



**A Reformed
Semi-Monthly
Magazine**

The Standard Bearer

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**Vol. 75, No. 4
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All to God's Glory

Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God.

— I Corinthians 10:31

There was a farmer who had three tall, stalwart sons who worked with him on the farm. Since the farm was large and had considerable livestock, all four men kept busy working at home. They ate their main meal at noon. According to custom they always prayed before and after their meals and also read the Bible.

One day the father asked the boys at their noon meal: "Do you want to read the Bible?" Of course they did. "We always do." But the father was not content with that. He insisted, "Do you feel the need for reading the Bible?" To that they admitted that they felt no particular need. So the father announced that they would then not read Scripture at their meals.

A few days later he asked the boys at the end of the meal: "Do you want to pray?" Again the response was, "Of course, we always do." The father asked: "Is that your only reason? Then we won't pray. We should not pray merely out of custom." With that he got up and left the table.

This went on for a short time, and then the father said to the boys: "Do you realize that we are just like the heathen? We do not read the Bible or pray at meals." By that time the boys were ready to agree that they needed prayer and also the reading of the Scriptures at regular intervals. They read the Bible with more interest and prayed more from the heart.

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Formal worship was the sin of carnal Israel in the old dispensation. The Lord complained that the

people of Israel drew near to Him with their mouth, and their lips honored Him, but their heart was far removed from Him.

This resulted in a dead formalism. Israel made law upon law, precept upon precept, here a little and there a little, but it became a mere mouth and lip worship. They went through the motions like counting beads or making a certain number of petitions.

This dead formalism became pious Phariseeism, like the Pharisee who stood in the temple and prayed thus with himself, "God, I thank thee, that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican."

God condemns that formal worship most emphatically in Isaiah 66:3: "He that killeth an ox is as if he slew a man; he that sacrificeth a lamb, as if he cut off a dog's neck; he that offereth an oblation, as if he offered swine's blood; he that

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burneth incense, as if he blessed an idol. Yea, they have chosen their own ways, and their soul delighteth in their abominations."



But how about us? How about a bit of self-examination? What was my first thought when I awoke this morning? Did I begin the day with a prayer for strength and guidance? Did I eat my breakfast conscious of the fact that I was doing that to the glory of my God? Or did I complain about the toast being too brown or the oatmeal too cold? Or was I in such a hurry that I really thought only of eating and getting on with other things?

That was only the beginning of the day. Was I aware of my deep dependence upon God? My helplessness? There are times in our lives when our suffering becomes so intense or our problems so weighty that we learn to say, not "I need Thee every hour, most blessed Lord," but rather, "Lord, I need Thee every second! Every move I try to make."

Is that not always true? In God we live and move and have our being. We confess: Without Thee we can do nothing. We actually have our existence in the palm of God's hand, under His watchful eye, His ear always attentive to our cry. As Asaph confesses: "Nevertheless I am continually with thee: thou hast holden me by my right hand. Thou shalt guide me with thy counsel, and afterward receive me to glory" (Ps. 72:23, 24).

We so soon forget. That sinful desire to be independent, to be able to take care of ourselves, soon takes over. In a doctor's office there was a plaque on the wall that said: "God and doctors have some things in common. When people are well they need neither one. When ailment strikes, both are called in. But when health is restored, God is forgotten, and the doctor's bill remains unpaid."

How true it is that in our lives

we are practical deists. Deists are those who stress natural laws. The world was created to run its course purely by natural laws. There is a natural cause for spring, summer, fall, and winter; a natural cause for rain and sunshine, floods and droughts, heat and cold, life and death, etc. These simply happen by natural causes, but sometimes, when things go wrong, it is necessary for God to step in. Thus we can call in God when the need requires. The rest of the time we can take care of ourselves and take the credit for what we have accomplished.

How about our Sabbath worship? Do we begin the day with the thought:

How dear to me, O Lord of Hosts,
the place where Thou dost dwell;

The tabernacles of Thy grace in
pleasantness excel.

My spirit longs, yea, even faints,
Thy sacred courts to see;

My thirsting heart and flesh cry
out, O living God for Thee?

Why do we attend the public worship? Is it because we were brought up to go to church? Or do we go to hear the minister, merely to enjoy the sermon? We may seek to be edified and strengthened in the faith, but is that all? Or do we go with the thought foremost in our minds of worshiping our God?

Do we begin the service with a sincere prayer for a blessing that we may worship our God to His praise and that we may be spiritually edified and equipped to serve Him from day to day throughout the week?

Do we indeed worship God in spirit and in truth throughout the service? For example, are we singing from the heart when we enter the presence of the Lord with that powerful: "Praise God from whom all blessings flow"? Does that zeal remain with us in all our singing, in our prayers, in the giving of our gifts, and the listening to what Christ says to us through the minister, even to the final doxology?

The Sabbath on the first day of the week is a day of rest. That does not mean that it is a day of idleness or of resting from the strenuous toil of the week of preparing for another week of hard work. But it is the *Lord's* day, a holy day to be devoted in a special way to the service of God. That means that we attend public worship to devote ourselves to God and hear Christ speak to us by His Spirit and Word through His servant, the minister. It means also that we busy ourselves in serving God by being busy in the things of the kingdom, in fact, so busy that we have time only for necessary duties. Thus in thankfulness we experience a foretaste of the eternal rest that remains for the people of God.

That may require so much activity that it even tires us. A minister, for example, not only preaches twice, but often also performs pastoral duties on the Sabbath day. This may require all His time, yet at the close of the day he may be called upon to spend the late hours of the day at a deathbed and comforting the bereaved. This is his rest, for we rest in the Lord, in the enjoyment of the blessed privilege of preparing for the week before us in His service.



This is something that young people must still learn to bring into practice in their own lives, even though they have been taught it from their youth. Young men are strong and full of ambition. They are quite confident of their own abilities. They are enthusiastic about sports and competition. When they plan their future they are often thinking of some occupation that will pay well and give them a life of leisure, rather than asking, "How can I best serve the Lord with my life?" Teachers and ministers can often give direction in this regard to young men and young women, especially when

they recognize certain definite gifts and talents in them.

Young women often dream of marriage and a home. I once said to a prospective bride who had her wedding plans thought out to the finest detail, "You must have been thinking about this since you were twelve years old." She answered outright: "I did."

Both the bridegroom and the bride are so much "in love" that they are interested only in the fact that they are getting married. Sex often plays a big part in their being "in love." And they act and talk as if they expect their marriage to be one grand adventure. But they soon must come to the realization that love, true love, is loving each other in the Lord.



But how about you and me? Though we may take life far more seriously because of the many trials that we have experienced, can we say with David, "I have set the Lord always before me: because he is at my right hand, I shall not be moved"? Yes, we do desire to have God at our right hand, ready at all times to come to our aid in time of need. But do we live in real God-consciousness? Do we sincerely and prayerfully ask at each step of the way: "Lord, what wilt Thou have me do?"

