



# *THE* **STANDARD BEARER**

**A Reformed  
Semi-Monthly  
Magazine**

**It is most important, especially at the dawn of a new year, that we are reminded that we are pilgrims and strangers on the earth. We are only passing through, for our citizenship and our real home are in heaven.**

See "Entering the New Year" — p. 147

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In This Issue ...

Start with the meditation, appropriate to the beginning of a new year. "If the Lord will, we shall live, and do this, or that." The "condition of James." This holds for the work and witness of the *Standard Bearer* too. And does not Rev. Cornelius Hanko remind us all of the reason why we are alive in 1996? "... that we may serve in our own small way toward the coming of His kingdom and the glory of His Name."

Mr. Gordon Schipper, who himself has served in the office of deacon, gives good instruction to the church as to the nature of the office of deacon and as to the qualifications of those men who may serve in the office (see "The Office of Deacon: Qualifications and Responsibilities").

In his explanation of the Reformed doctrine of creation, Rev. Steven Key addresses the issue of the days of Genesis 1. This is an aspect of the creation account that would-be defenders of biblical creation usually studiously avoid. They suggest that the length of the days can safely be left an open question without compromising the doctrine of creation. Read "Creation's Time Frame."

Attorney James Lanting keeps us abreast of court decisions that bear on Christianity and the church. The decision in view "lends credence," writes Lanting, "to the contention held by many evangelical constitutional scholars who argue that our federal courts are badly misinterpreting the Establishment Clause by requiring government hostility toward religious practice." This, in our rubric, "Church and State."

Do not overlook the "Letters" column.

If the Lord will, in this and following issues, the *SB* will faithfully set forth, explain, and defend the creedal Reformed faith — the faith of Scripture — in A.D. 1996.

—DJE



# Entering the New Year

*"Go to now, ye that say, Today or tomorrow we will go into such a city, and continue there a year, and buy and sell, and get gain. Whereas ye know not what shall be on the morrow. For what is your life? It is even a vapor, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away. For that ye ought to say, If the Lord will, we shall live, and do this, or that."*

James 4:13-15

Go to now, ye that say....

James sometimes, as here, uses rather strong language. He seems disappointed with us. It is as if he wants to say, "What ails you? Do you not realize how spiritually wrong, even sinful, you are when you talk like that?"

We stand at the beginning of a new year, the year of our Lord one thousand nine hundred and ninety-six, just four years from the turn of the century. At this point of our earthly pilgrimage we do well to take note of the warning Scripture gives us here.

Our text is virtually a parable about a certain man who has been doing a lot of thinking and planning. He has made up his mind that he is ready to pack up his belongings and move to another city. There at this new location he will set up a business. He is absolutely confident that this is the thing to do, for he is sure of financial success.

He could be any of us, including you and me.

How long was I and were you awake this morning before we felt we should bring all the needs, cares, and problems of the day before the throne of grace to seek God's guidance? Often we make our plans for the day without asking the Lord's approval and blessing. We seem confident that we can manage very well on our own.

We make plans for a trip or for a vacation, or even for weightier matters, without consulting the Lord about it. Only after all our plans are made do we ask the Lord to bless them.

Some of the big decisions that affect our whole future and the future of our families are made while seeking very little, if any, guidance from the Almighty.

Young people make some of the biggest decisions of a lifetime, decisions which will determine their entire future, and yet this is often done with little thought of prayer for guidance and blessing. Such decisions as whether to attend college and where, what future vocation to seek, who will make a proper life mate, and what is my responsibility in the church, are all matters that determine a person's entire future, both for time and for eternity. Yet prayer for light and wisdom is often sorely lacking.

We treat our God as we regard a doctor. It is nice to know that He is always on beck and call, but only in emergencies do we call upon Him to come to our aid. When we are back to normalcy God is again for-

gotten, hardly receiving an expression of thanks.

In many ways we live and talk as if we have control of our lives, as if even the future is in our hands.

Go to now, ye that say.... Is it not time for you to do a bit of quiet reflection?



James reminds us on these holy pages of God's Word that when we live and talk that way we are boasting in sinful pride. Such boasting is vain, "Whereas ye know not what shall be on the day of tomorrow."

Let us face it, we sin when we take matters into our own hands and make plans for the future as if that future were under our control. That is not mere thoughtlessness. It is sin before the face of the Most High God. In fact, it is the sin of paradise, the evil desire to be as God. This we must confess!

We must learn that we are dependent creatures, who exist in the palm of God's hand. Each moment of our existence we receive our life, our breath, and our being from the hand of the Almighty. Only according to His will do we live from moment to moment.

We make plans for the day, for the week, or even for longer periods of time, little considering that these plans can never be realized unless God directs our way accordingly.

Often God touches our lives with the very tip of His finger, and we are brought to a halt. In fact, God may stop us in our tracks and change our entire future in a split second.

---

*Rev. Hanko is a minister emeritus in the Protestant Reformed Churches.*



Think of what happens in an automobile accident. Man plans, but God determines his way!

For we are children of time, who live from moment to moment, not knowing the day of tomorrow.

God has wisely hung a veil before our future. We can take but one step at a time. We can live but one day at a time. And sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof.

The obvious implication is that our great God has the future in His hands. He forcefully reminds that by His almighty power He upholds and governs all things according to His eternal counsel and purpose. He brings the cold, the snow, and the storms of winter. He sends warm spring breezes, gives seed to the sower, supplies us with His rains and His sunshine. He provides the warmth of summer and causes the crops to produce food for man and beast. He alone gives us each day our daily bread.

Our heavenly Father determined our parents, our time and place of birth, the span of our lives, and all that happens from day to day. He gives us our place in our families, in the church, and in the midst of this present world. We are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto those good works which God has before determined for us to do that we should walk in them. He uses us to serve His purpose unto the coming of His kingdom.

Tomorrow is not in your hands and mine, but in the hands of the wise and almighty God, who is our heavenly Father in Christ Jesus, whose counsel stands and who does all His good pleasure.

We walk at His hand, one step at a time. And as we walk He leads us to our eternal home with Him in glory!



"What is your life? It is but a

vapor, which appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away."

The man described in our text is purely materialistic. He thinks only of carrying out his business and becoming rich and prosperous. He seeks only earthly, carnal success.

*We sin  
when we take  
matters  
into our own  
hands  
and make plans  
for the future  
as if that future  
were under  
our control.*

Notice, he plans to move to another city. Did he investigate whether there is a church there that bears the marks of the true church? Did he inquire about a good Christian school for his children? Does he know whether this is a proper environment for his family? It seems all this is forgotten.

Is our sole ambition centered in this passing world? Often we live as if this life is all that counts. We live only for the present. We want all this, yes, but when we die we like to go to heaven.

Scripture stresses here, even as in the entire Word of God, that our life on earth is but a vapor, lasting a moment. Like the flower of the field we wither and die. We are here today, but soon our place knows us no more.

We walk in the midst of death. The curse of sin rests upon us, and its bitter consequences are evident in our lives. From the moment we are born until we breathe our last we experience sufferings, pains, anxiety, cares, and numerous problems. The child of God realizes this life is not his final goal. This world is not his home. All this is but a preparation for his real life still to come.

It is most important, especially at the dawn of a new year, that we are reminded that we are pilgrims and strangers on the earth. We are only passing through, for our citizenship and our real home are in heaven.

Our heavenly Father has redeemed us with the blood of His dear Son, and given us as new creatures our place in His church and kingdom, that we may serve in our own small way toward the coming

of His kingdom and the glory of His Name. What makes our life worth while is that we seek the things above.

Living by faith we can confidently say: "Thou hast holden me by Thy right hand. Thou shalt guide me with Thy counsel, and afterward receive me in glory!"



"For that ye ought to say, If the Lord will, I shall live, and do this, or that."

Evidently our times have changed. Not so many years ago it was a common practice among believers to include this limitation to any future plans: "if the Lord wills" or "the Lord willing." The announcements on church bulletins also often included the letters, D.V., that is, *Deo Volente*, another way of saying, "The Lord willing."

Were our forefathers more God-conscious than we are today? Did they realize their dependency upon God more than we do? Is that what mothers had in mind when they taught their children their evening prayer: "Now I lay me down to sleep, I pray Thee, Lord, my soul to keep. If I should die before I wake, I pray Thee, Lord, my soul to take"?

Deeply dependent upon our God we must learn to say: "If the Lord will, I shall live!" The Lord gives us our allotted days, in order that we as members of His family may serve in our small way toward the coming of His kingdom and the glory of His Name.

Our will must be completely subservient to the wise and good will of our heavenly Father. At all times we must be ready to say: "Have Thine own way, Lord. Thou art the Potter, I am the clay." We must be as fully devoted to Him as are the angels that minister before the throne.

That requires prayer, much prayer, constant prayer, a praying without ceasing.

God's kingdom must come, and you and I are instruments in God's



hand toward the coming of His wide and vast dominion in the new creation.

Come what may, upon that kingdom we fix our blessed hope, in order that the ever glorious,

blessed, adorable Name of our God may receive all the praise, world without end!

For God's is the kingdom, His is the power, His is the glory forever and ever!

May that be our deepest ambition also in the coming year! We do not enter this year alone, but we enter it with our God! □

## Editorials

# On Behalf of Our Schools

The Federation of Protestant Reformed Christian Schools has undertaken a project that promises to be of great worth for our schools. In the nature of the case, the project is of immediate interest to those in the Western Michigan area. The benefits will eventually extend to our other schools.

In Western Michigan, school boards, parents, and all with a heart for the covenant, as well as teachers and would-be teachers, should take lively interest in this activity.

The project is an academic course that has been specially created for Protestant Reformed teachers and for college students who intend to teach in the Protestant Reformed schools.

The course is called "Seminar on the Principles and Practices of Reformed Education." The course description states:

A course designed to introduce students to the history of and theological foundations for Reformed Christian education and the principles that have driven this movement. Particular emphasis will be given to the idea of parent-controlled schools as they have developed in the United States. Other topics stressed will be the relationship between faith and learning, the idea of a Reformed world and life view and the characteristics and ex-

pectations of Christian teachers. The course will conclude with applications of the principles of Reformed Christian education to the workplace — to the school as institution, to the classroom, to the student, to the parents, to the office of the principal/administrator. The course will be conducted in seminar format.

