherd, is pleased to care for God's flock through the elders of the church.

For this reason too the saints are exhorted to "remember them that have the rule over you, who have spoken unto you the word of God: whose faith follow, considering the end of their conversation" (Heb.

13:6). Those who have the rule over us are literally the ones who go before us as our leaders. These leaders rule by speaking the Word of God to us. They are also our examples, for we are called to follow their faith, considering the end of their way of life (conversation). A little later in this same chapter Scripture exhorts the saints to "obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account, that they may do it with joy, and not with grief: for that is unprofitable for you" (v. 17). The elders of the church ("them that have the rule over you") watch for the souls of the saints with joy when the saints are obedient to the rule of Christ. When the saints are disobedient to that rule, the elders watch for their souls with grief. In both instances the elders are those who must give an account to the King of the church, our Lord Jesus Christ. Hence, it is certainly unprofitable for the disobedient saints when the elders are watching for their souls with grief.

Christ, therefore, is the minister, the Head, or King of the church. Christ ministers His Word, rules the church, and dispenses His mercies through those whom He lawfully calls through the church.

We do well to remember this. Indeed! □

Taking Heed to the Doctrine

Rev. Steven Key

God the Creator

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Under this rubric, "Taking Heed to Doctrine," we have been led by other writers through a broad overview of theology or the doctrine of God. This new writer begins with the next section of Reformed doctrine, that of anthropology, or the

doctrine of man. This division of Reformed doctrine generally includes such subjects as creation and providence, as well as what the Bible teaches concerning man — his creation, his fall into sin, and the effects of that fall.

To many of our readers, the treatment of these concepts will contain nothing new. After all, we simply follow "the old paths." At the same time, however, we might say that the old paths are always and again *new*. Any man of God will agree, we are always learning. Even though we may spend a lifetime in the study of the Scriptures, we never plumb the depths of God's revelation. Repeatedly we stand amazed at the wonderful truth God has revealed to us. Indeed, it is *gospel* to us!

So it is when we turn again to the truth of creation. We stand before *God*! Oh yes, we enter now into a new division of Reformed doctrine. We speak of the doctrine of man. But make no mistake. We are still dealing with the doctrine of God.

It is important that we understand that principle too. All biblical truth must serve to point us to God, and more specifically to God *in the face of Jesus Christ*. It stands to reason. Scripture is the revelation of Jesus Christ, the God of our salvation. That is the great, all-pervading principle of Scripture. When we study the doctrine of creation, therefore, when we search out what the Bible has to say about man, we do so as those who are concerned first of all with *God*. If that is not our approach, we shall fail to discern the truth.

We take, therefore, an approach that is fundamentally different from that taken by many theologians and preachers and Bible students today. The world of our day is humanistic. Man is the object on the foreground. Man's authority, man's knowledge, man's abilities, man's possessions, man's salvation are all placed upon the foreground. But our viewpoint, even with respect to the doctrine of man, will be *theological*.

It is certainly true, all things are ours. That is I Corinthians 3:21.

But read on. "...all things are yours; and ye are Christ's; and Christ is God's." For His own name's sake God made all things. In fact Proverbs 16:4 puts it so clearly

that we are almost astounded by it. "The LORD hath made all things for himself: yea, even the wicked for the day of evil."

Every single thing in the creation was made by God for His own purpose and to reveal His own glory. God is the source of all things, the center of all things, the purpose of all things. And therefore in our study of doctrine, in our unfolding of biblical truth, we must be concerned about the glory of God, first of all, and about the creation and man only as they serve to magnify God's glory. That will be our approach in considering the doctrines of creation and man. That is the Reformed way.

The necessity of a God-centered approach is seen in the very first verse of the Bible. "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth." Here is immediately set forth the truth that *God is God*. It is so simple. Even a small child can understand it.

And yet it is so objectionable to the human mind. Looking at the world in which we live, and considering the origin of the creation, there is a strong inclination embedded deep in the heart of every sinner to prefer any other explanation than this one: "God created; the worlds were framed by the word of God" (Gen. 1:1; Heb. 11:3). For what this means is that you and I and all creatures are *dependent* creatures, subject to the will of our Creator.

You and I, who prefer to look at this universe as a giant stadium in which we can play our games and have our fun, are told by the Word of God that this world is *God's* world, and that you and I and all creatures are subject to Him. We are not here to serve ourselves. And the creation is not here simply for our own pleasure. All things are for Christ's sake!

When we stand before that truth, clearly revealed in the Bible, and when we examine ourselves and our

sinful natures, it isn't difficult to understand why the vast majority of the human race scorns the idea of this world as the creation of the sovereign and almighty God. As we are told in Romans 1, they know the truth, but suppress it in unrighteousness.

But, as we must understand, the truth of creation as the work of the sovereign God, the Creator-Redeemer, is not a theory to be taught alongside various other theories concerning the origin of all things. It is not something that can be proved to the minds of men by the use of human reason or science.

The work of creation is God's wonder work, something which no man could see. It is God's wonder work, which testifies of the greatness of our God and the magnificence of His wisdom and His ways. Creation is God's wonder work, revealed in the Scriptures, before which you and I must bow and believe, rendering all praise and glory to the Creator who is our Redeemer.

Our belief in creation as God's sovereign handiwork is exactly a matter of faith. Without shame we lay hold of that which is revealed to us in Holy Scripture. Without embarrassment we reject any theories of science which contradict God's revelation in the Scriptures.

We stand appalled at the brazen opposition to biblical truth that is seen even in so-called Reformed circles today. We are deeply grieved by the unbelief that is widespread in churches and colleges that have the name "Christian," but where science, the "knowledge" of men, is placed above the authoritative teaching of the Word of God Himself.

We, without compromise, proclaim the truth that the Scriptures are the inspired, authoritative written record of God's revelation in Christ Jesus. The doctrine of creation is a concrete matter where the

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authority of these Scriptures applies. Who was here to see God create? Who saw Him make heaven and earth? But make them He did — because He alone is God. And we know this because He Himself has told us in His Word. Shall we receive what the Creator Himself has revealed to us concerning His own work?

The alternative, you understand, is not merely to adopt another theory. The Bible is the authoritative Word of God. And because it is that, we are dealing with a question of faith and unbelief. There is no neutral ground here. The Bible confronts us with the call to believe. The alternative is to go to hell for your unbelief and refusal to humble yourself before the authority of God and His Word.

The seriousness of rejecting what the Bible teaches concerning creation has a reason. Creation does not stand alone. To believe in the biblical truth of creation is fundamental to saving faith. For Scripture pro-

claims clearly that creation and redemption are inseparably connected. You cannot deny the one and hold to the other. The church looks unto God *the Creator* for redemption and deliverance. (See Ps. 89:8,11; 95:1-7; 121:1,2; 124:8; Col. 1:14-17.)

Scripture makes clear the inseparable relationship between creation and redemption, between God as Creator and God as Savior. That God is our Savior is possible only because He is the almighty Creator.

That makes the truth concerning God the Creator a matter of very practical importance.