We are stewards in God's house, servants of the most high God. We must confess: "All that I am I owe to Thee, Thy wisdom, Lord, hath fashioned me; I give my Maker thankful praise, Whose wondrous works my soul amaze."

We must also be fully conscious of the fact that all that we have is the Lord's, which is only entrusted to us as servants in His house. There is nothing of all my belongings that I can lay my finger on and say: "This is mine."

Therefore we are to use all our possessions and our gifts and talents in His service. Jesus says, "Seek ye first the kingdom of God

and his righteousness, and all these (other) things shall be added unto you." "For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every man may receive the things done in the body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad." According to the parable of the talents, we must give an account of what we have done with all that God has entrusted to us, and we will be judged accordingly.

What a blessed privilege is granted to covenant parents to receive and bring up children in the fear of the Lord. There is no higher calling on earth than that. The influence of a godly parent, or of parents, extends, not only to the children, but also to the children's children in the generations to come.

Whether we eat, or whether we drink, may we learn ever more eagerly to do so unto the Lord. □

Apples of Gold

When Unto Thee We Come

When unto Thee we come
With heads bowed down in prayer
May our first impulse be
To glorify Thy holy name —
To praise Thee for the fact that Thou art God —
In deep humility and awe to see Thy matchless grace,
Thy power, Thy glory, mercy, holiness, and love —
Thy justice, greatness, Thy long-suffering —
And may we grovel in the dust,
Knowing our own weakness, meanness, evil lusting natures,
Selfishness, pride, envy, laziness, deceit.
May our prayers never be so self-centered that they are
A catalog of earthly desires.
May we seek *Thee*, not self —
Lord, be merciful to us — sinners!
And may we leave Thy holy courts
With lighter hearts,
Knowing that our Faithful Savior stands
In mediation.
God's just and holy wrath is fully satisfied —
He bore the burden; set us wholly free.
He even plants desire in our hearts —
Desire to please Him.
Our filthy sinful natures, changed by love divine.
We glorify Thy name!

Thelma Westra

Editorially Speaking ...

The previous issue of this magazine (Nov. 1, 1998) contained a contribution by Mr. Pete Miedema, "The High Cost of Building New Churches." The article proposed "that the entire denomination participate in the funding" of new church buildings by means

of "a special line item" in the annual budget.

My purpose is not to comment on the proposal but to encourage such contributions on the part of our readers. The *Standard Bearer* welcomes constructive, well-reasoned articles that concern espe-

cially the faith and life of the Protestant Reformed Churches and people.

In addition, we welcome comment on such articles.

What do you think of Mr. Miedema's proposal?

—DJE

Editorial

Our Seminary as Military Academy*

*Thou therefore, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus.
And the things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same
commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also.
Thou therefore endure hardness, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ.
No man that warreth entangleth himself with the affairs of this life; that he
may please him who hath chosen him to be a soldier.*

— II Timothy 2:1-4

This address on the occasion of the beginning of another year of instruction and study in our seminary proposes that among other ways of viewing the seminary is that of viewing it as a military academy.

By military academy is meant simply a school that trains soldiers.

"Academy" could be misleading, as though the instruction of the seminary were purely intellectual

and had as its purpose to train high-ranking officers who remain safely behind the line of combat giving orders to other men who do all the fighting. *This* academy—our seminary—trains soldiers, the actual combat-troops. Every one who graduates and then is ordained in the office of the ministry fights as a soldier, is in the front line of battle, handles the weaponry, is direct object of enemy fire, endures the "hardness" of war, and personally destroys the enemy.

I considered using the phrase "boot camp" in my topic, "Our Seminary as Boot Camp," but decided against it. I feared that the announcement of that topic might be met with an unseemly outburst of enthusiastic agreement by our present recruits.

Our seminary is to be viewed

by us as a military academy because this is what it is. This is not all that it is. There are other ways of viewing the seminary. But this belongs to what our seminary is, and all of us who are involved in the school must know this—the students, the professors, the synodical committee that supervises the seminary, the support staff, and our people.

Our interest is particularly the Protestant Reformed Seminary. But the address is not intended to describe our seminary exclusively. Every theological seminary ought to be a military academy. Every seminary that is faithful to its mandate from God to train ministers is a military academy.

The seminary is a military academy by virtue of the fact that ministers, whom, of course, the

* The text of the address at the convocation exercises of the Protestant Reformed Theological Seminary held at the First Protestant Reformed Church of Grand Rapids, MI on September 9, 1998.

seminary trains and prepares for the ministry, are soldiers. This is clearly taught in the passage of Holy Scripture which more than any other establishes the seminary in the life of the churches, II Timothy 2:1ff. Verse 2 is recognized, and often used, as the classic biblical basis of the seminary: among the duties of the minister Timothy is that he commit the truth to faithful men, who then will teach the people of God.

What is not always noted is that in the immediate context of this demand for the training of men for the ministry is the comparison of the minister to a soldier. Verse 3 exhorts the minister to "endure hardness, as a good [noble] *soldier of Jesus Christ*." Verse 4 warns the minister not to entangle himself with the affairs of this life, giving as the motive that he please him who has chosen him "*to be a soldier*." The force of the extended comparison is the insistence that the minister of the gospel is a soldier.

One important model of the ministry is that of soldier.

It is worth noting that our Reformed form for the ordination and installation of ministers employs this model. The exhortation to the minister calls on him to "bear patiently all sufferings, and oppressions, *as a good soldier of Jesus Christ*." The prayer beseeches God to endue the minister "with wisdom and valor to rule the people aright over which he is set, and to preserve them in Christian peace."

The Real War

War demands soldiers.

Our churches, with the true church everywhere and always, are at war. War is not a possibility. War is not a likelihood. War is not even imminent. But war is raging. It has been raging for some 6,000 years without any truce or letup. The war was declared in a garden east in Eden and has spread until today it is a world war.

Even though the outcome of

this war is life and glory for the people on behalf of whom the ministers fight as soldiers (and this outcome—victory—is assured by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead that the apostle speaks of in verse 8), the war means suffering and hardship especially for the soldiers. It means death—*eternal* death—for some who seem for awhile to be part of the victorious people, the church.

As he wrote II Timothy, Paul was a prisoner, facing death at the hands of the foe. This hardship befell him as a soldier.

He warns ministers and aspiring ministers to expect similar hardships.

Experience shows that, as in all wars, there are casualties in this war, particularly among the ranks of the ministers. Some defect to the enemy. They become the bitterest enemies of the true church. Such, in the apostle's own day, were Hymenaeus and Philetus of verse 17. Others are tripped up or so weakened that they can no longer fight as minister-soldiers. When this happens, the people ask in amazement, "How could this happen?" The answer is that there is a war going on, and in a war there are casualties.

Some members of the visible church (though not of the elect body of Christ) have their faith overthrown by the enemy, according to verse 18, so that they perish everlastingly.