Although the course will present the principles of Reformed Christian education, specifically Protestant Reformed Christian education, a main purpose will be the implementation of these principles. The description of the course concludes:

A critical assignment for this course will be a presentation ... which will demonstrate an understanding of the mission, goals, and objectives of the Reformed Christian school and how this makes a difference in our teaching.

Main topics to be treated include the history of Reformed Christian education; the Reformers and education; principles of Reformed Christian education; education as rearing; mission/goals/objectives of Reformed Christian education; examination of the mission statements of different schools, Christian and secular; who is the teacher?; and the Christian concept of self. In connection with the principles of Reformed

education, the course will consider such truths as the Christian schools and the covenant; the Christian schools and the Bible; and the Christian schools and the confessions.

The Federation of Protestant Reformed Christian Schools has contracted with Hope College in Holland, Michigan to provide the course. This means that the course can be taken for credit. Especially the college students who take the course will appreciate this. One has already arranged with a state university that credits from this course will be applied to the student's master's level program at that university.

The instructor will be Mr. Jon Huiskens, Dean of Academic Services and Registrar at Hope College and elder in the Grandville PRC. Mr. Huiskens is himself an experienced teacher.

The Federation is underwriting the cost of the course, so that there will be no tuition for those who take the course.

For the convenience of the teachers and students who will be taking the course, classes will be held at the Protestant Reformed Seminary in Grandville, Michigan.

Classes will be held on alternate Wednesday evenings through May, beginning on January 17, 1996. Each class will meet from 6:30 - 9:30 PM.



The course will conclude with a week of concentrated work in July or August.

Especially the younger teachers in the Protestant Reformed Christian schools in Western Michigan ought to make every effort to take the course. Our school boards should strongly urge these teachers to avail themselves of the course. All young men and women attending colleges in the area who intend to teach in the Protestant Reformed Christian schools should enroll. Parents should encourage this.

Under the blessing of the God of the covenant, the course will benefit the teachers, the children they teach, and the precious covenant-cause of Protestant Reformed Christian education.

Our teachers are not presently able to receive their training in a college that is committed to the principles that make our separate schools a necessity. In the existing Reformed colleges, there is a serious falling away from the fundamentals of the Reformed faith that undergird Christian education. Think only of the

sovereignty of God in the Lord Jesus Christ, of the truth of creation and providence, and of the antithesis. More and more, our teachers are trained in secular colleges.

This must be a concern, not only to the covenant community that look to these men and women for the teaching of the children of the covenant but also to these men and women themselves. There is a serious lack in their academic training.

They must — and do! — themselves bring the principles of the faith to bear on their teaching as they have learned it at home and in the church. But the course being offered will certainly help them.

There is the danger in Reformed education that the great covenant work of the schools begins to run on the capital of commitment to principles of former generations. The Protestant Reformed schools had their beginning in the fiery love of parents, teachers, and others for the great, grand, distinctive truths of the covenantal Reformed faith. As time passes and new generations

arise, it is a threat that knowledge of and even concern for the principles wane. The schools continue to exist and may even flourish physically. But at the heart of the movement, zeal for the Reformed principles cools.

This is an evil which, if not corrected, would bring the whole work to ruin.

The course can serve also as a safeguard against this evil, as regards the teachers.

We should have a similar class for us parents.

There is still time to enroll. Write Hope College, c/o Mr. Jon Huiskens, P.O. Box 9000, Holland, Michigan 49422-9000. Or call (616)-395-7760.

The course is aimed at teachers in the Protestant Reformed Christian schools. I am sure that others who desire to please Christ by teaching according to Reformed truth will be welcome.

Is there any reason why the classroom should not be full?

— DJE

## On Behalf of Reformed Theology

*Dutch Reformed theology.  
In English.*

A good cause that readers of the *Standard Bearer* should be aware of and can help.

From the Board of the Dutch Reformed Translation Society, the *SB* has received the following "press release."

Twelve men in Western Michigan have established the Dutch Reformed Translation Society. Laymen, pastors, and academicians, all are familiar with the literature of

the Dutch Reformed tradition and are committed to making the best of it available in English.

The founders are members of five different Reformed denominations. Among them are professors on three different seminary faculties. The board members are united in their appreciation of a common Dutch Reformed theological legacy.

The first project, already well underway, is the translation of Dr. Herman Bavinck's four-volume work on systematic or doctrinal the-

ology. Bavinck (1854-1921) was a contemporary and close associate of Abraham Kuyper and excelled Kuyper as a theologian. Bavinck's work is regarded as superior in many ways to the work of Louis Berkhof and G.C. Berkouwer, both of whom relied substantially on Bavinck. This translation, an \$80,000 project, will be the first complete translation of Bavinck's systematic theology.

The first publication will be a selection from Bavinck's work that deals with the doctrine of the last



things, or eschatology. It is due to appear in the spring of 1996. Baker Book House of Grand Rapids, MI is the publisher.

After completing the Bavinck project, the society will move on to other worthwhile devotional and doctrinal literature. Dutch Reformed theology, the board believes, offers the most mature and comprehensive development of the Calvinian or Reformed faith available, but has been kept from wider Christian readership by the relative obscurity of the Dutch language.

Membership in the society is open to all who pay a one-time membership fee of \$100. This assures members of newsletters on forthcoming projects as well as substantial discounts on pre-publication prices for all society projects. The address is Dutch Reformed Translation Society, P.O. Box 7083, Grand Rapids, MI 49510.

The editor of the *SB* is a founding member of the Society and a member of the Board of Directors.

The work of this Society is deserving of the financial support of the readers of the *SB*. All are interested in books that explain and defend the Reformed faith. All are desirous to see such books circulate everywhere in the world.

The Dutch Reformed Translation Society (DRTS) intends to make available in English for the first time some of the wealth of Reformed truth that now lies buried in the Dutch language, inaccessible to all who cannot read Dutch.

Although the Society has begun with Herman Bavinck's monumental dogmatics, *Gereformeerde Dogmatiek (Reformed Dogmatics)*, and intends to translate other theological works, plans are to translate also certain works of a more practical and devotional nature.

The firstfruits of what the Society hopes will be a rich harvest will appear in the spring of 1996, God willing. The section in Bavinck on the Reformed doctrine of the last

things will be published as an attractive paperback by Baker Book House of Grand Rapids. In time, the entire *Gereformeerde Dogmatiek* is to appear, in English, in several matching, hardcover volumes.

Baker will publish all the works translated by the Society.

How can readers of the *SB* support and promote this worthwhile venture?

First, many could join the Society by contributing a one-time membership fee of \$100. In this way they become part of the venture. To a large extent, the Society's work will depend on these memberships. Members will be kept informed of developments. They will also receive substantial discounts on all books translated by the Society.

Second, some might also think this project worthy of substantial gifts — hundreds or thousands of dollars. The Society asks that the wealthy, businesses, and foundations consider its work in their giving.

Third, all can buy the books of Reformed theology translated by the Society, beginning with the volume of Reformed eschatology forthcoming next spring.

All gifts, including membership donations, are tax-deductible. The Society is officially incorporated with the Michigan Department of Commerce. It has been granted tax-exempt status by the IRS and can receive charitable contributions.

The translation of Dutch books is costly. Translating Bavinck's entire dogmatics will be an \$80,000 project. Some \$70,000 still needs to be raised. Most of the expense is the wages of the professional translator.

Memberships and contributions should be sent to:

Dutch Reformed  
Translation Society  
P.O. Box 7083

Grand Rapids, MI 49510

Informational brochures on the Society, including its purpose and the present Board, are available without charge from the same ad-

dress.

The purpose reads, in part:

The purpose of the Dutch Reformed Translation Society is to sponsor the translation and facilitate the publication in English of important Reformed theological and religious literature published in the Dutch language.

The members of the Society believe that the Dutch Reformed tradition has produced many works that deserve much wider distribution than the limited accessibility of the Dutch language makes possible. The writings selected are recognized classics that would be widely appreciated by English-speaking Reformed believers around the world. They would also reveal the spiritual and theological genius of this tradition to Christians of other backgrounds.

The ultimate goal is to spread and to strengthen the Reformed faith....

On behalf of Dutch Reformed theology, never before in English.

A good cause. □

— DJE

### *Lord, Teach Me*

Lord, teach me how to pray  
To praise and honor Thee,  
Extolling all Thy virtues,  
Thy grace, boundless, and free.

Thy glory fills the heav'ns;  
Thy wonders crown the earth;  
Thy ways, past understanding;  
Thy name, unmatched in worth.

Thou hast made in Thy image  
Mankind, a faint reflection  
Of Thine own attributes.  
Immeasurable perfection!

*Thelma Westra*



## ■ Singing Psalms

I would like to express my appreciation for your editorials of May 1 and June 1, 1995 entitled "Music in the Church." These articles deserve careful reading, so that the principle that underlies them, namely that the Psalms constitute the church's songbook till the end of time, is clearly understood. We sing them, not first of all because it is required of us by the Church Order, but because it is required of us by God Himself.

I do however have a question. In my study of the Psalm/Hymn question I have read that the original word-order in Ephesians 5:19 and Colossians 3:16 is "psalms and hymns and songs spiritual" — the idea being that the adjective "spiritual" (that is, Spirit-breathed, or inspired) qualifies psalms and hymns and songs. Is this correct? And, if so, does that not provide additional evidence that God's command is that we sing the Psalms, since they alone are *inspired*?

God's command that inspired songs be sung in the worship services was taken very seriously by the apostolic and patristic church. And that was at a time when, as can now be proven through the Dead Sea Scrolls, many uninspired hymns were already in existence. Those hymns did later find their way into the worship services. Hardly a coincidence that that was soon followed by acceptance of false doctrine and unbiblical worship. A cause and effect relationship is difficult to prove, but I found it interesting to note that students of the Reformation have observed that in many places where the *Psalter* preceded the actual Reformation, and where people began singing Psalms in the homes and fields, there the Reformation proved more likely to prosper. Can there be any doubt

that such power of the Psalms lies in the fact that they are God-breathed?

Psalms, as products of the Spirit, are profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, that the man of God may be furnished unto all good works. Is not this the reason that we are commanded to sing from the only songbook given to the church? And do we not also run the risk of losing the "little Bible" when, in our schools and homes, we find ourselves using more and more hymns?