You know how our souls can be in such turmoil when the power of God is not before our consciousness. You recognize in your own life, if you reflect for a moment of self-examination, that when we are filled with worry and distress, we are unable to maintain a proper spiritual focus. Our mind is filled with something other than God and His glory.

But, on the other hand, when we have raised the power of God to the

appropriate elevation in our consciousness, we know that all things work together for good to us who love Him, because we are the called according to His purpose. And the creation of the world and God's government of every single thing is for our sakes.

To recognize the magnificence of God as Creator-Redeemer is to find in your own life the profound comfort and joy of His wonder work of grace.

So the doctrine of creation is concerned with far more than only the origin of things. You and I stand here before the one only true God. We do not go to heaven for believing that He created the heaven and the earth. But we go to heaven in the way of laying hold of *Christ* by faith. And that faith, which is the gift of God's grace, is faith by which also "we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear" (Heb. 11:3). □

Special Article

Rev. Ronald Cammenga

The Standard Bearer — In Defense of the Faith (2)

Why this defense of the faith?

Polemical the *Standard Bearer* was and polemical she is. Why? Why from the beginning was it felt that the *Standard Bearer* ought to be polemical? Why this *defense* of the faith?

The *Standard Bearer* is and the *Standard Bearer* must continue to be polemical for God's sake.

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Defense of the faith is at bottom defense, not just of the faith, but of the honor and glory of God. God is glorified in the truth. He is the truth! God is robbed of His glory by the lie. Zeal for the Name of God compels us to defend the truth.

This is why God Himself calls us to defend the truth. This is why God called His prophets to such a defense of the truth in the Old Testament. This is why our Lord Jesus Christ so vigorously defended the truth and exposed the lie and the false teachers in His ministry. This

is why God raised up a Luther and a Calvin in the days of the Reformation. And why God raised up a Hoeksema, a Danhof, and an Ophoff in the early history of the Protestant Reformed Churches. God is jealous for His own glory!

This is the thing that we must be conscious of, that must be uppermost in our minds as we write in and publish the *Standard Bearer*. We must be thinking about this. We must make the defense that we make out of a conscious concern for the glory of our great God.

The *Standard Bearer* is and the *Standard Bearer* must continue to be polemical also for the sake of the church.

Love for the church must prompt our defense of the faith. The church is built upon the doctrine of the Word of God. This is the only foundation upon which the church can stand. False teaching erodes that foundation! Error destroys the church! Heresy and the heretic are not to be coddled! They threaten the very life of the church.

Oh, it was love for the church on the part of Hoeksema, and Danhof, and Ophoff, and the founding fathers of the RFPA that moved them to take up the challenge of producing a new church paper. Love for the instituted church. Love for the church to which they still belonged and in which they were working for reformation — the Christian Reformed Church.

That, too, must be before our minds in our defense of the faith today. We must write what we write and publish what we publish out of love for the church. Certainly love for our own Protestant Reformed Churches. And love, too, for the church of Jesus Christ catholic.

The *Standard Bearer* is and the *Standard Bearer* must continue to be polemical also out of a sincere desire that those who depart from the faith will be convinced of their wrong, and those who are in doubt will be established in the truth.

It belongs to the purpose of polemics that there may be repentance and retraction.

For that reason error must not simply be attacked, but must be refuted. God's Word and the Reformed confessions must be appealed to. It must be shown *why* a certain teaching is erroneous, and *why* a certain practice is condemned.

This, too, must be on our minds as we send out the *Standard Bearer*. We must desire this. It must be evident that we desire it. This must be our prayer as we write and publish.

The "how" of our defense of the faith

If these three reasons for our defense of the faith are before our minds, then it is also going to be the case that we are concerned to carry on our defense of the faith in the right manner. God's glory, the welfare of the church, and convincing of error not only establish the need for polemics, but also control the way in which we engage in polemics.

They are wrong, dead wrong, who object to polemics — whether in the preaching or in writing.

But they are also wrong who express unconcern for the way in which the faith is defended.

They are wrong who hold that the only thing necessary is that a defense be made.

And so long as that defense is made, it really does not matter *how* it is made. They are wrong who view those who express this concern as

weak, and regard them with suspicion, the suspicion that they do not really hold to the line and are inclined to compromise.

Not only do the Scriptures call us to a defense of the faith, but they also demand that we defend the faith in the right manner.

In Matthew 10:16 Jesus says to His twelve disciples, "Behold, I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves: be ye therefore wise as serpents, and harmless as doves."

Luke 9, the latter part of the chapter, records a striking event in the ministry of the Lord Jesus. On His way to Jerusalem, Jesus passed through Samaria. He sent messengers ahead announcing His entrance into a certain village of the Samaritans. We read in verse 53, "And they would not receive him...." The narrative goes on: "And when his disciples James and John saw this, they said, Lord, wilt thou that we command fire to come down from heaven, and consume them, even as Elias did? But he turned and rebuked them, and said, Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of. For the Son of man is not come to de-

stroy men's lives, but to save them" (Luke 9:55, 56). Jesus would have nothing of the vindictiveness of James and John.

In II Corinthians 6:3, Paul says about himself that he gave "no offence in any thing, that the ministry be not blamed." In II Timothy 2:24-26, the apostle instructs Timothy and all officebearers, "And the servant of the Lord must not strive; but be gentle unto all men, apt to teach, patient, in meekness instructing those that oppose themselves (to the truth); if God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth; and that they may recover themselves out of the snare of the devil, who are taken captive by him at his will."

What the apostle Peter requires of the individual believer in I Peter 3:15 applies here as well, that we must "be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh (us) a reason of the hope that is in (us) with meekness and fear."

In the text of an address given to this same gathering by Prof. Herman Hanko entitled "The *Standard Bearer* and Polemics," and printed in the December 1, 1981 issue of the *Standard Bearer*, Prof. Hanko, reflecting on this very matter, wrote:

The *Standard Bearer* has not always done this. These are sins which we confess to God at the foot of the cross. Weakness is with us and against it we must be on our guard. (*SB*, vol. 58, p. 108).

We acknowledge this weakness and sin. We acknowledge it before God and before men.

But this does not deter us from carrying on in the battle. This does not detract from what before God we know to be our calling. And no matter what others may think of us, say about us, or write concerning us, we are determined to be valiant for the cause. Because the cause is not ours; the cause is God's. And one day it will be shown to have been so. □

Integrity

Are you a person of integrity? Perhaps we think of integrity only in certain limited spheres: a business man must stand behind his product, a researcher must have intellectual honesty, a reporter must present the facts of a case or an event. But the Bible makes clear that every child of God is to demonstrate integrity in every sphere of life. This word is found sixteen times in the Old Testament; although the New Testament does not contain the word, it expands on the idea in several places.

The Hebrew word has the basic meaning of completeness, wholeness, and simplicity. Then the word takes on the moral values of perfection, innocence, and uprightness, but always from the point of view of consistency. The person of integrity displays a moral consistency that begins within the heart and proceeds outward without any change. Integrity implies homogeneity of such a high order that wherever you look at a person, or however a person reveals himself, you see the same thing. The plural of the Hebrew word is *Thummim*. On the breastplate of the high priest were placed the Urim (light) and *Thummim* (perfection), objects which were used to discover the will of God for Israel in a certain matter (Ex. 28:30). Although we do not know the method of using these things, the idea of wholeness, completeness, and perfection is strongly present.