The stakes are high in this war, the very highest. The issues are the gravest: eternal life and eternal death.

The reality of this war, our seminary holds before all the students. Of all the failures that a military academy might be guilty of, surely none is worse than keeping the students ignorant of the war that is raging.

The seminary must keep before

the students the fact of war. It must also explain to them the nature of the war.

The Nature of the War

The war in which we are engaged is the spiritual conflict over the glory of the triune God in His incarnate Son, Jesus Christ, by the salvation of the elect church. It broke out with the promise of the gospel of Genesis 3:15 by which God called Adam and Eve out of their unholy alliance with the devil

unto fellowship with Himself. By this, He put enmity between them as the church in Christ and the devil.

In the history of Old Testament Israel, the war heated up. This was true especially during the reign of David, when Israel was attacked by the ungodly from every quarter and when Israel itself attacked and subdued its enemies. Those

battles, bloody as they may have been, were not the real thing. They were merely typical of the battles that the church is fighting today. They do indicate the reality, the prominence, and the ferocity of the warfare of the New Testament church.

No one who knows the history of the old covenant can be surprised that the church of the new covenant is at war and needs her military academy.

This great war over the Godhead and glory of God culminated in the ministry of Jesus Christ. Satan and his forces came up against Him personally, as the apostolic church confessed in Acts 4:25-28. Rightly, they saw in this the fulfillment of Psalm 2:

Why do the heathen rage and the people imagine a vain thing?

The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the LORD, and

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against his anointed, saying,

Let us break their bands asunder, and cast away their cords from us (vv. 1-3).

Jesus Christ on His part went on the offensive against Satan and the reprobate, ungodly world. This is how he began His ministry (Matt. 4:1ff.). By His death and resurrection Christ defeated the foes of God and gained the victory—the *decisive* victory—for Himself and the people of God.

This is part of the training of the minister-soldier in our seminary. We do not simply instruct him concerning a great war, but we instruct him concerning a great war that has been decided. The churches do not simply send him out to fight, but they send him out to fight in a war that has been won.

Still, Christ did not conquer in such a way that the war is over. It continues, as the persecutions and struggles that loom large in church history demonstrate. Indeed, the war becomes more furious until at the very end it climaxes in the gross lawlessness, deep apostasy, and great tribulation of the little season of Satan's loosing, to erect the kingdom of the beast.

The truth about war to the very end is taught in our seminary in that part of Reformed dogmatics known as eschatology.

The Opposing Forces

The opposing forces are the church of Jesus Christ on the one side and the ungodly world in league with the false, or departing, church on the other side.

The church, the true instituted church, is the host of the LORD God in the world. Of her it holds, as the Scottish Presbyterians loved to confess, that she is "fair as the moon, clear as the sun, and terrible as an army with banners" (Song 6:10). In her sound, orthodox, biblical confession, she flies the glorious banner on which is emblazoned, "In Jesus Christ the Lord, God is God."

Is it not a privilege to be enlisted in this army? Is this not balm for our wounds in the battle? Is this not encouragement in the time of weariness and disappointment?

Pitted against the church are the wicked world of ungodly men and women and the churches that have fallen away and thus gone over to the other side—traitors. This dreadful army also has a banner: "Man is God."

Soldiers must know the enemy. This is a first principle of war. Ignorance of the enemy is fatal. In the Protestant Reformed Seminary, we teach men to know the enemy.

The world outside of Jesus Christ is the enemy of God, of Christ, and, therefore, of the church. It is the avowed, determined enemy of the God and Father of Jesus Christ. The world is not a friend by virtue of common grace. The world showed its colors at the cross.

The Roman Catholic Church is an enemy, hostile to the sole Lordship and Mediatorship of Jesus Christ, opposed to the sole authority of Scripture, hateful against the gospel of salvation by grace alone through faith alone. Her hands are red with the blood of multitudes of God's saints. Rome is not a "co-belligerent" in the war.

Denying all the cardinal truths of divine revelation, theological modernism is an enemy.

Arminianism is an enemy, more dangerous than some of the others exactly because its attack is more subtle. Speaking and singing enthusiastically, and even emotionally, of Jesus, sin, grace, and salvation, Arminianism denies that Christ saves and affirms that man saves man. God's will, Christ's cross, and the best efforts of the Holy Spirit fail. Human free

will accomplishes salvation.

The charismatic movement is an enemy. It replaces Christ with the "Spirit," faith with feeling, and doctrine with "life."

These imposing battalions are not the real enemy, but only his minions. Both of the opposing hosts are commanded by a powerful, spiritual prince and lord. The captain of the hosts of the triune God is the exalted Jesus Christ. Over the forces of darkness is Satan.

The warfare of the church, then, is both offensive and defensive: aggressively, she promotes the kingdom of Christ in all the earth and among all peoples, and she defends Christ's kingdom against every assault.

It belongs to our seminary's instruction about the reality of the battle that in this great war God is sovereign. He is sovereign not only in that He will win, not even in that He always wins, but also in that He decreed the war from eternity for the fullest revelation of His glory. Since God is truly God, there is no dualism. In no way does this detract from the gravity of the war, or from the seriousness of fighting the good fight as a noble soldier. On the contrary, it lends urgency to our work as a military academy. God wills to glorify Himself in the way of this warfare.

The war is spiritual, not physical or political. It concerns the glory of God and the salvation of elect sinners, not the improvement of social conditions for the earthly advantage of man. This too our seminary teaches.

The soldier in this war—the fighter, therefore, is the minister of the gospel.

(to be concluded) □

—DJE

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Reading, Writing, and Heretics (2)

Abiding Truth

That faith is *once delivered*.

Don't look for changes. Changes to the faith are the works of men's imaginations.

The truth abides. That is a comforting aspect of Jude 3.

That means, for one thing, that God's promise shall not fail. The doctrine that He has committed to His church shall not be changed.

That means, in addition, that the doctrine of faith shall never cease in the world. It is a candle that all the winds of hell can never blow out, a flame that all the waters of trouble can never extinguish! The same faith we are called to contend for is called in Revelation 14:6 *the everlasting gospel*.

The errors that have pervaded the church world unto this day have not changed the faith one iota. How horrible is the departure from the faith once delivered unto the saints. For it is a departure which brings about the terrible judgment of Jesus Christ: "This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoureth me with their lips; but their heart is far from me. But in vain they do worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men" (Matt. 15:8,9).

The faith remains a solid rock, the foundation upon which we stand. But the attacks upon that faith once delivered are many. And we who are saints are exhorted to contend for the faith.

The Battle That Is Ours

To contend speaks of a vehement fighting and striving. The word was often used to describe the striving among wrestlers in the Olympic games, a battle of sweat, pain, and trouble.

It reminds me of some of the championship basketball games that many enjoy watching. Some of the men on those teams play with great pain, with injuries that would have some people in bed. So important do they view that battle for the championship. Through sweat and pain they contend for the victory, striving to obtain that which comes with being called "champion."