This is not to say that our 1912 version of the Presbyterian *Psalter* is above criticism. There is in fact room for improvement in some songs both in music and poetic structure, to make them more singable and closer to the King James Version of the Bible. In the late 40s a committee was appointed by synod to work on *Psalter* improvement. That attempt was later aborted when the committee attempted to introduce good hymns. Is there something to be said for resurrecting that attempt at the synodical level — in an attempt to make of the songbook of our churches a closer versification of the original, inspired Word?

John VanBaren  
Grandville, MI

## Response:

Grammatically, the adjective "spiritual" both in Ephesians 5:19 and in Colossians 3:16 modifies "songs," not "psalms" or "hymns." The adjective has the feminine ending corresponding to the feminine noun "songs." The other two nouns are masculine. As far as the text is concerned, therefore, "spiritual songs" is distinguished from "psalms" and "hymns."

The 1944 synod of the Protestant Reformed Churches (PRC) appointed a committee "to purge the

*Psalter* of doctrinal errors and if possible to make recommendation for some revision" (Art. 53). Out of this committee came a request to the synod of 1949 "to work on versifications, as literal as possible, of Scripture passages dealing with Christ's birth, crucifixion, resurrection, Pentecost, etc., and incorporate it (*sic*) in the new *Psalter*" (*Acts of Synod*, 1949, Art. 27). This, of course, was a request to revise the *Psalter* into a *Psalter Hymnal* and the PRC out of exclusive psalmody. This history should caution one who desires that the churches remain a psalm-singing denomination: "*pas op!*"

Referring to our *Psalter* as the "1912 version of the Presbyterian *Psalter*," as is done more often of late, strikes me as odd. We do not refer to our Bibles as "our 1611 version of the Church of England Bible" or to our creed as "our 1563 German Reformed Catechism." Why is not the *Psalter* that the PRC have used with profit for some 70 years, and that they are using at present with enthusiasm, simply our *Psalter*?

— Ed.

## ■ Called to Indoctrinate

The "Reformation Issue" of the *Standard Bearer* (October 15, 1995) was one of the best ever. A pregnancy of Reformed orthodoxy pervaded every article, and every article in turn dealt with the core of the Reformed faith. I confess to having been immensely encouraged by those doctrinal fibres, which, when woven together, create the distinctive and attractive position of the PRC.

Rev. Cornelius Hanko's "Where We Stand Today" dealt excellently with the most important matter of all, the future of the distinctive doctrinal stand of the PRC. He asks: "Has the pendulum swung too far



the other way [from indoctrination toward contemporary, social matters]? Are our people being as thoroughly indoctrinated as they should be?" Of course, not being a member of the PRC, I cannot answer these questions. But, certainly, while members of the PRC must ask (and answer) such queries, in the final analysis ministers must honestly interrogate themselves on this matter. Is God's grace particular? *Yes!* Is common grace a myth? *Most definitely!* Is the "well-meant offer" erroneous? *Yes — it is full-blown Arminianism.* If so, the onus is on ministers to "indoctrinate" continually their congregations and reading public.

Many of us in the British Isles have recently come to hold doctrines

similar to yours, mainly through the polemical writings of Herman Hoeksema and others, for which we are thankful. Our regret is that we were not part of that great heritage from birth: common grace and the well-meant offer were part of our upbringing. The unenthusiastic cannot be enthused by gimmicks or innovations: Hoeksema was correct in saying that the people needed "Doctrine" in the first place, in the second place, and in the third place. Therefore, the antithesis (obliterated by common grace) must be maintained — namely: "... saying Yes to God and all that He requires, and saying No to what God forbids, and to all that opposes God" (Rev. Dykstra, p. 36).

The *Standard Bearer* might con-

sider reprinting more doctrinal and polemical articles by Herman Hoeksema. Hoeksema's crisp and incomparably Reformed writings that led me to seek a truly Calvinistic theology will doubtless invigorate others, giving both "indoctrination" and historical perspective. We desperately need those voluminous writings, locked away in Dutch, to be translated, for the advancement not only of the PRC, but of the entire body Reformed — for example, *A Power of God Unto Salvation, or Grace Not an Offer*, already begun by the late Prof. H.C. Hoeksema. Who will begin this great task? Will you? Please begin now! □

Raymond Kemp

Co. Cavan

Republic of Ireland

Search the Scriptures

Rev. Carl Haak

## John 6:22-40

# Jesus' Sermon on the Bread of Life (1)

This memorable and beautiful sermon on Christ as the Bread of Life is directly connected to the miracle of the feeding of the five thousand. For the Jews this was the greatest miracle they had ever seen, and in their carnal zeal they see Him as the perfect king, able to supply them with earthly bread. The Lord wasted no time in announcing to them that He can be and will be the *Bread of Life* to His own, only through His death on the cross for their sins. The whole passage centers in one

point: What kind of Bread is He? When the Lord teaches that He is the indispensable spiritual bread, and that He is that bread by a wonder of sovereign election and gracious atonement for the sins of His own, the Jews are offended, and many walked no more with Him.

A few points ought to be kept clearly before us in this study.

1. This is a *great turning point* in the Lord's ministry. This chapter shows Jesus' fall from the height of popularity to public scorn. The transition is made in one day in Capernaum. It was not that Jesus changed (Heb. 13:8), but the conception of the multitude was altered. Men want Him to be the Messiah

who will satisfy their physical needs. When they are made to understand that the real Jesus is come to save His people from guilt, corruption, and the misery of sin, they turn their backs upon Him.

2. What lay at the bottom of this rejection was *the Lord's teaching on the sovereignty of God's grace in Christ*. When the Galileans hear that they cannot come to Him unless the Father draws them, that unless He die for their sins they have no life in them, that He is the bread sent down from God for those elected of the Father — in short, when they hear that salvation is entirely of grace — they are offended in Him. This is always the sharp edge of the gospel.

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The Lord's words humble us. Our salvation can only be of His will and work, not our own. It can be only by grace that we embrace these truths as the sure wonder of our salvation.

3. This sermon, therefore, contains *the very heart of the gospel, which is nothing less than T.U.L.I.P.* Our study of it ought to be eager, humbling, and extremely joyful. It forever blasts the false hope of an earthly kingdom and at the same time draws out of Christ's true disciples the confession: "Thou hast the words of eternal life."

### Outline

1. The Jews search for Jesus (vv. 22-25).
2. The Lord rebukes their motive for seeking Him and instructs as to what the motive must be (vv. 26, 27).
3. Jesus is the true Bread sent down from heaven (vv. 28-40).
  - a. The work of God is to believe on Him whom He sent (vv. 28, 29).
  - b. The manna was a sign of the true Bread which the Father giveth (vv. 30-34).
  - c. Jesus is the Bread of Life (vv. 35-40).
    - 1) Those believing in Him shall never hunger.

- 2) To believe in Him is possible only by divine election and irresistible calling.
- 3) Those believing in Him will be kept and raised up at the last day.

### Questions

1. Read through the entire discourse and show how Jesus teaches the doctrines of sovereign grace, the five points of Calvinism (T.U.L.I.P.).
2. Explain why the people were curious about *how* Jesus had arrived in Capernaum. What is their *motive* at this point in "seeking for Jesus" (v. 24 and v. 26)?
3. Verse 27: What does Jesus *forbid*? *command*? *promise*? What does it mean that He is *sealed* by the Father?
4. What prompted the question the Jews have in verse 28? What do they mean by it?
5. Does verse 29 teach that faith is a work? In what sense is faith the work that pleases God?
6. Why do they ask for a "sign" in verse 30? What had Jesus said that in their judgment now required the verification of a sign? What kind of a sign do they seek?
7. What are the Jews saying in verse 31? How did they conceive of the manna that was given in the wilderness? Who did they think gave it to them?
8. From the Lord's words in verses 32, 33, explain the significance of the manna in the wilderness and how it was a type of Christ.
9. Why is bread such a fitting figure of Christ? What does it mean that those who come to Him shall never hunger or thirst?
10. What bread are the Jews asking for in verse 34? How is this done today? How do we often ask for the same?
11. Show from the verses 36-40:
  - a. The divinity of Christ
  - b. Eternal and gracious election
  - c. Irresistible grace
  - d. The preservation of the saints
  - e. Faith as the only way of salvation
12. Discuss the comfort that is given in the Lord's words: "him that cometh to me, I will in no wise cast out."
13. What does it mean to be raised up at the last day? How does Jesus show that this is the great end or goal God has in mind in our salvation?
14. How are these truths of God's sovereign and gracious salvation your personal and unmovable comfort? □

## Apples of Gold

### Another Year

Another year has just begun —  
Another year my earthy race to run.  
How shall I run? What is my goal?  
Where shall I find rest for my soul?

*"I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus."*

Philippians 3:14

Another year — again a year of war —  
A year to fight the evil at my door.  
How do I fight? What is my strategy?  
What my protection? What refuge is for me?

*"Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil."*

Ephesians 6:11

Another year — a year begun in prayer,  
A year in which I know my Savior's there.  
How can I pray? What words shall I now say?  
My feeble efforts — Are they heard night and day?

*"Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered."*

Romans 8:26

Another year — a year to praise our Lord,  
A year to glorify His name in sweet accord.  
How can I praise? Can these lips utter laud?  
Can sinful man praise the thrice-holy God?

*"O Lord, open thou my lips; and my mouth shall shew forth thy praise."*

Psalm 51:15  
Thelma Westra



# The Office of Deacon: Qualifications and Responsibilities

*"Wherefore, brethren, look ye out among you seven men of honest report, full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business."*

Acts 6:3

Once each year the men currently holding office in our churches meet together as council and consider who among the men in the congregation best meet the qualifications for deacons as mentioned in Acts 6 and in I Timothy 3. The office bearers consider these qualifications in light of the unique duties Christ calls deacons to perform. The church has gleaned from the Scriptures its understanding of this office and has expressed the responsibilities of deacons in our Church Order and in our Form of Ordination of Elders and Deacons. The congregation must prayerfully consider the men nominated and vote for those whom they think to be best suited for the office. In this way Christ calls the men whom He wants to represent Him as the merciful High Priest in a local congregation. Electing good deacons is necessary for the spiritual health of a congregation. We must take the calling seriously. We must review the qualifications and responsibilities of the office of deacon on a regular basis.