God informed Solomon that David his father walked in integrity of heart and in uprightness, to do all God's commandments (I Kings 9:4). Though Job lost all, he still held fast his integrity, being a perfect and upright man who feared God and eschewed evil (Job 2:3). David dared to ask God to judge him according to his righteousness and the integrity that was in him (Ps. 7:8). Even though the enemy is deceitful, David will walk in his integrity (Ps. 26:11). He confesses that he is able to do this because God upholds him in his integrity (Ps. 41:12). God chose David to feed Israel, and David did this with integrity of heart and skillfulness of hands (Ps. 78:72). Integrity is a safe guide (Prov. 11:3). The poor man who has integrity is better than a rich fool (Prov. 19:1). When the just man walks with integrity, his children are blessed after him (Prov. 20:7).

The prophets warned Israel when she lived a segregated rather than an integrated life. In Hosea 7:8, 9 we read that Ephraim (the kingdom of the ten, northern tribes) is a cake not turned. The life of this nation revealed that she was spiritually inconsistent; she was

as a cake that is baked to a golden brown on one side, but on the other side and within she is raw dough. In God's judgment she was unpalatable, and the reason for this was that Ephraim mixed himself among the people (heathen). Isaiah records God's complaint over Judah's outward, religious exactitude (Is. 1). Their sacrifices, feasts, and prayers were unacceptable to God because their hearts were not right with Him. Such a lack of integrity, consistency, and uprightness that the prophet must call Israel Sodom and Gomorrah, and liken Jerusalem to a harlot.

Jesus had the same thing in mind when He called the scribes and Pharisees *hypocrites*! Outwardly they appeared righteous, but inwardly they were full of hypocrisy and iniquity. Pretty hard to distinguish a hypocrite from an unturned cake. The inner life of heart, mind, and soul was not integrated with their words and deeds. Foolishly and sinfully they tried to separate the law from the gospel, Moses from Christ, the heart from the hand. Woe to those who lack integrity! James says to all outward professors of Christianity, "Show me thy faith without thy works (if you can), and I will show thee my faith by my works" (James 2:18). For faith without works is dead, unprofitable, and inconsistent. The beloved disciple instructs us that "If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar" (I John 4:20); and "My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue, but in deed and in truth" (I John 3:18). The ninth commandment of God's holy law requires spiritual consistency or integrity, according to Lord's Day 44: "That even the smallest inclination or thought, contrary to any of God's commandments, never arise in our hearts; but that at all times we hate all sin with our whole heart, and delight in all righteousness."

The whole law was fulfilled for us by Jesus Christ, the Man of perfect integrity. The zeal of His Father's house consumed Him. He had meat to eat that the disciples did not know, and that was to do the will of Him that sent Him, and to finish His work (John 4:32-34). With complete self forgetfulness, with undivided heart and unswerving will, He was always about His Father's business (Luke 2:49).

Perhaps the best test for integrity is to ask oneself these questions: Do I behave myself the same way when I am alone as when I am with others? When I am among the worldly as when I am with the saints? When I am on vacation as when I am at home? If we can say yes, we have integrity! □

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Oliver Cromwell: Lord Protector (1)

Introduction

I recall that a number of years ago, when we were on a tour of Westminster Abbey in London, the Anglican prelate who was our guide took every opportunity to express his hatred of Oliver Cromwell and the disaster which he had brought upon England in the 17th Century. Oliver Cromwell was that kind of a man: one either loved him or hated him. His enemies were many and were from the side of those who supported the Anglican Church as well as Calvinist Presbyterianism who despised his form of church government. But that he was an important figure in the history of England as well as in the history of the Reformation in the British Isles cannot be denied.

He has gained his niche in the history of the church by being the most startling example of one who, in the cause of Christ, rises against his ruler and brings about his overthrow. English Protestantism today is influenced by Cromwell's rebellion against the king.

Background

To have some understanding of the role Cromwell¹ played in English history, we must know something of events in the land at the time he lived.

The Reformation in England had produced the Anglican Church, so much like Protestantism in its doc-

trine, but so much like Roman Catholicism in its hierarchical church government and liturgy. Within the church from the time of Queen Elizabeth, who ruled in the latter half of the 16th Century, was a large group of men who, influenced by the Calvin Reformation in Geneva, wanted complete reformation in the church, including Presbyterianism in church government and liturgical reformation in worship. They became known as Puritans and were particularly strong in Scotland.

On the throne of England ruled the cruel Stuarts, in Cromwell's early life, James I (the one responsible for our King James Version of the Bible) and later, Charles I, beheaded at Cromwell's instigation. These Stuarts were convinced that their own royal prerogatives were inseparably bound up in the Anglican Church, of which they were the head. As James I expressed it: "No bishop, no king." However, they were always suspected, with some justification, of really working secretly for the return to England of Roman Catholicism. The Stuarts were embroiled in a bitter struggle with Parliament for political control. The Stuarts needed Parliament because only Parliament could pass tax laws, but Parliament was intent on curbing Stuart power.

In Europe a continent-shaking conflict was going on between Protestant forces and Roman Catholic armies: The Thirty Years War was destroying Germany, and the Eighty Years War had brought about untold suffering to Dutch Protestants and was not, in Cromwell's time, set-

tled. Spain could not be forgotten, for only recently had she launched her mighty armada against England in an effort to restore England to papal rule, and the wreckage of Spanish ships still strewn the coastline of Scotland and Ireland as a constant reminder of the perfidy of the Romish Church.

If all this were not enough, Scotland wanted nothing so much as political independence from England, and Roman Catholic mobs in Ireland had butchered thousands of Protestants throughout that troubled land.

Cromwell's early life

Into all this seething unrest Cromwell was born on April 25, 1599, at the end of a century of reformation and just before that most crucial 100 years of church history — the 17th century.

He was born of middle class parents by the name of Robert Cromwell and Elizabeth Steward. Both of them were Protestants and devoted Calvinists. Robert Cromwell had served in Queen Elizabeth's Parliament and was active in local affairs. They were small land owners and suffered along with most people under the heavy burden of taxation, for the Stuarts needed untold revenue to support the royal navy and to finance the luxurious extravagances of the Stuart court.

¹ The best and most objective biography of Cromwell which I have been able to find is Robert S. Paul's book, *Lord Protector*, published by Eerdmans in 1964.

Oliver was the second child of the family, which was composed of two additional sons and seven sisters. But the death of Oliver's two brothers in their infancy and the death of his father when Oliver was 18 years old, put the responsibilities of support and the management of their small holdings on Oliver's shoulders.

After a mediocre education in grammar school, Oliver was sent to Cambridge to study; but his studies were brought to an end by the death of his father, and his further education consisted exclusively in wide reading.