But the word used by Jude is a compound word which denotes a greater contention than known among men's games. The efforts put out by a basketball player in the deciding game of that championship series—even a player who is playing over his painful injury—is nothing in comparison to the effort required by you and me in contending for the faith.

When it comes to the faith, we are not in a game!

"We wrestle not against flesh and blood," says the apostle, "but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places" (Eph. 6:12). We are engaged in a deeply spiritual battle.

Doing Battle by Writing

What is the place, then, of *writing*, when it comes to this spiritual battle in which we find ourselves engaged?

Writing occupies an important place in this battle.

We recognize, of course, that the chief instruments in the battle are the faithful preaching of the Word—with which I include faithful instruction in the catechism classroom and privately—as well as the faithful exercise of Christian discipline.

But I speak tonight with more specific application. With respect to the labors of the RFPA and all of us who write, we must recognize the broad influence our writings can carry. We know not where our writings go. Especially in this age when information is transmitted over the Internet in the blink of an eye to all reaches of the world, we must write with purpose, knowing that God is pleased to use this means also in the battle against the devil's lies.

That means that in our writing we must give both a sound defense of God's truth, and careful instruction in that truth.

When I speak about giving a sound defense of God's truth, I don't mean to imply that God's truth needs our defense in order to stand. God's truth will endure forever. But that defense is necessary for our own sakes and the sakes of our children.

It is necessary for our sakes, that we might be able to say with the apostle Paul in II Timothy 4:7, "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness."

But we must also contend for that faith and stand with a sound defense of God's truth for our

children's sake, that they might understand the importance of that truth, that it is a truth worth dying for, that it is truth which alone will give peace upon the Israel of God!

But in our writing we must also take the *offensive*, providing positive and sound instruction in the truth. That is, to contend for the faith means that in our writing we wield the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God. And let me emphasize, what is required in our day is clear and concise writing, with clear definitions and authoritative instruction. The authority of the *Scriptures* must be evident in our writing.

What then shall be the results of our publishing?

The answer to that question, I would have you understand, we do well to leave to God. In a sense, the question itself may even be improper. We don't need even to concern ourselves with the results. We simply need to be faithful! Let us remind ourselves of that too.

In this day of vast departure from the authoritative standards of God's Word, we live before the penetrating light of public opinion. That kind of thinking enters the church too, including our own churches. We may expect that, in our writing, whatever we say and however we say it is sure to be displeasing to someone.

But we have a duty, and God has laid it upon us, to take a stand on the basis of His authority. We are to do so regardless of human praise or criticism, as to the Lord and not to men. We are to do so in a spirit of meekness, beseeching God for wisdom. We are to combine firmness with kindness when at all possible. But we are to write the truth, and that precisely and without wavering.

Paul wrote to Titus in Titus 1:9 that the *bishop*, an overseer in the church, must always be "Holding fast the faithful word as he hath been taught, that he may be able by sound doctrine both to exhort and to convince the gainsayers."

Those gainsayers are ones who are contradicting the truth of God.

Notice, by *sound doctrine*, we are to exhort and *convict*—i.e., by the light of God's truth *expose* and *refute* — the gainsayers. Our only weapon, our only ammunition, in the battle against heresy, no matter what the form, is the truth of God! And it is an effective weapon indeed! It is the only weapon the *Spirit* uses! And, oh, to be instruments of the Holy Spirit of truth!

The many publications of the RFPA, with the *Standard Bearer* leading the way, have played a vital role in bearing testimony of biblical truth, the light of the Reformed faith, in an amazingly broad circle, indeed, around the world.

From personal correspondence and various contacts that have arisen in my personal involvement with evangelism labors throughout my ministry, I have often been amazed at the influence our publications have played in spreading the truth for which we stand, as well as the cause of our Protestant Reformed Churches. There have been numerous contacts whom I have met through the years, whose initial introduction to our churches came through one of our books or through the *Standard Bearer*.

And while our own people, you and I included, ought to be widely read and ought to appreciate the publishing labors of the RFPA and show that appreciation by faithful reading, I think we ought not underestimate the place these publications occupy in our *witness*. Let the Word go forth! Let it go forth in truth!

Reading

But then let us also promote the reading of our materials.

The purpose of such reading is to strengthen our understanding of the truth of God's Word, and to lead us, therefore, into a deeper study of the *Scriptures* themselves.

Our reading must begin with the *Scriptures*, and I would have

nothing that I say tonight detract from that.

Martin Luther, in his treatise addressed *To The Christian Nobility of the German Nation*, warned that "the writings of all the holy fathers should be read only for a time so that through them we may be led to the *Scriptures*."* He cautioned that those who read without turning to the *Scriptures* themselves are like those who read the sign posts and never travel the road they indicate.

But the publications of the RFPA serve the purpose of leading us into a clearer understanding of the *Scriptures*, whether those publications treat specific doctrines of Scripture, specific books or passages of Scripture, or the application of the Bible to specific aspects of our daily lives.

Even the biographical writings — I think of the titles *Therefore Have I Spoken* or *Lori* — show the lives of Christians, with all their struggles and sorrows and joys as they live under the embrace of the gospel, to be lives empowered by the Spirit through the Word.

That makes your labors and your support of the RFPA a matter of importance, also in the spiritual battle that is ours as citizens of the kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ. We must stand strong as we contend for the faith. We must know what we believe. Our children and our youth must also know and must grow in that knowledge of the truth of God.

Let us, therefore, promote that growth by faithful support of this work of writing and publishing sound, substantive material, *biblically grounded* material, *truthful* material.

Let us promote it by our labors, by our gifts, by our attempts to spread the word.

But let us above all read it, and teach our children to read what

* Martin Luther, *Luther's Works*, vol. 44, p. 205.

they are capable of reading. Let us assign our children at least selected portions of the *Standard Bearer* for their Sunday afternoon

reading — again, according to their capacity to understand.

Let us show that the written

word, the word conveying God's truth, is precious to us, as we live as God's people in the midst of this present spiritual warfare. □

Marking Zion's Bulwarks

Prof. Herman Hanko

Arius and the Council of Nicea (2)

Introduction

In the last article, when we began to discuss Arius and the heresy he attempted to introduce into the church, we brought the story up to the Council of Nicea.

You will remember that Arianism was a denial of the divinity of our Lord Jesus Christ. Arius claimed that, although Christ was in a certain sense divine and existed before the worlds were formed, yet He was created and, as he said, "there was a time when he was not."

The issue, while concentrating on the divinity of our Lord, involved the entire doctrine of the holy Trinity: Was Christ divine? Was the Holy Spirit divine? How could three persons be divine and yet God be one? What was the relationship between the three persons?

The battle was long and furious and threatened to tear the church to pieces.