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John à Lasco was pastor of a refugee congregation in London during the time of persecution that followed the Reformation. Under his leadership the church developed a rich understanding of the office of deacon. It is instructive to note the procedure for electing deacons in his congregation. P.Y. DeJong in his *The Ministry of Mercy for Today* states on page 65,

The consistory would prescribe a special day of fasting and prayer on which the minister was to preach twice, explaining the nature and function of this holy office. Thereupon the congregation joined in prayers for the wisdom and guidance of God. Within the next week, the ballots of the members were collected at the homes by the elders. From those designated by the members, the consistory elected the necessary number.

Though our churches do not follow the formal aspects of this procedure, we can learn something from the great importance which the Reformed churches historically have placed on the office of deacon.

When instituting the office of deacon, the apostles called the congregation to consider the qualifications for the office in the same breath they used to indicate the reason for the office (Acts 6:3). This points out that the apostles were not looking merely for assistance with some administrative and logistical details. The apostles realized that they were

not doing justice to a particular aspect of the office of Christ in the church. Christ's care of His poor required men who made this work their peculiar business. The apostles therefore set forth the qualifications they felt were necessary for those who would represent Christ as He cared for the poor in their fellowship. This was emphatically a spiritual calling with spiritual qualifications, namely, being of honest report and being full of the Holy Ghost and of wisdom.

The apostle Paul gives an extensive treatment of the requirements for officebearers in I Timothy 3. After listing the qualifications for ruling elder, Paul states the characteristics of good deacons. They must "be grave, not doubletongued, not given to much wine, not greedy of filthy lucre; holding the mystery of faith in a pure conscience." The apostle continues by stating that the deacons must "be the husbands of one wife, ruling their children and their own houses well." The Church Order and Form of Ordination summarize the calling of deacons. Articles 25 and 26 of the Church Order maintain that "the office peculiar to the Deacons is diligently to collect alms and other contributions of charity ... and faithfully and diligently to distribute the same to the poor as their needs may require it." These articles also call the deacons to visit and comfort the distressed and to assist the poor, making use of institutions of mercy. The Form of Or-



dination gives similar instruction, as it notes the calling of deacons to be the diligent collection and preservation of the alms along with cheerful, discrete, and prudent distribution to objects of charity.

From the biblical qualifications and the church's understanding of their duties, we may say a few things about the men who make good deacons.

First of all, it is clear that the church must know the men whom they elect as officebearers. It is not enough simply to be satisfied that there is nothing evident that disqualifies a man from serving. If the only thing that one knows about a man is his name and that he attends church regularly, one has no basis yet for considering him to be qualified to hold one of the special offices. The church must know positively that a man satisfies the qualifications. This implies that prospective officebearers must be active in congregational life. Only in this way can a congregation know that a man is "full of the Holy Ghost." This activity includes participation in congregational meetings, fellowship after the worship services, and participation in the Bible-study societies.

The implication, really, is that everyone must be active in congregational life. How else do we get to know each other? Indeed, how else can we fulfill the injunction of the Heidelberg Catechism in Question and Answer 55 in its treatment of "the communion of saints," i.e., "every one must know it to be his duty, readily and cheerfully to employ his gifts, for the advantage and salvation of other members"?

That a man is full of the Holy Ghost will be evident in his knowledge of and attitude towards Scripture. It will also be evident in his prayers. We should note that a vital aspect of the deacon's work is to bring the Word and offer prayer. When the Church Order calls deacons to comfort the distressed, it means that deacons bring the com-

fort of the Word! They come with much more than mere consolation or platitudes, such as "every cloud has a silver lining." The Form of Ordination specifies that, along with the material gifts, deacons must bring "comfortable words from Scripture." Deacons must therefore have a broad familiarity with Scripture. They must lay hold of the principle that Christ Himself effectually speaks His Word in the hearts of His people as the deacons, as His official representatives, open the Scriptures. Men in the congregation must continually strive to acquire a thorough knowledge of the Bible so that they are prepared for this work should it please our Lord to call them to this office.

Closely related to the requirement that a man be full of the Holy Ghost is the characteristic of a deacon that he "holds the mystery of faith in a pure conscience." Deacons must be doctrinally sound. Here, also, it is not enough that doctrinal error be absent. It must be positively evident that a man is thoroughly Reformed. We must be assured that prospective deacons understand and maintain our Protestant Reformed distinctives. We should note that deacons sign the "Formula of Subscription," whereby they promise that they will "teach and faithfully defend the aforesaid doctrine (the Three Forms of Unity), without either directly or indirectly contradicting the same, by our public preaching or writing." We might be inclined to connect this requirement more to the office of elder than to that of deacon, but the apostle Paul mentions it specifically as a requirement for deacons. Perhaps it goes without saying that this applies to elders, and Scripture takes special care that we understand that this is a requirement for deacons as well.

Doctrinal soundness is a requirement for deacons because "mercy and truth are met together" (Ps. 85:10). Mercy is inseparable from the truth. Scripture uses the phrase

"mercy and truth" ten times. This phrase appears in the Psalms five times. In the Psalms, where this phrase appears, the psalmist is either offering a prayer of supplication to God, or he is extolling God for His virtues. Note the following opening lines: "Unto thee, O Lord, do I lift up my soul" (Ps. 25). "Hear my cry, O God" (Ps. 61). "Bow down thine ear, O Lord, hear me" (Ps. 86). "I will sing of the mercies of the Lord for ever" (Ps. 89). God is mercy and truth! These are virtues of God. This is the God of our salvation. Christ Himself clung to these virtues of God, as is evident from Psalm 40, where the Spirit of Christ inspired David to write in verse 11, "Let thy lovingkindness and thy truth continually preserve me." Deacons, as representatives of Christ, must reflect this in their doctrine and life. This is also very practical because it is the Reformed faith that is comforting to God's people. As Rev. Vandenberg noted in volume 32, page 358 of the *Standard Bearer*, true mercy leads God's people "in the way of truth, in which way is the attainment of the only blessedness." Deacons must be able to bring our beloved Reformed doctrines to bear on the situation of the poor and oppressed. In this way they show the mercies of Christ.

Acts 6 and I Timothy 3 stress that deacons must have an impeccable reputation in the church and in the community. They must be men of "honest report" and "not greedy of filthy lucre." The Form of Ordination stipulates that deacons "collect and preserve with the greatest fidelity and diligence, the alms and goods which are given to the poor." Deacons will be dealing with large sums of money. There must be no suspicion that a deacon has "sticky fingers"! To that end the deacons consistently handle the moneys, not individually, but as a diaconate. They exercise mutual supervision over each other in order that the integrity of the office never be questioned.

Deacons must be wise. Acts 6



states this explicitly. The Church Order clearly implies this when it requires "care that the alms are not misused." The Form of Ordination states that "discretion and prudence" are required to "bestow the alms only on objects of charity." Paul tells us that deacons must be "grave." Deacons must think carefully about situations. They must seek biblical solutions to problems. Their wisdom must not be the wisdom of this world, but the wisdom of Scripture. One of the marks of wisdom is the characteristic that a man humbly acknowledge that he does not have the best understanding of every situation by himself, but that he must seek the collective wisdom of the diaconate. Specifically, the decision of whether or not to grant financial assistance requires sound judgment on the part of deacons.

Much more could be said about

the qualifications of deacons, but rather than making an extensive checklist, we could better sum up the requirements with the one word, "merciful." It is the office of mercy. Are care and concern for the household of faith clearly displayed in his walk? Is this same care seen in his wife and family? Can you envision the man bringing the Word to you when you are aged, a widow or widower, alone or distressed? Can you picture the man opening the Scriptures in a poverty-stricken household in such a way that the family will testify that Christ is indeed merciful? Do you see the man tactfully dealing with a family who has developed financial distress due to poor stewardship? Are you confident that the man will be able to convey the biblical truth that "having food and raiment" we must be content? Do you believe that this man will point you to the spiritual

riches that are ours in Christ, through His atoning work? Would you want this man to lead you in prayer?

As we consider these qualifications, we must be impressed with the fact that good deacons are a gracious gift of Christ to His church. What a marvelous institution! manifold are the blessings which Christ merited on the cross. Not the least of these are faithful officebearers. As deacons and prospective deacons consider the qualifications, we are all humbled and confess that none of us is equal to this task of himself. We labor in the confidence that Christ will bless His Word, and we rejoice in the words of the apostle Paul, "For they that have used the office of a deacon well purchase to themselves a good degree, and great boldness in the faith which is in Christ Jesus" (I Tim. 3:13). □

*Taking Heed to the Doctrine*

*Rev. Steven Key*

## Creation's Time Frame

Having considered the magnificence of the Creator, and how He created, we have yet to consider the time element in His creative handiwork. How long did God take to form His creative handiwork?

We immediately state our answer on the basis of what we read in Genesis 1, and what is confirmed by many other Scripture references.

God performed His wonder work of creation in only six days. And those days are to be understood literally. They were, without question, twenty-four hour days just as we know the measure of a day.

### **The perspective of unbelieving science**

We don't seek to prove our position on the basis of science. Our position is simply biblical. We stand on the authority of God's Word.

But let's examine the perspective of science for a moment. Understand, one can only come to the position of an old earth — i.e., millions or billions of years old — if he rejects not only the Bible's account of a six-day creation, but also the biblical account of the Flood.

First of all, we must remember that God created a full-grown creation, and therefore a creation with the appearance of age. When God formed the plant world, He did not seed the ground and wait for things

to grow. When God called the animals forth, He did not bring them into existence by development from eggs, much less through a long process of evolution. He called all things into existence by the word of His power.

Creation was full-grown at the very time of its formation. When God made Adam, He did not make a baby. He created a man, and then the woman out of the man, both of whom were full-grown on the day of their creation.

In the very nature of the case, therefore, each element of the creation had the appearance of age — from man's perspective — on the very day it was created. The unbelieving scientist, in refusing to re-

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ceive the biblical account of God's creation, fails to take this into account.

Secondly, the one who denies the literal account of creation and the fall fails to recognize that the universe has been radically affected by the curse. Through the fall and the curse, the whole creation came under the bondage of corruption, as we read in Romans 8:19. Both the plant and the animal worlds were dramatically affected, as was apparently the soil itself.