Although not much is known of Oliver's early years, it seems as if he lived a rather boisterous and profane life. He speaks of his conversion at about 20 years old shortly after his marriage to a staunch Calvinist girl by the name of Elizabeth Bouchier, with whom he had five sons and four daughters. Oliver himself speaks of the fact that from the date of his conversion, his reading was almost exclusively limited to the Bible, and he was known till his death as a man who had a rare knowledge of Scripture far exceeding that of most of England's ministers.

Following the example of his father, he immersed himself in local affairs and was, in 1628, sent to Parliament. His stay there was not long, for the Parliament was angrily dissolved by Charles in 1629. Under the burden of Stuart taxing policies, he suffered great want, but his financial burdens were somewhat eased when in 1638 he fell heir to his uncle's estate. He was now a member of England's gentry.

In 1640 he was sent again to Parliament when it was called by the king. This Parliament became known as the Long Parliament, for it met till 1653. It was the Parliament responsible for the overthrow of the monarchy and for the calling of the Westminster Assembly.

But in the Parliament he was something of a misfit. Parliament was composed at least in part of wealthy gentry, cultivated and ur-

bane, witty in speech and dressed in the latest fashions. Cromwell came with homespun clothing, crude, relatively uneducated, not gifted in flowery language, and a figure to be despised by his peers. Yet he was also a fiery speaker capable of moving men with his oratory. In his maiden speech he appeared before the assembly with a spot of blood on his collar and little to recommend him. When Lord Hambden was asked who that was, he uttered the prophetic words: "That slovenly fellow which you see before us, who hath no ornament in his speech; I say that sloven, if we should come to a breach with the King (which may God forbid) in such case will be one of the greatest men of England."

Cromwell's war against Charles

Oliver Cromwell used his platform in the House of Commons for attacks on Anglican episcopacy, which attacks were, almost by necessity, made also against the king, who agreed wholeheartedly with James: "No bishop, no king!" Royal politics in England, with the king the head of the Anglican Church, were so closely interwoven with Anglican episcopacy that the two could not possibly be separated in England's life.

Gradually, as the number of Puritans increased in Parliament, the balance swung from support of the king and Anglicanism to strong opposition. And the king, fearful of his throne, began to prepare his army as his sole weapon to destroy Puritan forces which threatened him and his church.

Another factor, however, came into play in the complicated politics of the times: the Puritans themselves were by no means united. The Presbyterian Puritans not only favored a strong Presbyterian Church in England but pressed hard for such a Presbyterian Church to be the State Church in the place of the Anglican Church. But with this position Cromwell strongly disagreed. He wanted complete freedom of religion

in England, with every person permitted to worship God according to his own conscience. He wanted, more than anything else, each congregation left free to choose its own pastor and to determine its own faith and worship. In essence, Cromwell wanted a form of Independentism in church government without any government interference of any kind. He had developed these views early in life and never wavered from them. This put him strongly at odds with many fellow Puritans and especially with the Scots Presbyterians who hated him.

But the essential disagreements were between Parliament and the king. And when Parliament saw that the king was marshaling his forces to defend his royal prerogatives, Parliament also saw the need to raise an army to defend its own position. Things were moving swiftly towards civil war, and civil war soon broke out.

... to be continued □

It Cannot Last

Weary now it is, and must be,
All my sky is overcast;
But no cloud can be eternal,
This one cannot always last!

Drearly the storm is beating,
Chilling rain is falling fast;
I am wet, and cold, and cheerless;
But it cannot always last.

Walls of granite, stern forbidding,
Separate me from the past,
That was erst so glad, so joyous; —
But they cannot always last!

And what sorrows lie before me
In the future drear and vast;
Ah! I know not! But it cheers me
That they cannot always last.

reprinted from
Standard Bearer, 1928

The Protestant Reformed Covenant View

For they are not all Israel, which are of Israel:

Neither, because they are the seed of Abraham, are they all children: but, In Isaac shall thy seed be called.

Romans 9:6,7

In the September issue of *Christian Renewal*, there appeared an article by Rev. Jelle Tuininga reflecting on some of my recent writings concerning the Liberated view of the covenant. With this I am rather pleased, if for no other reason than that, when one writes, he seeks to put thoughts into words which can be accurately understood; and the real test of whether one has succeeded is in hearing from those who differ with him. It is not very difficult to get through to those who agree; they have their own way of filling in where one's presentation is weak. It is from those who object that one discovers whether he expressed himself as he ought; and, considering the response of Rev. Tuininga, it would appear that there remains much that has not yet been made clear. If there is to be theological development in our conservative Reformed community, we are going to have to learn to communicate together about our doctrinal differences with mutual kindness and concern and respect. And this in its own way relates to the problem we in the Protestant Reformed Churches had with the Liberated from the start.

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At the beginning of his article Tuininga writes, "It was particularly disagreement about the nature of the covenant that ended the relationship between Schilder and Hoeksema. After all, Schilder had just gone through a bitter struggle about this very thing in the Netherlands. Schilder and his followers had been deposed because they refused to accept the Kuyperian view of the covenant which stated that infants are baptized on the basis of 'presumed regeneration.' That is to say, we do not baptize children solely on the basis of the promise of God, but on the presumption that these children are regenerated. Imagine Schilder's consternation when he was confronted by a somewhat similar version of this teaching on the part of Hoeksema." Now this is an interesting and rather natural speculation on Tuininga's part — except that it is not true.

In actuality, already when Dr. Klaas Schilder returned to the Netherlands from his first trip before the Second World War, he knew full well that the Rev. Herman Hoeksema held a covenant view different from his own. In turn, once the war was over and it became evident that there had been trouble in the Netherlands over the doctrine of the covenant, one of the first things sent there was a supply of Hoeksema's *De Geloovigen and Hun Zaad (Believers and Their Seed)*, a book written already in 1927 analyzing and emphatically rejecting the covenant view of Prof. Heyns, which was in reality not greatly different from that of Schilder and the newly formed Liberated Churches. In fact, before

Schilder came again in 1947, Hoeksema wrote, "Dr. Schilder ... knows that we do not agree with their covenant conception, and that we take the same stand as they, church politically. He is assured too that, in spite of our differences, our churches will give him a hearing. He trusts that we still love him, and that we will give him a warm reception. In this, I think he will not be disappointed." Meanwhile, Hoeksema in the *Standard Bearer* was writing about the covenant and inviting, even pleading for, a meaningful discussion of the differences between us. But that was where the problem came in. Schilder, even when personally present — although always gracious as he could be — was little inclined to give definitive answers on these matters. He simply promised to write about them in the *Reformatie* some day, which to any substantial degree he never did, and Hoeksema's pleading for discussion went essentially unanswered. The interest of the Dutch seemed to be more in setting up ecclesiastical relations and finding a place for their immigrating families than in dealing with the theological differences which were there.