The doctrines were fundamental to the Christian faith, for the doctrines of God and Christ are the foundations on which is built the whole body of Christian truth. These doctrines the devil sought first to destroy through the heresy

of Arius; these doctrines, even through the scurrilous attacks of Satan, were the first to be established officially in the New Testament church.

The Calling of the Council of Nicea

Constantine became ruler in the West in 312, and over the entire empire in 323. He saw in Christianity a hope for an empire which was old and worn out, on the verge of collapse. But the unity of Christianity was the key to his use of Christianity for his own political purposes. And now Christianity itself was torn apart. What a disappointment these squabbling Christians were to the emperor!

He saw a ray of hope in calling a council of the entire church to discuss and settle an issue which seemed to him to be much ado about nothing, or as Constantine himself put it, a debate over unanswerable and unsolvable riddles.

He summoned the bishops of the church together to a small town called Nicea, in the northwest part of Asia Minor, about 20 miles from Nicomedia, the imperial seat. The bishops were instructed each to take two presbyters along and three servants. The expenses were all to be paid for out of the imperial treasury, and transportation would be provided by the emperor himself, so that the bishops could come from every part of the Mediterranean world.

Three hundred and eighteen

bishops in all came together—which was about one-third of the total number of bishops in the church. If one would count all the officebearers, the total of delegates was between 1500 and 2000. Most of them were from the Eastern or Greek Church. The Western or Latin Church sent only seven delegates—although their influence was far greater than their number.

The council met from around June 14 to July 25, 325.

Many bishops took the opportunity to bring to the emperor's attention their own personal grievances and problems, but the emperor was not interested. He burned all their papers in one huge bonfire, and exhorted them instead to unity. The attention of the bishops was then concentrated on the matter at hand.

The Council Meeting

One delegate described the opening ceremonies in this way:

After all the bishops had entered the central building of the royal palace, on the sides of which very many seats were prepared, each took his place with becoming modesty, and silently awaited the arrival of the emperor. The court officers entered one after another, though only such as professed faith in Christ. The moment the approach of the emperor was announced by a given signal, they all rose from their seats, and the emperor appeared like a heavenly messenger of God, covered

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with gold and gems, a glorious presence, very tall and slender, full of beauty, strength, and majesty. With this external adornment he united the spiritual ornament of the fear of God, modesty, and humility, which could be seen in his downcast eyes, his blushing face, the motion of his body, and his walk. When he reached the golden throne prepared for him, he stopped, and sat not down till the bishops gave him the sign. And after him they all resumed their seats.

Among the many delegates were some worthy enough to have our attention called to them. Perhaps the most notable of all, apart from the emperor, was Alexander from Alexandria, the bishop who had first opposed Arius. And with him came his deacon, a man by the name of Athanasius. Although at this time only a deacon and a young man, his careful arguments on the floor of the council had more influence on the formation of the creed than any other present. Athanasius, in the years following the council, became the man whose name was synonymous with Nicene orthodoxy.

Some delegates present still bore in their bodies the marks of the cruel persecution which the church endured under Diocletian. Polamon had had his right eye dug out. Paul of Neo-Caesarea had been tortured with red hot irons and had been crippled in both hands.

Some were ascetics. Jacob of Nisibis had spent years and years living in forests and caves, eating roots and leaves like a wild animal. Spyridion, though ordained as a bishop, had never abandoned the life of a simple shepherd — even while attending to preaching and the needs of his congregation.

At the outset of the council, the delegates were divided into three groups. The orthodox group, led by Alexander and Athanasius, though numbering less than a dozen was undoubtedly the most

able. The Arians, who were devoted to their leader and led by him at the council, numbered only about twenty. The largest party was the middle party, itself split into numerous factions, but which was finally persuaded to support the orthodox position.

After preliminary maneuverings, a creed was presented for consideration which represented the Arian position and was designed to get the assembly to approve the heresy of Arius. This creed was rejected with raucous shouts and torn to pieces. (Assemblies were somewhat more volatile in those days than they are now.)

This paved the way for the presentation of another creed, which was in all respects sound and which most of the delegates were willing to sign. The difficulty with it was that it lacked one word which the orthodox wanted incorporated. The word, transliterated from the Greek, is *homo-ousion*, and means “of the same essence.” It was an important word and it became yet more important in the years after Nicea. It expresses the idea that the Lord Jesus Christ is “of the same essence” as the Father; that is, that He and the Father are one in essence.

The word might have been excluded from the creed altogether if it had not been for the fact that Arius expressed himself as willing to sign the creed without the word. This readiness of Arius to sign the creed made the orthodox suspicious and they fought long and hard to get it included in the creed. They finally succeeded.

And so we have our beloved Nicene Creed.

The pertinent part reads (the entire creed can be found in many different places, including the back of the Psalter used in the PRC):

I believe ... in one Lord Jesus Christ, the only-begotten Son of God, begotten of the Father before all worlds, God of God, Light of Light, very God of very God, be-

gotten, not made, being of one substance (*homo-ousion*) with the Father....

Almost all present signed the creed, especially when the emperor announced that any who refused to sign it would be banished. Finally only two Egyptian bishops plus Arius himself refused to sign. They were banished to Illyria and the books of Arius were burned. This was by direct order of the emperor, who now had set a precedent for imperial involvement in all matters of the church.

The History After Nicea

If the emperor or anyone else thought that the decisions of the Council of Nicea would settle the matter, they were sadly mistaken. The controversy continued with renewed bitterness shortly after the bishops returned to their churches, and bitter fighting continued without letup.

The issues became more complicated, and we need not go into them in detail here. But they revolved chiefly around the one word the council had insisted on: *homo-ousion*.

The strict Arians had insisted on the word *hetero-ousion*, which means “of a different essence”; but their numbers were almost zero after the council. But a new party arose which wanted to use another word than Nicea had used, although not the *hetero-ousion* of the Arians. It was the word *homoi-ousion*. You will notice that the only difference is a small “i” in it. It is not very much of an exaggeration to say that over 50 years of terrible struggle which followed were over the question of an “i.” And many might be inclined to say, as Constantine himself often said, “This is evil wrangling over unimportant differences.” But it was not. The “i” made all the difference in the world. The word *homoi-ousion*, with the “i,” meant that Christ was only “like” the Father in essence—“similar to,” but not

"the same as." On that "i" hung the whole truth.

The reasons why the controversy continued were many, and we cannot recount them all. Many who signed the Nicene Creed had done so because they feared banishment. They were not convinced of its truth. Many of the issues which Nicea had attempted to settle were not yet clearly defined in the minds of many bishops. Many enemies of the truth were still roaming the sheepfold of Christ as ravening wolves. And Constantine himself, unable to understand the issues, was not a firm and dauntless defender of Nicea as he should have been.

Constantine's own ambivalence paved the way for Arius to return from exile. He was recalled because he had presented a creed to the emperor which the emperor approved. In fact, Arius even signed the Nicene Creed, most probably with some sort of mental reservations, or, perhaps, while giving in his own mind a meaning to the creed acceptable to him, but which the creed itself would not bear.