Thirdly, we must remember that the Flood brought cataclysmic consequences to the earth, so much so that Peter, in II Peter 3, speaks of the world that once was and the world that is now. To deny the Flood as revealed in Genesis, chapters 6-8, is to involve oneself necessarily in misinterpretations during geological studies. (For more extensive consideration of the Flood, I refer the reader to the editorial of the September 15, 1995 issue of the *Standard Bearer*.)

The scientist who doesn't believe God's own account of creation and of the Flood cannot possibly come to the correct conclusion concerning the time frame of the creation and the approximate age of what is, relatively speaking, a very young earth.

But for those who stand on the authority of God's Word, there is sufficient scientific evidence to confirm their position.

The scientific evidences for a young earth are overwhelming, the argumentation of the evolutionists notwithstanding. The relatively recent eruption of the volcanic Mount St. Helens in the state of Washington is one example. That incident has provided explosive evidence which serves to confirm (I do not say "prove") the biblical creation account of six twenty-four hour days and a young earth, and it demolishes the dating practices of modern science.

The eruption that God wrought

in that volcano in 1980 is said to have had the explosive power of one Hiroshima-type bomb going off every second for nine hours straight. The lava flow of that volcano resulted in the formation of coal in rapidly deposited peat beds and sedimentary layers. Would one know how old such formations are, if he were to use the dating methods standard in modern science? They would appear to be millions of years old, although, in fact, they are only 15 years old!

Again, we can easily do without scientific evidence when it comes to dating the creation. We do not believe in a young earth because of scientific evidence.

In fact, we ought to remember, science cannot even study the creation as it was originally formed or existed prior to the Flood. The Mount St. Helens example mentioned above simply destroys the dating practices of modern science. It does not help us date the world.

But to stand on the foundation of the Bible is not to reject the sciences either.

We have a deep appreciation for the various fields of science, also teaching them *in the light of Scripture* to our children both in the homes and in our Christian day schools. We ought to study and observe God's creative handiwork. Our children should learn about the plant world, the animal world, and the many other branches of scientific studies. For as we observe God's creation, and as we study the sciences *with the spectacles of the Scripture*, as Calvin put it, then we will see all the more clearly the glory of our Creator and Redeemer.

But never may we subject the Word of God to the theories of men, and never may we elevate the sciences above the Scriptures. We do not believe in creation because of scientific proof, although the evidence abounds in support of Scripture's

creation account. We believe in creation and in the six-day creation account because it is given us in the Bible. *God*, who cannot lie, testifies of it.

### Six days

The Almighty Creator did His work in six days. He did not *need* twenty-four hour days. He did not *need* six days, in order to create the various realms of the creation. After all, He is *God*, who speaks and it is done! But the Bible tells us clearly and simply that God created in six days, and rested on the seventh day from all the work that He had done.

How did God do so much in so little time? I call your attention only to Psalm 33:9. "*He spake and it was done; he commanded, and it stood fast.*" *Powerfully, instantaneously* God accomplished His purpose.

His tool of creation was His own powerful, efficacious, creative Word. He spoke, and it was done!

"Let there be light.... Let there be a firmament.... Let the dry land appear.... Let the earth bring forth grass, the herb yielding seed, and the fruit tree yielding fruit after his kind.... Let there be lights in the firmament of the heaven.... Let the waters bring forth abundantly the moving creature that hath life, and fowl that may fly above the earth.... Let the earth bring forth the living creature after his kind."

"Let there be.... and it was so."

Yes, Scripture's creation account is unmistakably clear. We must bow before God's authority. "For in six days the LORD made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day." We read it in God's law. And so we also are called to labor for six days, and to rest on the sabbath day, as God did in the beginning.

Do you struggle with doubts concerning the *how* of creation? Have the teachings of the scientists caused you to question your own beliefs in a six-day creation?

Then there is one solution. Prayerfully and quietly and with a

*We believe  
in creation  
and in the  
six-day  
creation account  
because  
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God, who  
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willingness to listen, take your Bible in your hands and open it to Genesis 1.

We have no need to force a strained interpretation upon God's record of His own omnipotence, as do those who are enslaved to the appearance of scientific respectability. We don't have to twist the Scriptures in order to make them fit unproven scientific theories. The Bible is clear enough for our very small

children to understand. All we need is the childlike faith of the Christian.

*"By faith we understand."*

We understand. Faith, you see, is particular. Not all men will understand. The personal pronoun "we" refers to believers, elect in Christ Jesus, called unto salvation by the same powerful voice whereby He spoke and it was done, whereby

He commanded and it stood fast.

These things are hid from the wise and prudent, and revealed unto babes. For so it is God's eternal good pleasure.

But in understanding, we find the joyful song of the psalmist flooding our souls: "Great is the LORD, and greatly to be praised; and his greatness is unsearchable" (Ps. 145:3). □

*Contending for the Faith*

*Rev. Bernard Woudenberg*

## The Covenant – Just Leaving It There

The following letter was received in response to our recent articles:

Dear Editor:

I have some questions concerning Rev. Woudenberg's views on the covenant expressed in the *Standard Bearers* of Sept. 1/95, p. 493 and Oct. 1/95, p. 13. It is not at all clear to me how he understands the baptism of children born into a covenant home. Are they baptized as children in the covenant as heirs of the promise? Or does baptism only signify that they are members of God's church? Can we make such a distinction? Abraham circumcised not only his sons but all that belonged to his household. Were they circumcised because they were God's elect children, i.e., belonging to the Seed, that is, Christ, or because they belonged to God's covenant children? As I read Woudenberg he leaves this hanging.

As a young man I wondered what baptism meant for our chil-

dren. Our minister gave a concise answer. He said: "The God who cannot lie says they are my children. Just leave it there." That is how he understood the words to Abraham: "... to be a God to you and your seed after you throughout their generations," (Gen. 17:9). So the fathers of Dort understood it (Chap. 1. Art. 17). And as I see it every child born to believing parents is a covenant child and must receive the sign and seal as a covenant child, that is, a child of God.

If only the elect belong to the covenant, how can anyone break the covenant? Impossible for the elect to fall away. But the Bible speaks of covenant breakers, of those who were in the covenant but because they did not live up to the demands of the covenant were cut off. Circumcision was a sign of the covenant. For those born into a covenant home and were not circumcised, it is said that, "... he has broken my covenant," Genesis 17:14, (see also Lev. 26:15; Deut. 31:16; Jer. 11:10). The same covenant breaking we find in Romans 11. The natural branches, those belonging to God's covenant people, were cut off. They broke the covenant. The wild

branches, those who believed in Christ Jesus, were grafted in. They belong; but that depends on their remaining in the faith (Rom. 11:22). That, by the way, is a condition of the covenant we find mentioned many times in Scripture. If only the elect are in the covenant, such a condition would not exist.

The attempt to understand or solve Scripture's mysteries through logic gets one into endless problems.

w. s. Rev. C. W. Tuininga

Answer to Rev. C. W. Tuininga

I value Rev. Tuininga's response to my recent articles concerning the place of children in the covenant, not only because it is better that he should explain his views on this matter — similar, it seems, to the views of Dr. Schilder and the Liberated churches — rather than for me to do so, but even more because of the importance of this matter. It has drastically divided the Reformed churches for at least the last 50 years (particularly since the synodical decision of 1944), and it is well that we should try to understand each other regarding it, if doctrinal convictions are to retain the importance they ought to have.

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



One can understand Rev. Tuininga's feelings for the pastor of his youth when the latter remarked, "The God who cannot lie says they are my children. Just leave it there." What he said is certainly true: God does not lie or contradict Himself. On this fact rests the logic that runs all through the Bible, providing the possibility of a true biblical exegesis. God's Word is a unified whole; and we can test our understanding of any one part of it by comparing it with the rest. The problem is, I fear, that it is precisely with this principle that the position of Rev. Tuininga fails to comply.

In spite of the fact that Rev. Tuininga would maintain that "every child born to believing parents is a covenant child and must receive the sign and seal as a covenant child, that is, a child of God," I am sure that he knows both from his own experience and from Scripture that there are many such who grow up without ever knowing, not just intellectually but experientially, what it is to know God and belong to him (John 17:3). We may baptize them as infants, as we should. We may teach them the truths of God, as the questions at baptism require us to do. We may assure them in personal contact and through the preaching of the Word of the wonders of God's promises, and of the consequences of rejecting them. We may love these children, and pray for them, beginning in the prayers at the baptism itself. But in the end there are those of them who do not believe what is said, and without believing they never really come to know what covenant fellowship with God is. That does not mean that the Word of God has failed, or has proved to be false (Rom. 9:6). What it comes down to is faith; and that is a gift of God (Eph. 2:8). The Author of that faith is the Holy Spirit (Lord's Day 27), not man. Nor does He give it to everyone (Acts 13:48). What Rev. Tuininga has to understand is that in Scripture to believe and to be elect are the same thing; and covenant life cannot be separat-

ed from that. Neither is faith a condition to the covenant, but the first expression of God's covenant faithfulness to us.

In actuality, what we are dealing with here is the gospel, and with that very point concerning it to which Paul comes at the heart of his great epistle to the Romans, particularly in chapter four. There, after carefully making his way through a line of well reasoned logic — a "just leave it there" logic, if you will — he arrives at the conclusion, 4:11, "And he [that is, Abraham] received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness of the faith which he had yet being uncircumcised: that he might be the father of all them that believe, though they be not circumcised; that righteousness might be imputed unto them also." Paul's point is this. There were those in his day who were committed to the position — not dissimilar, it would seem, to that of Rev. Tuininga and the Liberated churches — that inasmuch as they had kept the law and received the sign of the covenant (circumcision in the Old Testament, and baptism in the New), they could rest on the presumption that they were heirs of the promises given to Abraham, and recipients of a special position of righteousness and favor in the sight of God — rather like, it would seem, those in the Dutch tradition who through a sad misapplication of the Belgic Confession presume to call themselves the "true" Christians and "true" church while classifying those who differ with them as "false."

But Paul, on the basis of his carefully crafted logic, strongly rejects this. His argument is this: receiving the sign of the covenant according to the law does not make one an heir to the promises of Abraham, since Abraham himself was righteous before that sign was ever received. And so it is that the sign of the covenant, rather than ascribing

special status or favor in the sight of God, points to our need to be cleansed from the filth of the flesh (I Pet. 3:21), which righteousness comes only through faith in the promised Seed. Such then are God's covenant children, not those who receive the sign according to law, but those who follow in the faith of Abraham and seek their righteousness in the same promised seed as Abraham did, that is to say, in Christ (John 8:56). These that follow in faith, not the children of the flesh, are the children of Abraham, and heirs of the covenant of grace (Rom. 4:12).