So, although we had no hesitancy about receiving their members, we were careful to inform them that, while they were free to believe concerning the covenant as they would, they could expect to hear quite a different view preached from our pulpits. But then it was discovered that Prof. Holwerda was privately advising those same immigrants to join the Protestant Reformed, but to ignore Hoeksema's covenant view and

work their own into our churches — and, even more, that certain of our own ministers had privately expressed their approval of this. That, and not Schilder's ignorance of our differences, was what brought about the breakdown of relationships between us and the Liberated, as well as causing a major disruption in our own denomination. Herman Hoeksema, and those of us who followed him, had no real interest in increasing the membership in our churches at the price of doctrinal unity, while others were willing to accept this. Even they, however, never succeeded in finding unity with the Liberated, but ended up back in the Christian Reformed Church which once "out of conviction" they had left.

Apparently, since that time, we have not been forgotten, but a selection of apocryphal anecdotes have arisen about us, designed, it would seem, to illustrate how extreme we can be. And Tuininga favors us with a few of them.

He writes, for example, "Fact is, Hoeksema once said that if he knew which children would go astray he would not baptize them. And consistency would compel him to say that. In actual fact, this position would be more consistent with believer's baptism than with infant baptism." For anyone who knew Hoeksema personally, or who is essentially acquainted with his theology, this can cause little more than a smile; for few things would have been more out of character with him. The fact was that Hoeksema had very little interest in determining, even in regard to the record of Scripture and much less in personal life, who are the elect and who not. Nor did he consider this in any way to be related to the question of who should be baptized. Apart from those very few instances in which the Bible tells us specifically that certain individuals were elect or reprobate, this, he would insist, is none of our business. And, should anyone be inclined to such judgments nonetheless, they would be apt to receive his rather sharp rebuke. He

believed firmly in predestination; but also that the application of it to individual persons must be left among the "*secret things* (which) belong unto the LORD our God" (Deut. 29:29), into which we should not probe.

And the same is certainly true of Tuininga's further observation, "That is why the Prot. Ref. had to change the traditional Form of Baptism," arousing one to wonder again what change this is supposed to have been. In actuality we have always used the translation of the Baptism Form found in the old 1912 edition of the *Psalter* with no revisions at all. (In fact, there are still copies of that edition floating around among us — some books had excellent bindings in those days — which one is free to use at any time.) As it was, Hoeksema himself was very fond of that form, often analyzing and expounding upon it, with a respect nearly equal to that which he held for the confessions. And, in its own way, it illustrates our covenant position quite well. It is true, of course, that it points out, as the Liberated properly observe, that "Holy Baptism witnesseth and sealeth unto us the washing away of our sins through Jesus Christ ...," and that "although our young children do not understand these things, we may not therefore exclude them from baptism." But this baptism comes to fulfillment only by a special work of God, as the Form goes on to imply in the two prayers that follow respectively, "We beseech thee, that Thou wilt be pleased of thine infinite mercy, graciously to look upon these children, and incorporate them by thy Holy Spirit, into thy Son Jesus Christ ...," and again, "We beseech thee, through the same Son of thy love, that Thou wilt be pleased always to govern these baptized children by thy Holy Spirit, that they may ... grow up in the Lord Jesus Christ, and that they then may acknowledge thy fatherly goodness and mercy, which Thou hast shown to them and us...." It recognizes that we may baptize with water, but it remains for God to apply the bap-

tism of the Holy Spirit without which one can neither see nor enter the kingdom of God (John 3:3-8). And, we might note, this is not something which is presumed to have taken place, but is to be brought about at God's own will.

Then there is the matter of logic — which warrants a smile of its own. All through his article Tuininga seeks to build one logical syllogism after another to prove how wrong we are, and then pummels us for daring to expect logical consistency of them. The fact of the matter is that God does not lie (Num. 23:19), which is to say that what He says at one point He will not contradict at another. This principle of non-contradiction, as one who has studied logic would know, is that from which all the rest of logic derives — as is implied in the Greek word *logos* (translated "Word" in John 1) from which the word "logic" is taken. There is a harmonious system of truth which flows throughout the *logos* by which God has created this world, based on His faithfulness or consistency. And this, in turn, provides us with that old exegetical rule which has always laid the groundwork for all sound Bible interpretation, namely, "the proper interpretation of any passage of Scripture must be in agreement with all the rest," much as Jesus implied when He said, John 10:35, "the scripture cannot be broken." One must not interpret one part of Scripture in contradiction to another. And the fact is that without such logical consistency meaningful communication cannot in reality take place. If what one says at one point may conflict with what he says at another, what do we have? All that would remain would be the throwing back and forth of invectives and opinions (only too common in our modern political age), to see who can shout the other. But that is not what Christianity is about.

And yet in a way that is what it all comes down to, the setting forth of presumptions on the one hand, which contradict realities on the other.

Abraham Kuyper held that elect children of believers are regenerated at birth, and because of this are to be baptized as a means by which they may receive a covenantal grace, making them sensitive to the Word of God in a special way. He knew, of course, that some of these children are not elect, and therefore may not in fact be regenerated; but he insisted they are to be presumed so nonetheless, and dealt with accordingly. In fact, this is to be so even if as they grow older they show little sign of spiritual sensitivity, since it is quite possible for the seed of regeneration to lie dormant for many years. We must simply continue to urge those who have been baptized to search for indications of this grace within themselves, thereby to gain assurance that they are in fact elect. This the Liberated rejected; and rightfully so — only to base their own view on a presumption equally real.

The Liberated view is that every baptized child without exception receives a concrete promise from God that he is a covenant child and is incorporated into Christ — except that there are demands and warnings affixed to this as conditions which must be met if these promises are to be finally realized. That is to say, if a child grows to maturity without heeding these demands and warnings, he will lose his place in the covenant, and his promises will become a curse. The promise, therefore, may not materialize (in spite of Hebrews 6:17, 18), and salvation can be lost (in spite of Philippians 1:6). Salvation hangs in contingency on responsibilities man must keep. While presumed to be for all at the start, the covenant promise may become a curse when all is done.

In both instances we seem to have a kind of rhetorical positivism. As Reformed believers the Liberated know and acknowledge that according to the confessions salvation is all of God, and only for those of his choice. In our world, orientated to Arminianism, this is not an acceptable thing to tell children; and

so they have searched for a way in which every child may be allowed to presume himself to be an object of divine favor, as though, if he does, this will outflank the realities of predestination. It is rather like that old saying which was bantered about by scholastics in the Middle Ages (wrongfully ascribing it to Augustine) that, "If you are not predestinate, then make yourself predestinate." And so with us, if our children will presume themselves children of God, they will come to be that way — as long, that is, as logical inconsistency may be allowed.

It is just this kind of ambiguity which we in the Protestant Reformed Churches have sought to avoid. We make no presumptions. The covenant of grace is essentially a relationship of friendship and love which God establishes with His people in Christ, and baptism is — as was circumcision before it — a sign pointing to the fact that one must be cleansed from the filth of the flesh in order to enter in. But such can come to one only through faith (Gal. 3:16) which makes one participant in the only true seed, Jesus Christ (Gal. 3:7).