At any rate, the emperor forced the churches to receive him. Athanasius, now bishop because of the death of Alexander, flatly refused on the grounds that another synod was the only power able to lift the ban imposed on Arius. It was, said Athanasius, an ecclesiastical matter, not an imperial decision. The bishop of Constantinople was forced to admit Arius to the table of the Lord against his better judgment. But the Lord saved the table from being profaned when Arius died in 336, one day before the Lord's Supper was to be administered.

So bitter was the battle, that even the lowliest fishmonger in the market place and the chimney sweep in his sooty clothing could discuss intelligently the issues involved.

Athanasius, for his strong defense of Nicea, was banished from his church no fewer than five dif-

ferent times and he suffered much for the cause of the truth. In fact, it seemed at times as if Arianism was sure to gain the victory after all. "The whole world," said Athanasius, "has gone Arian"; and he was not far from wrong. In fact, his remark has been the occasion for Athanasius to bear in history the (honorable) name: "Athanasius *contra mundum*": Athanasius against the world.

But orthodoxy did finally win. God often works that way. When the night is the darkest, then the dawn is about to break. God must show that the preservation of His church is His work, not man's. And God saves His church when from a human point of view all is hopeless. So it was in the second half of the 4th century.

A new generation of theologians arose in the East—able men, committed thoroughly to Nicene orthodoxy. They defined the issues with clarity and biblical discretion. The West, always orthodox on this issue, began to exert more influence on the East, especially through such men as Augustine. The horrible notions of Arianism had reached their high tide and were beginning to wane.

Another council met, the second great ecumenical council. This one met in 381 in the Eastern capital of the empire: Constantinople. It reaffirmed Nicene orthodoxy and made some changes in the Nicene Creed, not significant, but which particularly affirmed the divinity of the Holy Spirit. The Nicene Creed had, in connection with the Holy Spirit, said only: "We believe in the Holy Ghost." Constantinople added: "And I believe in the Holy Ghost, the Lord and Giver of Life; who proceedeth from the Father; who with the Father and the Son together is worshiped and glorified; who spake by the Prophets." (Only later [589], at a synod in Toledo, Spain, were the words, "and the Son" added after "proceedeth from the Father.")

Conclusion

And so the truth of the absolute divinity of Christ and the doctrine of the holy Trinity was established as the foundation of all the confession of the church.

One striking and extremely important aspect of the controversy is the fact that Athanasius, in his defense of the divinity of Christ at the Council of Nicea, consistently argued his point on the grounds that the question *involved our salvation*. That is, Athanasius never permitted himself or the council to discuss the question as abstract theology, but insisted that it had to do with the salvation of the church.

His argument, in brief, was this. Our lost condition makes salvation impossible for us to accomplish. Only God can save. And, because salvation comes to us through Jesus Christ, Christ must be very God Himself.

That insistence of Athanasius on looking at the problem of the divinity of Christ as related to our salvation is reflected in the Nicene Creed, which in this connection reads:

I believe in one Lord Jesus Christ . . . who, for us men and for our salvation, came down from heaven, and was incarnate by the Holy Ghost of the Virgin Mary, and was made man; and was crucified also for us under Pontius Pilate; he suffered and was buried; and the third day he rose again, according to the Scriptures; and ascended into heaven, and sitteth on the right hand of the Father; and he shall come again, with glory, to judge both the quick and the dead; whose kingdom shall have no end.

How utterly important this is.

It is the biblical approach, for the divinity of Christ is connected directly with our salvation, something already evident in Christ's name given Him by the angel. He shall be called Jesus (Jehovah saves), for He shall save His people from their sins.

When the Eastern Church, some years down the road, failed to follow the example of Athanasius and argued over the questions of Christ's divinity apart from the question of salvation, it fell into barren and fruitless speculative argumentation and spawned every heresy under the face of the heavens. For that sin the judgment of God came upon the Eastern Church, a judgment which all but destroyed it—in the Mohammedan

conquests.

Christ Himself had affirmed that He would build His church on the foundation of the confession that He "is the Christ, the Son of the living God." Thus only is salvation as a work of God alone maintained.

Arminianism makes salvation partly the work of man. Let it never be forgotten that Arminianism is incipient Modernism, for Arminianism, denying that salvation is of God alone, will ulti-

mately deny that Jesus Christ is the eternal Son of God, very God of very God. Arminianism leads the church back to Arianism.

And so John warns us to beware those spirits which confess not that Jesus Christ has come into the flesh (that is, that Jesus Christ, who is very God of very God, *has come* [that is His divinity] into the flesh) is of antichrist, not of Christ (I John 4:1-3).

Salvation is of God! □

Go Ye Into All the World

Rev. Jason Kortering

Brethren, Pray For Us....

These words flowed repeatedly from the lips of missionary Paul. In both letters to the Thessalonians (I Thess. 5:25, II Thess. 3:1), as well as Hebrews 13:18 and others, he reminded the church of his need for their prayers. We do likewise. We reflect often upon the meaningful words of Heidelberg Catechism, Lord's Day 45, A. 116: "God will give his grace and Holy Spirit to those only, who with sincere desires continually ask them of him, and are thankful for them." Little wonder that prayer is indispensable for all spiritual progress.

The purpose of this article is not to discuss the theology of prayer for missions. That may well be profitable, but rather we want to acquaint you readers with specific needs so that you can pray meaningfully for the work in this part of Christ's kingdom. We are encouraged to receive letters from

school children and youth who occasionally assure us that they are praying for us. We trust this article will help them, parents, and also our Christian school teachers to pray specifically for the Singapore churches and their work.

Singapore

1. The saints in the Evangelical Reformed Churches of Singapore carry a burden for the aged, usually one or both of the parents either of members or of friends. Most of these parents are steeped in idolatry and superstition. They are the "old generation" who worship their ancestors, who visit the temples to gain good luck from the gods, who associate every sickness or trial with displeasing their gods, and who blame their Christian children for this. As long as these parents are strong, most of them resist all attempts to bring to them the gospel of Jesus Christ. Very interestingly, as they get older and weaker, such resistance seems to decline in some of them. The burden of love increases from their Christian children, who want so badly for their parents to allow

members of the church, who can speak their dialect, to come and visit with them. Both First and Covenant churches are giving more attention to this need and God is blessing these efforts. Pray for the salvation of parents as they are ministered to by the church. In first generation missions the reverse is usually true, God saves parents through the children, not children through the parents.