For us, what it comes down to is this. When a child is baptized, that baptism implicitly involves the commitment "to see these children ... brought up in the aforesaid doctrine." This means that our children are to be taught the gospel, namely, the fact that righteousness and the experience of covenant fellowship with God come to one, not because he has been baptized as God requires (according to the law), but only through faith in the promised seed, Jesus Christ (Gal. 3:16). There is no other way through which one can come to be adopted as a child and receive an eternal inheritance in the covenant of God (Rom. 8:15-17).

(Perhaps we should note that Paul did not come to this truth by means of a logical deduction from an abstract beginning in the doctrine of election. He comes to election — after passing through several of the most profound chapters in the Bible — but only as a means of demonstrating and supporting what he had already established from his careful exegesis of the Word of God. And the same can very really be said of the theology of Herman Hoeksema. Somehow the idea seems to have gotten about that his views can be dismissed lightly by simply identifying them as rationalistic logic, and

*The sign of the covenant, rather than ascribing special status or favor in the sight of God, points to our need to be cleansed from the filth of the flesh.*



leaving them at that. Anyone, however, who knew Rev. Hoeksema personally or has studied his works seriously, must know that he was not in the least inclined to philosophical speculation, or to beginning with an abstract presupposition, whether election or anything else, and deducting his positions syllogistically from that. Hoeksema was first and foremost an exegete of the Word of God. He believed sincerely in the unity of the Word of God, and came to his teachings by comparing Scripture with Scripture until he came to that which was in harmony with the whole. This he taught, being quite content to "just leave it there." Election had a place in that, an important one, but hardly an abstract starting point from which to deduct the rest. It was to him, as with Paul, but another indication that covenant fellowship with God comes to one, not by receiving an external sign according to law, but only as by grace through faith one is engrafted into God's Son, in Him to become an

heir.)

And so is it regarding the "covenant breakers" passages which Tuininga cites. They, and others like them, are fascinating to study, each within its own context; but I doubt whether any of them comes close to teaching what Tuininga would have them say. I suppose, considering the expression itself, it is rather natural to conclude that these passages refer to "those who were in the covenant but because they did not live up to the demands of the covenant were cut off." But take, for example, the first and foremost of them, Genesis 17:14: "And the uncircumcised man child whose flesh of his foreskin is not circumcised, that soul shall be cut off from his people; he hath broken my covenant." The covenant breaker here is not one who has received the sign of the covenant, only thereafter to lose what he had for failing to meet its conditions. Rather, he is the one who has not received that sign at all, or — in the terms of Romans 4 — has not been

brought up under the truth that righteousness comes only through faith in Christ. And when he does not know that, and accordingly does not baptize his children and teach them that truth, the line of covenant generations are no longer carried on in that family; it is broken off from the vine. What had been a line of generations in the covenant of God is stopped, and, unless God intervenes, will no longer carry on the truth of the gospel to its future generations. The covenant is broken when it is not carried on from one generation to the next.

What it comes down to is finally the truth of Galatians 3:26-29: "For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus. And if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise." □

## All Around Us

Rev. Gise VanBaren

### ■ More on "Promise Keepers"

The *Christian News*, a paper produced by a Lutheran minister, continues to present articles which treat of the "Promise Keepers." In its issue of Nov. 6, 1995, it quotes from a statement made by the American Council of Christian Churches (ACCC), an association of conservative churches. Their concern is expressed thus:

Resolution 95:5 —  
*Promise Keepers*

While we acknowledge it to be God's will that Christian men provide biblical leadership in the home and in the local church, the American Council of Christian Churches

stands diametrically opposed to Promise Keepers. This ecumenical movement is both unscriptural and dangerous because it ignores God's Word, which clearly forbids fellowship with those who disobey the Bible.

Promise Keepers is directly linked to two other unbiblical movements (the Charismatic and the Vineyard, with their emphasis on "signs and wonders"). All these movements — and others of like mind — fail to admit that it is Scripture, not signs and wonders, that God uses to bring individuals to salvation and then to maturity in Christ.

The rallies sponsored by Promise Keepers include speakers that belong to churches in the apostate National Council of Churches and the compromising National Association of Evangelicals. Promise Keepers has broadened to include participation from not only Roman Catholics but also Mormons.

The teaching by Promise Keepers leaders relies upon humanistic psychology and even promotes unspeakable things regarding the reasons for physical circumcision as ordered by God.

The greatest tragedy, however, is to see some leaders of once Fundamental churches and groups now cooperating with Promise Keepers and using as defense of their compromise that "the end justifies the means." Such compromisers are thereby giving support to a movement that leads men away from the truth and ushers them into serious doctrinal errors and unbiblical fellowship.

The American Council of Christian Churches, meeting at its 54th Annual Convention in St. Louis, Missouri, October 24-26, 1995, issues a declaration that Promise Keepers is an organization that ignores a key directive of Scripture. "Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers.... Wherefore

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come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, and will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty" (II Corinthians 6:14, 17-18).

The ACCC also underlines our determination to obey God's Word, which brings both godliness and true unity. We would seek to encourage men (and women too) to grow in Christliness and to serve our Savior with humility, integrity, and responsibility.

### ■ *Samen op Weg* (Together on the Way)

There has been in recent years the attempt to unite three major Protestant churches in the Netherlands. These churches which seek to unite are the Netherlands Reformed Church (*de Nederlandse Hervormde Kerk*), with about 2.4 million members, the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands (*de Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland*), with almost 800,000 members, and the Lutheran Church (*de Evangelisch-Lutherse Kerk*), with about 22,000 members. The process of going "together on the way" has, however, encountered a snag. The *Christian News*, Nov. 6, 1995, reports:

A joint meeting of the synods...of the three churches meeting from October 12 to 14 in Alphen aan de Rijn discussed proposals to dismantle a recently set-up steering committee that was preparing the organizational union of church employees, thus putting a brake on an organizational merger between the churches. After an unusually heated debate the meeting decided to postpone the final decision on whether to dismantle the steering committee until January 1996.

...The decision to dismantle the steering committee is seen as a concession to the most fervent opponents of the *Samen op Weg* process, who come from the ranks of the "Reformed Union" (*Gereformeerde Bond*), an influential conservative organization, which comprises

about a third of the Netherlands Reformed Church.

Most of its members are devout churchgoers and tend to take the Bible literally. Its leader, Jan van der Graaf, has appeared on television warning against the new unified church, saying: "I won't be forced to listen to unbiblical sermons every Sunday, filled with criticism of society."

..."The credibility of the church has been damaged and if this goes on, it will no longer be my church," a pastor, Ton de Nooij, from Vlissingen, told ENI, after the weekend's discussions.

"The synodical boards pay far too much attention to the orthodox members of the church. These people have but to sneeze and the board gets a cold. Board members seem to have a very sensitive right ear, whereas their left ear is stone deaf," he said.

...An academic, Anne Van der Meijden, who is a Protestant minister and writer on public relations, told ENI that "the conflict between supporters and critics of unification is in fact a conflict between towns and the countryside. People in rural areas like things to stay as they are. People in towns want change. And that's the bottom line."

It will prove of great interest to see what the final outcome of this merger attempt will be. The comment of the woman minister (above) is oversimplification of the problem — which is, rather, the desire of some to maintain the historic Christian faith over against those who want to unite all churches without consideration of the truth of God's Word. It appears, however, that the effort to accomplish final merger could occur in the near future despite the opposition to it.

### ■ Dutch Church Breaks Ties with CRC

In what must have been a minor embarrassment to the Christian Reformed hierarchy, the Christian Reformed Church in the Netherlands (CGKN) has severed its ties with the Christian Reformed Church in North America. The Religion sec-

tion of the *Grand Rapids Press* (Nov. 4, 1995) as well as other religious periodicals (as *REC News Exchange*) present the following:

Four months after narrowly deciding to maintain ties with its mother church in the Netherlands, the Christian Reformed Church suddenly finds itself cut off from another Dutch church with which it shares historic roots.

The Dutch Christian Reformed Church synod has voted to sever its ecclesiastical fellowship with the CRC.

Commonly known as the CGKN, the Dutch church broke ties over, among other reasons, the CRC's allowance of women as ministers, and its continuing ties with the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands (GKN). The much larger GKN's acceptance of practicing homosexuals, including ministers, in monogamous relationships triggered an emotional debate at last summer's CRC synod.

The CGKN voted 42-10 to cut 15-year-old official ties with the CRC, according to a Dutch newspaper report Oct. 19. A translation was provided by United Reformed News Service.

"All of us are feeling some pain now," said CGKN Synod President the Rev. M.C. Tanis, according to the translated report. "But brothers ... we could not decide otherwise."

The CRC had little notice of the action, said General Secretary David Engelhard. Dutch delegates to the CRC synod sent a report late last summer indicating they would probably recommend severing relations, Engelhard said, but added, "I don't think any of us realized it would happen immediately."

...Engelhard doubted there would be much practical impact from the decision. It will have greater impact in Canada, where there is a higher percentage of recent Dutch immigrants, he said.

However, the decision may have symbolic importance for CRC members troubled by last summer's synod vote allowing church classes to ordain women ministers, he added. A conference of CRC churches concerned about the decision and



the continuing GKN relationship will be held next week near Chicago.

"For that reason it saddens me as well, that it might be used within our own setting to either fuel further secession (from the CRC) or frustrate or anger people more," Engelhard said.