In effect what happens is this. When a child is baptized, he is received into the church of God as it is visibly manifested in the local congregation. There, in accord with the promise of the parents, he is brought up in the truth of God as it comes to expression in the life and instruction of the family and the church. At the same time, however, he is assured that true participation in this covenant is not something that can be taken for granted (Lk. 3:8). Just because one has been born of believing parents and baptized, he is not to presume himself regenerated, nor to be an automatic recipient of the promises. He must believe, turn from sin, and follow in the way of Christ (Rom. 10:9). Nor is age a barrier to this. David had faith from his birth (Ps. 22:9, 10); and John the Baptist responded to the presence of Jesus while they were both still in the womb (Matt. 1:44); while all

through the ages many have confessed to being unable to remember a day when they did not know themselves to be sinners saved by grace. It may be a very simple and child-like faith, but we are certainly warned not to despise such as that (Ps. 8:2; Mk. 10:14; Matt. 18:1-3). But, throughout, one thing should be understood. This is not something that anyone can do of himself. Faith is a gift of grace (Eph 2:8), and its author is the Holy Spirit (Lord's Day 27), not man. Life in the covenant is not a matter of what we are willing or able to do, but of rejoicing in what God has done for us.

But it is not always that way. While some covenant children receive this grace at an early age, there are those as well to whom it comes only after they have delved deeply into sin (Lk. 15:17). And then there are those who, though they may have mastered Christian instruction and may even have shown a certain affection for parents and church, to say nothing of having shed tears for sin (Heb. 12:16, 17), yet find no place in their hearts for true repentance and fall away (Rom. 9:6). Within the sphere of the covenant, as without, the means of grace have their dividing effect, as Paul once said with a tinge of sorrow and pain, II Corinthians 2:16, "To the one we are the savor of death unto death; and to the other the savor of life unto life. And who is sufficient for these things?"

Nevertheless, Deuteronomy 7:9, "the LORD thy God, he is God, the faithful God, which keepeth covenant and mercy with them that love him and keep his commandments to a thousand generations." In this God will keep His church to the end.

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In the copy of this article sent to the *Christian Renewal*, we offered copies of our preceding articles on this subject. If there are any of our readers who are sufficiently interested in this matter to desire them as well, we will send them upon request [1355 Bretton Drive, Kalamazoo, MI 49006]. □

■ Lutherans on Promise Keepers

Increasingly one hears of the great meetings of the Promise Keepers. Huge gatherings of men, in 13 large stadiums, met in 1995. An estimated 720,000 men attended. Five years ago Bill McCartney, then head football coach for Colorado University at Boulder, with a friend, dreamed of filling a sports stadium with men gathered for Christian encouragement and fellowship. In 1993 some 50,000 men filled Colorado's Folsom Stadium. Last year over 275,000 men gathered at seven different locations. Next year the dream is to expand much further and even to become international.

Many things could be written about the origin and goals of this organization. The seven promises made by those attending these gatherings can likewise be carefully examined — and these appear at first glance to be worthy indeed. Who would be opposed to "apple pie" and "motherhood"? Who could oppose the commitment of men, many of whom had been negligent in the past, to build better relationships with their wives and families? Who could oppose the promise of men to go back to their home church and hug their pastors, pray for them, and encourage them?

Still, grave reservations are expressed by many who see in the movement something sinister and deceptive. Though men of all denominations and many sects and cults have been attending, including many from the Lutheran churches, the *Christian News*, a paper published by a Lutheran minister, in var-

ious issues has been quoting Lutherans who find great faults in the movement. Not the least of these faults is its blatant Arminianism and obvious ties to Pentecostalism. Some of the articles faulting this movement contain points that appear very serious indeed. In the issue of October 2, 1995, an article called, "Promise Keepers Do Not Proclaim the Gospel," states:

The "gospel" message of Promise Keepers is not the Gospel message," says the September-October PsychoHeresy Awareness Letter....

Promise Keepers has been endorsed and promoted by such leading evangelicals as James Dobson, Charles Colson, and editors of *Christianity Today*. Lutheran Church - Missouri Synod District President Gerald Kieschnick is one of many church officials backing Promise Keepers.

"Promise Keepers' 3 Unwritten Promises," a story in the September-October PsychoHeresy Awareness Letter, says:

During the past months we have made numerous phone calls to Catholic archdiocese offices, parishes, pastors and priests. In addition, we have called several Mormon (LDS) Temples, Wards and Stakes. And, we have contacted RLDS (Reorganized) Mormons.

In the numerous phone calls, we asked a variety of questions and were given prompt, clear, courteous answers. It became evident to us that, in addition to the well-known Seven Promises of Promise Keepers, there are three unwritten promises also being made and kept.

The three unwritten promises are just that — unwritten....

The three unwritten promises of Promise Keepers are very simply:

1. Promise Keepers will not violate your doctrines.
2. Promise Keepers will not proselytize your men.
3. Promise Keepers will send men back to their parishes, churches, and wards.

If these three unwritten promises were not committed to and kept, why would Catholics, Mormons, and Reorganized Mormons encourage their men to participate? Would they send their men to rallies or meetings where their doctrines would be violated or their men would be proselytized and stolen from their parishes, churches, and wards? Absolutely not! And, that is what we were told in speaking to numerous Catholics, Mormons, and Reorganized Mormons.

The "gospel" message of the Promise Keepers is not the Gospel message. The true Gospel message will, at times, offend and condemn. Furthermore, true biblical preaching and teaching will speak of heresies and aberrant teachings and will even name names, as the apostle Paul did. Imagine, if you will, the apostle Paul having a "rally" and inviting the Scribes, Pharisees, Essenes, Judaizers, and others. Then imagine Paul committing himself to not violating their doctrines, not proselytizing them, and then sending the men back to their "churches."

As we have said before, underneath the hoop, holler and hype of the Promise Keepers movement is an ecumenicalism that smacks of the last days spoken of in Scripture, rather than what some have called the "greatest move of God since the day of Pentecost." This "move of God" is arguably the largest (in terms of numbers) and broadest (in terms of denominations) ecumenicalism that the world has ever seen. Promise Keepers was and is a fatally flawed movement. It is psychologically flawed through its continuing support of *The Masculine Journey* and its phallic focused god. And, it is ecumenically flawed through its three unwritten promises.

The popularity of Promise Keepers is leaping beyond the borders of America. It is going worldwide through Internet and through men abroad who are hungry for the feel-good ecumenical, psychological

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mishmash offered by Promise Keepers.

How did this flawed Promise Keepers movement expand from zero to over 700,000 men this year in its regional meetings in such a short period of time? How did it leap from its hyper-charismatic, Vineyard beginnings to its current hodgepodge, which includes Catholics, Mormons, hyper-charismatics, and cults?

One reason Promise Keepers is so popular is because there have been, over the years, so many predators appearing as angels of light and preaching all-embracing messages governed by the same three unwritten promises of Promise Keepers. The sheep have heard these aberrant and heretical messages for so long that the broad way looks like the narrow gate to them.

The *Christian News*, September 25, 1995, has an article written by Pastor Harold Senkbeil of the Elm Grove Lutheran Church in Elm Grove, Wisconsin. In the article he answers various important questions. I quote a few of these.

Q: Isn't it great to see Christian

men from so many different denominations getting together in a united front?