2. Covenant church has lost their use-permit for their church building. From the perspective of Christians, it seems the government is hurting Christianity by not giving use-permits to churches. The Muslims seem to build their mosques almost anywhere, as do the Chinese their temples. There are many Christian churches which are losing their permission to use their church buildings for Christian worship. Some, like FERC, have free-hold property in that they actually own their own land and have received permission to use it for Christian purposes without the need to renew. Such land is almost non-existent today and was very rare in the past. CERC bought their

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property with the need to renew yearly their permission to use it for Christian service. They received notice in May that they can no longer use it for that purpose and have to terminate such use in one year's time. They have formed a building committee which has been searching for possible suitable land or building. Most of what they find requires a change-of-use permit, which seems impossible to get today. So, do pray that God may give them encouragement and direction to know what His will is as a congregation. Ideally, if the ERCS could have congregations at scattered key places on the island, active involvement of the members would be greatly enhanced. Even if we could worship in homes (something the present law forbids), it would be helpful. All these things seem to be impossible at this time. Even rented property is hard to find, but maybe the Lord wants to teach us to be pilgrims who have no abiding place on the earth.

3. The financial crisis is affecting the entire society, including the members of the churches. Pray that God may use this for His glory. True, we pray locally for our members who have been "retrenched," i.e., laid off from work. Things are done a bit differently here. The government sits down with labor unions and works out an agreement how to lower wages, cut back working hours, and even adjust prices of merchandise in order to preserve social cohesion. This means less money, but at this point in time, most are still able to work. This financial crisis is affecting all of Asia, and businesses and banks are hurting. It is a time of pain, as Singapore is learning the hard way that life is not all success. Even though they may be number one, outside forces can quickly take it all away. There are evidences of complaining, worrying, showing dismay, as the dream of Singapore shows some tarnish. At the same time it is a good op-

portunity for Christians to speak of their faith to their neighbors. Pray that our members may seize this difficult time to show to others that life is more than money and success. We must look to the future, where moth and rust does not corrupt and where thieves do not break forth and steal.

4. We seek your prayers as we chart a course for theological training in S.E. Asia. This involves a number of concerns. First, we are much interested in making available to our own leaders and other students in Singapore, classes for their own benefit. The Theological Training Committee decided it is time to address the issue of Hyper-Calvinism. We are being accused of being such by some of the Bible Presbyterian Churches in Singapore and also by other churches in the countries where we are doing ministry. So the committee decided that we ought to have a series of evening lectures in December on this subject and that Pastor Lau should prepare them. Do pray for Pastor Lau as he prepares these studies.

Secondly, we believe that it is necessary that we prepare a *Reformed Digest*, in order that as churches we can develop in our theology and communicate this to others. Pastor Cheah is editor of this project and he is working to get the first edition out by November.

Thirdly, we believe strongly in the need to organize and begin our Bible School. We ask that you pray for this need because it is not only urgent, but also the most complex to realize. We have discussed various ways of how to organize this school, and over the years these ideas have been considered. Should we have a school operating here in Singapore on a semester basis and have students come here for studies? Should we have a school which teaches subjects on a modular basis, one subject at a time in a more concentrated manner? This would give us greater

flexibility. Should we set as our goal to take students to Singapore, or should we set up a school here and have extension courses in the local countries in which we are doing mission work? Presently we are giving most attention to developing our courses as modules and teaching them in Singapore, and also using them as extension courses in other countries. This is the easiest way to begin. It is low-key and less demanding than to begin a full-time school. It is something which we can develop as we go along. It will allow us to instruct students both in Singapore and in other countries without having all of them come to Singapore, which has its own difficulties. I am convinced this holds by far the most significant long-range impact for the spread of the Reformed faith in this part of the world. It is this area also where the PRC and ERCS need to work together if we are to meet the demands which such a project require. Let us pray that God may guide us in the proper way as we chart our course.

Myanmar

Do pray for the saints in this difficult land. We must pray for them from two points of view.

First, many of them suffer because of oppressive government. The Chin State borders India, and any border state suffers because of insurgency. The students especially are becoming more active in causing trouble. Not too long ago they blew up an electric generating plant near Falam, where a large number of the URCM churches are located. They give the military some difficulty, and then slip into India for refuge. Due to this the military becomes very hostile to the local people. Though we do not know particulars from Chin, we read of some of these oppressions in the Shan State.

In May 1998, many villagers who had been forcibly relocated to Kho-Lam had asked permission

from the SPDC (military government) authorities in Nam-Zang to go and work on the farms outside the village. One man, 45, and some 18 of his fellow villagers managed to get a pass from the authorities in Nam-Zang as well as permission from the commander of the local military camp at Kho-Lam, Capt Han Sein, to work on the farms about 4 miles west of Kho-Lam and they had been working on the farms from 14-5-98 until 6-6-98 when troops from IBZ46 shot at them from a distance. The villagers all ran away into the nearby forest without anyone getting hit and the soldiers left after searching the farms for awhile.

After awhile, a woman 30, and her uncle 40, presuming the troops had really left, went back to the farms with the intention to get their clothes and beds from the farm hut and return to the village. However, as they reached the hut, the soldiers came back and arrested them and beat (the uncle) to death. (The woman) was stripped of her clothes and raped many times before she was also shot dead in the hut. After that, the troops left the farms and went to Kho-Lam.

On 7-6-98 the villagers at Kho-Lam heard the news and became very worried, so that a villager who had relatives working on the farms about 4 miles south of the village went and warned them. On hearing about it, the farmers became so frightened that they all returned to the village. But when they were still about one mile away from the village they met the same SPDC soldiers coming from the village to search the area and they were arrested. Eight of them, including the one who came to warn them.

These farmers were taken to the military camp at Kho-Lam and tortured, also with electric shocks, until they lost consciousness for some time and one was beaten so hard that he later died in the camp. Twenty five village leaders and elders went to the troops and pleaded for mercy. Eventually, the soldiers agreed to release them on paying 15,000 Kyats for each. The villagers had been tied and locked

up for 9 days before their release.

Secondly, due to many circumstances, one of which is poor governing, the economic situation in Myanmar has become critical.

The kyat was trading around 360 to the dollar on Yangon's black market Friday (Sept. 11) but earlier crashed through the 400 mark in some parts of the country. The black market rate was around 150 to the dollar before Asia became embroiled in the economic crisis last July. The official rate is six kyat to the dollar but is almost totally ignored.

This affects the saints in the United Reformed Churches and Protestant Reformed Churches. It is becoming more difficult for them to travel to the conferences and seminars we sponsor. Due to the difficulties, we almost always hold them in Yangon (instead of our flying to Kale, which is closer to them). This requires them to walk many miles before they can get to the main road, and then they ride on the back of large trucks hauling commercial goods. I have seen them not even able to stand up straight for the first couple of days when they arrive in Yangon, they are so sore. Yet they come for the Word of God.

Rev. Titus wrote me recently, "Now our electricity situation is very bad. We get it in ration. And any time it can be cut off. I really miss you, especially whenever I am down with the struggles of my country." We are saddened also that, due to the involvement of some recent public demonstrations which included Americans, the military government's suspicion of Americans has increased. The ERCS decided that it is best that I not go to teach the next seminar in November, but that Pastor Cheah go again. Be much in prayer that God may continue to bless this instruction, so that they may grow in the knowledge of God's Word

and their love of the sovereign God.