## ■ Creation or Evolution

The *Christian News*, November 6, 1995, presents an introduction to the subject: "Creation or Evolution." Dr. David Kaufmann, introducing speakers who would address the above subject, gave this interesting illustration:

...Imagine that you are the child of the famous painter, Michelangelo. You grew up watching him paint the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel. Each stroke of the brush revealed his love, creative design, and masterful perfection. Years later as you're walking beneath your father's great work, a guide enters leading a group of tourists. As they stand in awe under the grandeur of the artistic work on the Sistine Chapel's ceiling, you overhear the tour guide state quite boldly that "as amazing as it may sound, the works on the ceiling occurred quite simply by the naturalistic process over countless years of water leaking through the roof and staining the plaster beneath with what now appears as intentional works of beautifully designed art ... strictly a chance occurrence." Now would you not, as Michelangelo's child, rise up in righteous anger to hear such a flagrant lie being told as the explanation for the work of your father?! Would you not confront the tour guide with the truth and contend for the honor of your father's name? Should it be at all surprising then that Christians would contend for the honor of their heavenly Father? The modern "tour guides" — evolutionists — are assertively and unapologetically giving as explanation for the existence of all things (from sea horses to orchids, giraffes to hummingbirds, emeralds to bowhead whales, and pandas to people) their "fact" that all this pur-

pose, eloquent design, and astronomical complexity just happened by chance by solely naturalistic processes over countless eons of time. An alert Christian should rise up in righteous indignation against this affront to their creator. The authoritative and divinely inspired Word in Exodus 20:11, "For in six days the Lord made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them," is the only reliable and trustworthy fact for explaining the origin of all things. Faithful Christians are compelled to contend for the honor of their Father's Name.

One might add also the Word of God from Hebrews 11:3, "Through faith 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." The unbeliever reveals the consequence of lack of faith when he insists on the erroneous view of evolution.

## ■ Television: The Children Speak

*The Outlook*, November 1995, quotes syndicated columnist Cal Thomas concerning television viewing by children:

...In a remarkable survey of children between the ages of 10 and 16, the Los Angeles polling firm of Fairbank, Maslin, Maulin and Associates learned that one-third of the kids "often" want to try what they see other people doing on television, while two-thirds said their peers are influenced by what they see on the tube.

This directly challenges what many network executives and programmers have said. They have claimed there is no connection between what children see on television and antisocial or personally risky behavior. At the same time, the networks have assured advertisers that if they will fork over \$1 million for a 30-second commercial during the Super Bowl, they'll sell plenty of beer, tires, cars and other products to viewers. Which is it? Why does persuasion work with commercials but not with programming?

The survey shows that television has a more profound impact on the lives, values, ethics and morals of the young than perhaps even television's greatest critics thought. And the kids in the survey handed down a two-count indictment. The first was against the television industry. The second was against their parents.

Sixty-five percent said programs like "The Simpsons" and "Married ... With Children" (both Fox Television Network shows) encourage children to disrespect their parents. Sixty-two percent said sex portrayed on TV shows and in movies influences kids to have sex when they're too young (77 percent said there is too much sex before marriage on TV). That television has replaced parents as the primary shaper of young lives was revealed by this statistic: 82 percent said TV should help teach children right from wrong.

The survey indicated a clear breakdown of parental authority and informed leadership. Fifty-five percent of those surveyed said they usually watch television alone or with friends, but not with their family. Forty-four percent said they watch something different when they're alone than with their parents (25 percent chose the moral sewer known as MTV). Sixty-six percent said they live in a home with three or more television sets, and 54 percent have a TV in their own rooms.

A further message for parents is that more than half reported watching television more than two hours a day, but three-fourths said that if they could choose between television and spending more time with their families, they'd choose family time.

But where are mom and dad? If they're not divorced, they're working too much (see the March 6 *Newsweek* cover story titled "Exhausted"). When they are home, TV is frequently used as a baby sitter or distraction so parents don't have to communicate with their children. The art of dinner conversation appears nearly lost. And the networks are happy to fill the void with programming that appeals mostly to the glands and not the head or the heart....



So — where are your children tonight? What are they watching? Do you fit into the description of the parents mentioned above? What effect is it having on your children? Scripture reminds of the wicked of this world who “knowing the judgment of God, that they which commit such things are worthy of death, not only do the same, but have pleasure in them that do them” (Rom. 1:32).

#### ■ SIGNS OF THE TIMES: Disturbing Report about AIDS

The *Denver Post*, November 24, 1995, presents a shocking report on the spread of the AIDS disease. Its headline states: “One of every 92 may be infected.”

The article continues:

One of every 92 young American men — those ages 27 to 39 — may be battling the AIDS virus, according to the most precise estimates yet of the epidemic's toll.

The sobering numbers show minorities are especially hard hit, with

one of every 33 young black men estimated to be infected in 1993, according to the report in this week's journal *Science*. The 1993 data is the latest available.

If the trend continues, “the threat of AIDS may become a rite of passage” for young people, said study author Philip Rosenberg of the National Cancer Institute. “That is a very disturbing future.”

The government already has warned that AIDS is threatening more and more young adults. In January, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention announced that AIDS in 1993 became the No. 1 killer of people ages 25 to 44.

...The CDC has counted 501,310 AIDS cases since 1981 and 311,381 deaths. As of 1993, between 630,000 and 897,000 Americans were alive with HIV, Rosenberg said.

The most shocking thing should be that the above disease is not easily transmitted and can be readily controlled and even eliminated.

That requires not “safe sex,” but proper honoring of the law of God. There is to be *no* adultery nor abuse of one's body by drugs. Man, however, is not willing to sacrifice his “rights” to God's law. Many will take their “chances” with the disease — evidently believing they are invulnerable.

One recalls the testimony of the book of Revelation, chapter 9, where is recorded the sounding of the seven trumpets at the end of the ages. When the sixth angel sounded the sixth trumpet, a third part of men were slain. In verses 20-21 we read, “And the rest of the men which were not killed by these plagues yet repented not of the works of their hands, that they should not worship devils, and idols of gold, and silver, and brass, and stone, and of wood: which neither can see, nor hear nor walk: neither repented they of their murders, nor of their sorceries, nor of their fornication, nor of their thefts.” □

Church and State

Mr. James Lanting

## Federal Court Declares State Good Friday School Holiday Unconstitutional

*“Illinois closes its schools on twelve holidays. Nine are purely secular. Two are religious in origin but secularized: Christmas and Thanksgiving. Only one of the holidays is a purely religious holiday, Good Friday, the holiday celebrated only by believing Christians. School districts are free to close their schools on the major holidays of other religions, but all public schools throughout the state are forced to close on Good Friday regardless of the preference of local school districts and no matter how small the number of students or teachers in a particular district who want to use the day for religious observances. The state has accorded special recognition to Christianity beyond anything that has been shown to be necessary to accommodate the religious needs of the Christian majority.... But the first Amendment does not allow a state to make it easier for adherents of one faith to practice their religion than for adherents of another faith to practice their religion, unless there is a secular justification for the difference in treatment.”*

*Metzl v. Leininger*, 7th Cir. Court of Appeals (1995)  
(Majority opinion).



In 1941 the State of Illinois made Good Friday a state holiday. State facilities, including public schools, were to be closed on that day. In 1989 the Illinois legislature repealed Good Friday as a state holiday, but retained it as a school holiday. All public schools remained closed and the teachers were paid just as for other holidays.

In 1995 a Jewish public school teacher in Chicago challenged the Illinois Good Friday school holiday law, arguing, among other things, that as a taxpayer she objected to the use of public taxpayer funds to pay teachers for the religious holiday.

The State of Illinois defended the statute closing schools on the Friday before Easter contending that it was not feasible for the schools to remain open when a majority of the students would be absent because of observance of the day by the Christian student population, which is much larger than that of other religious groups.

The federal appellate court rejected the state's argument and held that the Illinois law closing public school on Good Friday was a violation of the Establishment Clause of the First Amendment. The Establishment Clause, the court ruled, forbids state and federal governments to promote one religion at the expense of others. Although the school code allowed students of other faiths an excused absence on their respective religious days while school was in session, the closing of all schools on a Christian holiday worked a disadvantage upon non-Christian students who missed classes during their religious holidays while schools remained in session.

#### The Establishment Clause

But the crucial issue the court faced was whether Illinois' statutory recognition of a Christian holi-

day with a two thousand-year tradition actually constituted "establishment" of a religion, or whether this was merely a permissible "accommodation" of religion. The court admitted this was a far cry from creating or operating an established church (one supported by taxes) as occurred in several European countries in the 18th century.

Nonetheless, the court remarked that the U.S. Supreme Court has interpreted the Establishment Clause to mean that government may not promote one religion at the expense of others, or even promote religion in general at the expense of non-belief. The only exceptions to this general principle are where the challenged law serves a secular purpose or "where the effect in promoting religion is too attenuated to worry about."

The court also noted that a challenged law may be defensible as an accommodation of the rights of religious persons to the free exercise of their religion. This exception, the court noted, could not be raised in this case since any public school student so requesting would be excused from school on Good Friday without penalty, as would Jewish students on their sectarian holidays. Accordingly, since there was no secular justification for closing schools on Christian holidays rather than Jewish holidays, the 54-year old state law could not pass constitutional muster.

#### Secular Justification

The state attempted to present a secular justification for closing the schools on Good Friday, arguing that the purpose of the law was merely to save the school system the expense of keeping schools open on a day when very few teachers and students would be expected to attend. There is no purpose in keeping schools open, the state school superintendent contended, when virtually no students would be present in the classrooms.

The court rejected this purported secular justification for closing the

schools because the state superintendent had presented no statistics or hard evidence as to actually how many students or teachers would absent themselves from Good Friday classes if the challenged law did not require the schools to be closed that day:

We do not need evidence to determine that Christianity is the predominant religion of the people of Illinois; but we do need evidence to determine how many Christians, in each school district, observe Good Friday. Not all, certainly. Perhaps not most. For we know that many Christians do not belong to a church, and it is a matter of common knowledge that many who do belong to a church (especially a Protestant church) do not go to Good Friday services.... And since many religious Christians send their children to parochial schools or educate them at home, secular Christians may predominate in the public schools, though this is another question on which there is no evidence.

In conclusion, the court ruled that the Good Friday school holiday law must be struck down since the state could not carry its burden of proof to demonstrate a "secular justification" for the school shutdown on that Christian holiday. And since students of other religions, although excused, had to miss a regular day of school to observe their religious holidays, the state's policy unconstitutionally worked to the advantage of Christian students.