A: The Promise Keeper movement falsely claims it is genuinely non-denominational. In point of fact, its top leaders are connected with Vineyard Churches, a national network of charismatic churches. PK's stance is distinctly anti-doctrinal, anti-sacramental, and involves many Pentecostal-type excesses, such as repeated calls to the Spirit: "Holy spirit, fall on me!"

By ignoring doctrinal differences and central Scriptural truths, PK seeks to unite Christian men under the banner of lowest common denominator experiential religion: love of Jesus and being born in the Spirit. Spiritual cheers ("I love Jesus, yes I do; I love Jesus, how about you?") from thousands of emotionally charged men in the stand are identified as spiritual experiences and genuine worship, prompting one eye witness to label PK gatherings "techno-tent revivals."

Q: I've had a friend invite me to an upcoming PK conference; what should I do?

A: Tell him "thanks, but no thanks." Put your time and money to better use. Plan an outing

with your wife and children, if you're married. Or spend time with your friends if you're not.

But here's the important thing: to become more holy, partake more regularly of the holy things of God — and come regularly to hear His life-giving Word and to receive Christ's life-giving Body and Blood. Spend time and energy in organized study of the Word of God here in our church where you can be fed and nourished on solid food for genuine, lasting spiritual maturity.

If the above evaluation made by Lutherans of the PK movement is correct, and there appears no reason to contradict it, then this movement does indeed represent one more attempt to seduce children of God from the sound and solid doctrines of the Word of God to adopt rather the pseudo-doctrines of the Pentecostal movement. The "Vineyard" movement and the PK movement are clearly intertwined. The goal of seeking to unite all manner of denominations, and even Mormons, represents what appears to be the beginning of the anti-christian church of the end-time. □

Book Review

Summoning Up Remembrance, by Henry Stob. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1995. 354 pp. \$15 (paper). [Reviewed by the editor.]

There are several reasons why readers of this magazine will want to read Henry Stob's autobiography. It traces the development of an influential college and seminary professor in the Christian Reformed Church (CRC). It offers a fascinating, insider's view of persons, events, and struggles in the CRC from some time after 1908, when Stob was born, to 1952, when the book ends. It is an interesting account of Dutch Reformed life in society and church. There are references to people and things Protes-

tant Reformed, including the ball-playing Veldmans in Chicago. With reference to Mr. and Mrs. Harm Pastoor, with whom Stob lived during his freshman year at Calvin College, Stob writes, "The Pastors were followers of Herman Hoeksema and members of the Protestant Reformed Church, and I did not join them at worship on Sundays" (p. 85).

As this quotation manifests, Stob's graceful, lucid writing style is characterized also by understatement.

Although a life, not a theology, the book necessarily, and deliberately, opens up to the reader intriguing and important doctrinal developments in the CRC during this period. The doctrine of common grace

was always very much in the mind of the CRC, little as it was disposed to discuss the issue with Herman Hoeksema and the Protestant Reformed Churches (PRC).

In a debate on common grace with Dr. William Masselink before a full house on the campus of Calvin Seminary, Dr. Cornelius Van Til declared that if the Christian Reformed doctrine of common grace prevailed at Calvin, "one might as well blow up the (Calvin College) science building with an atom bomb." Stob remarks, in what must be the supreme instance of understatement in the book, that "this injudicious and provocative remark did not sit well with many of us" (p. 318). This was the science building from which has

come Howard Van Till's *The Fourth Day*; the report of the "Committee on Creation and Science" adopted by the Christian Reformed synod of 1991; and Davis A. Young's *The Biblical Flood*.

Rev. H. J. Kuiper, foe of the PRC that he was, acknowledged in a petition to the Christian Reformed synod in 1952 that some professors at Calvin College "stress common grace far more than the antithesis" and that "there is no pronounced spiritual atmosphere in our college" (p. 319).

Stob gives the fullest account of the struggle at Calvin Seminary in 1952 that I have ever seen (pp. 320-338). This struggle resulted in the

dismissal of four professors. Two of the four insisted that the real issues were doctrinal, including fidelity to Scripture and the Reformed confessions and the doctrine of God's immutability.

Hardly less significant than the developments in his church is the insight Stob gives us into his own theological thinking. For the thinking of Henry Stob fairly represents the thinking of the intelligentsia in the CRC that now commands that church. Already in his college days, he had learned to be open to evolutionary theory and closed to the infallibility of Scripture (p. 117). In seminary, he came to doubt the doctrines of reprobation and limited atonement (p. 130). He signed the

Formula of Subscription while refusing to be bound to the doctrines set forth in the creeds ("... considered that we were not bound by expressions formulated in the heat of sixteenth-century battles," p. 297). He rejects the creedal doctrine of God's immutability for "an accommodating mobility that is a feature of all God's engagements with a world in process" (p. 330).

Anyone with any interest in the Dutch Reformed, Calvin College, the CRC, and Henry Stob will find it hard to put this book down.

It is hoped that the author will finish the story of his life by a "detailed account" of the 30-year stay at Calvin Seminary that followed. □

News From Our Churches

Mr. Benjamin Wigger

Congregational Activities

We begin this issue of the "News" with an update of the progress of the building project of the Peace PRC in Lynwood, IL.

In mid-October it appeared very likely that the first worship service in Peace's newly completed building would take place the 29th of October.

In the weeks leading up to that first service, the congregation of Peace was also actively involved in their church building project by repeatedly volunteering to help tie up the many loose ends that accompany any building project of that size. Through their efforts the parking lot was excavated, the entire property was landscaped, and some interior work was done.

All this had to be done before Peace could hold their first church service because the village of Lansing, where the building is located, would not issue an occupancy per-

mit until the entire project has been completed.

As of this "News report" no date had been set for dedication, but it was suggested that a possible date could be November 11. On that date Peace celebrates its seventh anniversary as a congregation in the PRC, and it would seem that that would be a fitting conclusion to this page in the history of Peace.

Perhaps in the not-too-distant future Peace will also be looking at a relocation of their parsonage. Their church building is in Lansing and their parsonage is about six miles away in Lynwood. It is very likely that Peace will sell its present parsonage and build a new one on their church property. This could happen in the coming year. Time will tell.

Mission Activities

Many of our readers receive through their congregation, regular news updates from our denomination's missionary to Northern Ireland, Rev. R. Hanko, so we apologize if this is old news to you. It now appears that the Covenant Reformed Fellowship is close to pur-

chasing property where they hope, the Lord willing, to build a church building — a goal that they have longed for for some time now. And a family is moving to Northern Ireland from the Republic of Ireland (the south) to be part of the CRF.

Rev. Moore, pastor of the Hull, IA PRC, showed his pictures on Ghana on behalf of the Foreign Mission Committee of our churches the night before the last meeting of Classis West, September 20, at our South Holland, IL PRC.

School Activities

The first PTA of this school year was recently held at the Hope PR Christian School in Walker, MI. Rev. R. Cammenga spoke on the topic "The Moral Environment of the Christian School."

If you are looking for a unique family gift, one that the whole family can benefit from, let us suggest the book, *The Farbers*, by Gertrude Hoeksema. This book is a collection of 101 stories about a fictional Christian family's everyday experiences. Children and adults alike can enjoy these sometimes amusing, sometimes thought-provoking, and al-

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

ways entertaining and instructional stories.

This book is published by the Fundraisers of our Heritage Christian School in Hudsonville, MI. It can be ordered for \$12.95 plus postage. Questions? Call (616) 669-2835 or write them at 4702 40th Ave., Hudsonville, MI 49426. Or, if you live in the Hudsonville area, you can pick up a copy at the Reformed Book Outlet, 3505 Kelly St., Hudsonville, MI

Seminary Activities

Prof. H. Hanks began teaching a Bible Study in early September at the Hope PRC in Walker, MI.

October 11 marked the beginning of a class for the study of the Belgic Confession, led by Prof. D. Engelsma, at the Faith PRC in Jenison, MI.

Minister Activities

In late September, Rev. B. Woudenberg, pastor of the Kalamazoo, MI PRC, went to Ann Arbor, MI for an operation to remove scar tissue from the inside of his left eye. He returned home the following day and is doing well, although the results will not be known for several months.

We are also happy to report that Rev. George Lubbers, emeritus minister in our churches, continues to make a good recovery following a heart attack. Medication has had good results, although he still feels the infirmities of his 86 years. Continued recovery also enabled Rev. Lubbers to witness the baptism of a great-grandson in late October.

Candidate Allen Brummel has accepted the call extended to him from the Edgerton, MN PRC.

Classis West planned a special classis for this month to examine him for admittance into the ministry of the Word and sacraments.

Rev. R. Dykstra, pastor of the Doon, IA PRC, has accepted the call he had been considering from the Hope PRC in Walker, MI.

Rev. W. Bruinsma, of the First PRC in Holland, MI, declined the call he had been extended from the Grace PRC in Standale, MI.

Pastor-elect Douglas Kuiper accepted the call extended to him from Byron Center PRC.

Food for Thought

"It is the hardest thing in the world to take Christ alone for our righteousness. Join any thing to Him of your own, and you unchrist Him."

— Wilcox □

ANNOUNCEMENTS

IN LOVING MEMORY

On October 7, 1995, it pleased our heavenly Father to call unto Himself our beloved husband, father, and grandfather,

WILLIAM E. CORSON,
at the age of 70 years.

To know that we belong to our faithful Savior Jesus Christ, in life and in death, was his testimony of trust even in difficult times. This confession is our comfort and will be our strength for the days which lie ahead.

"Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father's house are many mansions: If it were not so I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you" (John 14:1, 2).

Mrs. Florence Corson
Ron and Linda Corson
Melissa, Chad, Rhonda,
and AnnaMarie
Randy and Cheryl Corson
Jason and Steven
Rick and Sharon Corson
Kyle and Kody

Grand Rapids, Michigan

RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The Adult Bible Study of Southwest PRC expresses Christian sympathy to our leader, Rev. R. Cammenga, and his wife Rhonda, in the loss of her father,

MR. CHARLES DE JONG.

May we rejoice together in the words of I John 3:2: "Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him: for we shall see him as he is."

Steve Kuiper, Vice-President
Lisa Langerak, Secretary

TEACHER NEEDED!

The Protestant Reformed Christian School of South Holland will need a teacher for the seventh grade during the second semester of the 1995-1996 school year. Persons interested in this opening should apply in writing or call the administrator, Lamm Lubbers, at (708) 333-9197.

RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The Council of Southwest Protestant Reformed Church expresses sincere sympathy to fellow members and to their families:

Rev. and Mrs. Cammenga and their family in the loss of a father and grandfather,

MR. CHARLES DE JONG.

Elder Darrel Huiskens and his family in the loss of a sister,

MISS BETH HUISKEN.

Elder Kenneth Schipper and Deacon Steven Kuiper and their families in the loss of a father and grandfather,

MR. ALFRED POLL.

May they find comfort in these words: "Wait on the Lord: be of good courage, and he shall strengthen thine heart: Wait I say on the Lord" (Psalm 27:14).

William DeKraker, Vice-President
Clare Kuiper, Clerk

RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The Senior Mr. and Mrs. Society of Southwest PR Church expresses Christian sympathy to its fellow members, Mr. and Mrs. Darrell Huiskens, in the death of his sister,
BETH HUISKEN.

"For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us" (Romans 8:18).

Rod Kreuzer, Vice-President
Marie DeYoung, Secretary

RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The Jr. Adult Bible Study Group of First PRC expresses sincere sympathy to fellow members Randy and Cheryl Corson and Rick and Sharon Corson in the loss of their father,
MR. WILLIAM CORSON.

May they find comfort in the words of Revelation 21:4: "And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away."

Rev. J. Slopsema, President
Pam VanPutten, Secretary

RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The Mary-Martha Society of Hope PR Church of Redlands, CA expresses its heartfelt sympathy to Estella VanUffelen, Beth VanUffelen, Chris McClaury and families in the death of their mother, grandmother, and great-grandmother,
EFFIE KRIKKE.

"Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints" (Psalm 116:15).

Pastor Arie denHartog, President
Audrey VanVoorthuysen, Vice-all

RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The Adult Bible Society of Peace Protestant Reformed Church in Lansing, IL expresses their sincere sympathy to Ernie Medema and family in the sudden loss of their wife, mother, and grandmother,
GRACE MEDEMA.

May they find comfort in the words of Jesus in John 14:2-3: "In my Father's house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also."

Rev. S. Houck, Pres.
Barbara Poortinga, Sec.

RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The Senior Mr. and Mrs. Society of Southwest PR Church expresses its heartfelt sympathy to Rev. Ron and Rhonda Cammenga and children in the death of their father and grandfather,
MR. CHARLES DE JONG.

"Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also" (John 14:1-3).

Darrell Huiskens, President
Marie DeYoung, Secretary

NOTICE!!

Classis East will meet in regular session on Wednesday, January 10, 1996, at the Southeast Protestant Reformed Church, Grand Rapids, MI. Material for this session must be in the hands of the Stated Clerk by December 13, 1995.

Jon J. Huiskens
Stated Clerk

Conference on Reformed Church Government Tapes available

In September the Seminary sponsored a Conference on Reformed Church Government. The four speeches, given by the faculty of the Seminary and Dr. Morton Smith (professor of Biblical and Systematic Theology in Greenville Presbyterian Theological Seminary in Greenville, South Carolina), are available on audio cassette and VHS video cassette. The four lectures were:

The Biblical Basis of Reformed Church Government,

by Prof. Robert Decker;

The Autonomy of the Local Church,

by Prof. Herman Hanko;

The Hodge-Thornwell Debate Over Church Polity in the 1800s,

by Dr. Morton Smith;

The Authority of the Major Assemblies,

by Prof. David Engelsma.

The prices (which include postage) are \$3.00 for each of the audio cassettes and \$6.00 for each of the video cassettes.

They may be ordered by contacting the
Protestant Reformed Seminary
4949 Ivanrest Ave.
Grandville, MI 49418
(Telephone: 616-531-1490).