#### A Dismal Decision

The *Metzl* decision and majority opinion is disconcerting for several reasons. First, how can the federal court strike down Good Friday but in the same breath endorse and approve Christmas, Easter, and Thanksgiving as state holidays? The reason we can distinguish Good Friday from these other holidays, stated the court, is that Christmas, Thanksgiving, and Easter have now lost all religious meaning and have become essentially secularized:

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*Mr. Lanting, a member of South Holland Protestant Reformed Church, is a practicing attorney.*



Some holidays that are religious, even sectarian in origin, such as Christmas and Thanksgiving, have so far lost their religious connotation in the eyes of the general public that government measures to promote them, as by making them holidays or even by having the government itself celebrate them, have only a trivial effect in promoting religion. Even Easter is becoming gradually secularized; in the week before this past Easter Sunday, a radio station in Chicago was advertising an opportunity to have your pet photographed with an Easter Bunny on Easter Sunday for \$5.00.

The irony here is unavoidable; apparently our courts now forbid the government from declaring a state or national religious holiday unless the holiday has become so secularized and so stripped of its meaning that any religious significance is trivial. Government may shut down on Christmas, for example, provided the day no longer has anything to do

with the celebration of the birth of Jesus Christ. A religious holiday can now supposedly be recognized by government only when it is no longer religious and no longer a true holiday. This, of course, is nonsense, and should alarm every Reformed Christian in this country.

But this decision should also perhaps serve as a warning or a wake-up call regarding our Reformed observance of these special days. Are we too influenced by the virulent secularization and commercialization of American culture? Have Thanksgiving, Christmas, Easter, and Good Friday become also for us empty symbols and trivial tokens of a dead orthodoxy? If so, it would be far better if we listened to our Presbyterian brothers in Scotland and Northern Ireland who view *all* religious holiday (holy day) observances as biblically suspect and Roman Catholic in origin.

Secondly, the *Metzl* decision lends credence to the contention held

by many evangelical constitutional scholars who argue that our federal courts are badly misinterpreting the Establishment Clause by requiring government hostility toward religious practice. There is a significant distinction, they suggest, between a government impermissibly "endorsing" or "promoting" religion in contrast to legitimate governmental "accommodation" of its citizens' religious practices. Accordingly, the Illinois legislature's statute closing schools and public buildings on Christmas, Good Friday, and Thanksgiving is not intended to promote or champion Christianity, but merely serves to accommodate the religious beliefs of a majority of its citizenry. To require a "secular justification" for religious beliefs and practices is absurd, and one wonders when the federal courts will end their ostensible antipathy and hostility toward historical Christianity which should have a legitimate place in the public square. □

## Report of Classis West

November 9, 1995  
in Edgerton, Minnesota

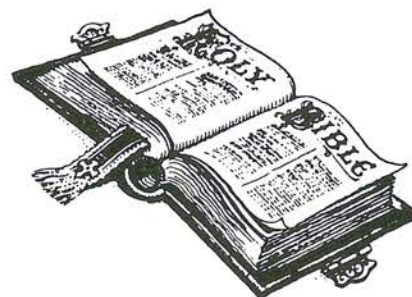
On November 9, Classis West met in Edgerton, Minnesota for the purpose of examining Candidate Allen Brummel, who had received and accepted the call to serve as pastor of the Protestant Reformed Church in Edgerton. A special worship service was called by Edgerton's consistory for the evening of November 8, at which time Pastor-elect Brummel expounded Scripture from Genesis 17:7. In attendance were not only the members of the congregation, but the 28 delegates of Classis West, as well as three ministers from Classis East who were in attendance as synodical deputies. The following day was spent in examining Pastor-elect Brummel in the several areas of doctrinal studies, as well as his knowledge of Scripture and the Confessions.

Classis West, with the synodical deputies expressing hearty agreement, voted unanimously to approve Pastor-elect Brummel's examination, and advised the Edgerton PRC to proceed with his ordination. The Protestant Reformed Churches have much reason for thankfulness to God in His continued provision of men to labor as Ministers of the Word and sacraments. Additional thanksgiving is God's due for the unanimity in biblical truth that is seen in the churches and among the ministers.

Classis West also extended farewell to Pastor Russ Dykstra, who leaves to take up new labors in Hope Protestant Reformed Church of Walker, Michigan. Classis appointed Rev. Richard Moore (Hull, Iowa) as moderator for Doon PRC during

their vacancy, and also granted classical appointments to Doon.

Respectfully submitted,  
Rev. Steven Key, Stated Clerk





### Young Adults' Activities

The young adults in the Grand Rapids, MI area met in late November for their monthly meeting at the Faith PRC in Jenison, MI. Pastor-elect Doug Kuiper spoke on the topic, "Remembering the Sabbath Day."

Our First PRC in Holland, MI hosted a Young Adult Retreat at the Days Inn in Benton Harbor, MI on November 17 and 18. The topic for that retreat, was "What Do You Do With Your Talents?"

There is a Young Adult Class which meets on a regular basis at the South Holland, IL PRC. For discussion this year they are considering other Reformed denominations and how we as churches differ from them. In early October they were considering the Free Reformed Churches.

### School Activities

Our Covenant Christian School in Lynden, WA gave their fall program entitled, "I Seek a City," on November 17 in the Lynden, WA PRC.

The Hope PR Christian School in Walker, MI presented their annual all-school program, "Living the Lord's Prayer," also on November 17 in First Jenison Christian Reformed Church in Jenison, MI.

### Congregational Activities

The entire congregation of the Trinity PRC in Houston, TX got together after their Thanksgiving Day service for an international turkey dinner, hosted by Pastor Mahtani and his wife, Esther.

Members of the congregation of the Georgetown PRC in Hudsonville, MI have begun meeting together for an hour of Bible study on Friday mornings at 6:30 at a local Hudsonville restaurant. Although it is billed as a Men's Bible Study, anyone may attend.

In other news from Georgetown, we learn that their Council has decided to add two more elders to their consistory, bringing the total to five. A quick look at the yearbook of our churches shows that since its organization in 1994 Georgetown has grown from 35 families to 62, a fact which no doubt led to that decision.

The Helping Hands Committee, along with the Deacons of the Hudsonville, MI PRC, sponsored a food-drive for needy families in their congregation. Throughout the month of November, Hudsonville's membership was encouraged to bring either gifts of canned or dry food, or money and gift certificates from area grocery stores, to church, where the donations were divided up and distributed by the Deacons in early December.

### Denominational Activities

Back in October, bulletins in the west Michigan PR churches saw announcements promoting a new choir which hoped to organize with the express purpose of singing and recording Psalms. From that beginning back in October this choir continues to practice under the direction of Mr. Dan DeMeester, and it has grown to between 50 and 70 members. Upcoming plans include, in addition to recording, some possible concerts around the holidays in area rest homes. If you are interested in joining them, they meet every Sunday at 2:15 in the Southwest PRC in Grandville, MI. Or give Dan a call at 791-4842.

### Evangelism Activities

Starting on November 26th, our congregation at Trinity PRC in Houston, TX has been able to air two radio broadcasts each Sunday. First, at 1:00 P.M. Pastor Mahtani gives a one-minute message entitled, "Reaching the Nations with the Gospel of Grace," an outreach aimed particularly at the Indian population of Houston. And second, we are happy to report that the Reformed Witness Hour has gone down south to Houston, and has begun broadcasts each Sunday at 4:00 P.M. over the same station, KTEK, 1110 AM.

### Minister Activities

We extend our congratulations to Rev. and Mrs. Allen Brummel on the occasion of the birth of their second child, Allyn Jay, born in Edgerton, MN on October 15th. We can also relate that Rev. Brummel preached his first sermon as pastor of the Edgerton, MN PRC, a preparatory sermon, based on Ephesians 6:18-20 and entitled, "And Pray for Me." Rev. Brummel has also already conducted his first baptism — the baptism of his son Allyn.

On November 28th, Pastor-elect Doug Kuiper successfully sustained his examination by Classis East for entrance into the ministry. Classis unanimously approved his examination and gave the Byron Center, MI PRC permission to proceed with his ordination. At a joyful service the following evening, with Rev. Dykstra preaching the sermon and Rev. Cammenga reading the form, Pastor-elect Kuiper was ordained as a minister of the Word and Sacraments in the Byron Center Church. Indeed we have much for which to thank the Lord.

We can add here that Rev. Doug Kuiper preached his inaugural sermon at Byron Center on December 3, with Psalm 122:6-9 as his text and

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



# THE STANDARD BEARER

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"Desiring Jerusalem's Peace" as his theme.

Rev. denHartog declined the call he received from the Grace PRC in Standale, MI, and Rev. S. Key de-

clined the call extended by the Doon, IA PRC.

### *Food for Thought*

"The sovereignty of God, as the

direct and immediate cause of whatsoever comes to pass — together with the absolute vanity of all subordinate agents — fills the mind with awe."

— Robert Candlish  
on Genesis 27 □

## ANNOUNCEMENTS

### RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The consistory and congregation of the Randolph PRC expresses its Christian sympathy to Mr. and Mrs. Berwyn (Gerry) Huizenga and Mr. and Mrs. Brent (Shannon) Huizenga, in the death of their father and grandfather,

#### **MR. JOHN VELDHUIS.**

May Gerry and the family continue to find comfort in knowing that Jehovah "lifteth us up from the gates of death" (Psalm 9:13).

Pastor Steven Key, President  
Mr. Jack Regnerus, Asst. Clerk

### RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The Adult Bible Society of the Doon PRC expresses its Christian sympathy to Mr. and Mrs. David Wiersma in the passing of David's father,

#### **MR. BERNARD WIERSMA.**

It is our prayer that their family may know that God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble (Ps. 46:1).

James Regnerus, Vice-President  
Mary VanDenTop, Vice-All

### WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

On January 9, 1996, the Lord willing,

#### **MR. and MRS. HENRY HOEKSTRA**

will celebrate their 40th wedding anniversary.

We, their children and grandchildren, are grateful to God, our heavenly Father, for giving us godly parents and grandparents. We rejoice in God's faithful covenant promises and fellowship with His children. We pray that the Lord will continue to bless and care for them in their life together. "For this God is our God for ever and ever: he will be our guide even unto death" (Psalm 48:14).

- \* James and Gladys Koole
  - \* Brian and Pauline Krouse
  - \* Henry and Linda Kamps
  - \* Harlan and Lenora Hoekstra
  - \* Vernon and Kari Hoekstra
  - \* Mark and LaBeth Hoekstra
  - \* Jeffrey and Mary Kalsbeek
  - \* Jeff and Rosalynn Andringa
  - \* Barry and Patricia Pollema
- 34 grandchildren

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