Pray for these saints that they may not be overcome in their difficult situation and that they may ever look to God for His protection and care. Pray also that the churches here may be sensitive to their needs and do all we can to help them as brothers and sisters in Christ. Our deacons are actively involved in helping them with their orphanages and old people's homes as well as individual poor. God has placed in our midst a brother and sister from the Philippines who in the past have assisted the poor in Vietnam. They offered to help us by going to Myanmar to assess how to teach the people to live off the land as best they can and how we can help them set up some sort of way in which they can earn a little money for themselves and not be dependent on outside money.

India/Nepal

Following our trip to India in April we have received a flood of letters and requests for books and financial help. Brother Stephen writes,

Regarding the seminar, I am communicating all people, I am sending to some of them the Xerox copy of first page message in the magazine, *Standard Bearer*. I have put a name for this issue that is, "Oh! Oh! Food to Soul." I will send you one just for your knowledge to know what I am doing. I communicating and fellowshiping with our people in our area in Theni, Periyakulam, and in upper hills.... People told me that they received booklets and letters from you. They are very much happy about that. I am sending a long list of people so that you can communicate them.

He is asking for financial assistance so that he can send material to these people on a regular basis to help them grow in the Reformed faith. He also wants very much to

continue to have more teaching seminars in his area.

Also from southern India, Brother Y. Paul Raj writes,

At present I stay at my home spending all my time in getting myself ready to be trained by you sooner. Some times I go for mission work and some charitable work. Frequently I meet Ps. Stephen and discuss more about our P.R. faith. And also our Lord always enables me to work at a village nearby my village. Right from the beginning we preach things according to our PR faith. When I look around I see most of the ministers who mislead the people according to Pentecostal Spirit. Most of the people are being captivated by false doctrines. As I see this I am greatly disgusted and pray the Lord to establish a P.R. Church in India.

He is a young man who is willing and available to be trained to become a pastor. Both he and Pastor Stephen are much interested in our sponsoring a work in India. So pray for these brothers and their ministries as well as the ERCS as we plan

some course of action for them.

Recently we also came into contact with churches of the Diaspora in Nepal and India. Especially in Nepal they are doing work in areas in which there is no other Christian church around. In a recent letter to me, Brother Pallab wrote,

I am staying a place called Mahendranagar, in Jnampur, which is 430 kms. away from Kathmandu. This place is a small town, but this is a center place for the local people.... We are only about one year old church. This church is started its work on last year only and thus far one person has accepted the gospel of the grace of God and become baptized. We have selected this place because there were no church for this locality which is the house for half million people. Another lady of 38 is preparing for baptism now. Every week there is 18-20 people attend our church regularly. We are working in a completely unreached area of Nepal. We are holding the Reformed faith and we are not compromising with any other things. Perhaps by the

grace of God we are the only Reformed church in Nepal.... As you have shown interest in Nepal and India it is very good for us to have your fellowship with us in order to grow in God's Word. We are a very few churches in India, we are not that much popular. Many people do not know about us. I hope you will come to Nepal then you will know more about the churches in Nepal and India. As my four and half years in Nepal, I have found that there is almost 99% charismatic Christians in Nepal. It was very difficult to find a Reformed man in Nepal. Thank God that He has helped us to start a Reformed Church in Nepal.

Our hearts are greatly encouraged by the financial support of our people and also by saints outside the Protestant Reformed Churches. With the funds, we have ample means to do this work as the Lord allows us time and manpower. Just pray for the ERCS that we may make good decisions as we evaluate all these opportunities to further the glorious truth of the sovereignty of our God. □

A Word Fitly Spoken

Rev. Dale Kuiper

Ransom

Central to the message of the gospel is the idea of ransom. The Hebrew word (*kofér*) has the basic meaning of covering; then it means a redemption price, a ransom that sets free, satisfaction. This word is related to the word atonement and the day of atonement (*yom kippur*), and to the covering of the ark, the mercy seat. Ransom is closely related in thought to the concepts purchase, buy, redeem. The Greek term means to release on receipt of a ransom, to liberate by payment of

a ransom, to redeem and deliver from the penalty of sin. When this word is found with a prefix meaning in the place of, instead of, or for the benefit of, there is strong emphasis placed on the idea of substitution. Someone pays the ransom price in the place of others and with great benefit for others.

The idea of ransom was taught the Israelites by several precepts of the Mosaic law. If an ox with a reputation for pushing with his horn kill a man, the owner of the ox shall be

Rev. Kuiper is pastor of Southeast Protestant Reformed Church in Grand Rapids, Michigan.

put to death; but if a sum of money be laid upon him, he shall give for the ransom of his life (Ex. 21:30). Because the firstborn males of man and of beast belonged to the Lord (Ex. 13:2, 12), the beasts are to be sacrificed to the Lord, but all the firstborn children shall be redeemed (Ex. 13:15). Thus, when Jesus was presented in the temple at the age of eight days, He was circumcised and a ransom price was paid that He might be free to go about His earthly ministry (Luke 2:21-24). If a hungry man steals, he is not despised; if he be found out, he must restore sevenfold (here, the fine is a kind of ransom). But he who committeth adultery lacks understanding, and the offended husband will not be satisfied with any ransom (Prov. 6:35).

But it was always plain to the Israelite that he could not give a ransom for his own soul or for the soul of his brother, "for the redemption of their soul is precious" (Ps. 49:7, 8). Jesus comments on this Psalm, "For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?" (Matt. 16:26). The ransom of the soul can be accomplished only by God Himself, as God spoke to proud Ephraim, "I will ransom them from the power of the grave; I will redeem them from death" (Hos. 13:14).

The term ransom is also used with two great deliverances that God gave to the Israelites. Of their deliverance out of the land of Egypt, that great house of bondage, we read, "I gave Egypt for thy ransom, Ethiopia and Seba for thee. Since thou wast precious in my sight, thou hast been honourable, and I have loved thee: therefore will I give men for thee, and people for thy life" (Is. 43:3, 4). Concerning their return from captivity in Babylon we read, "For the Lord hath redeemed Jacob, and ransomed him from the hand of him that was stronger than he" (Jer. 31:11). In both these examples, the idea is not that foreign nations which were wasted by God for the sake of His people were types or pictures of the great ransom price that our sins demanded; this could never be. But these examples reveal the sovereignty of God in the way in which He saved His people under the old covenant. He does what He pleases with nations and peoples. He

raises them up, gets glory for Himself, and frees His people from cruel bondage. Secondly, these examples show that reprobation serves election, the world serves the church. All things are for our sakes! All things are ours, we are Christ's, and Christ is God's.

A ransom price implies bondage. Man is subject to the dominion and curse of sin (Gal. 3:13 and I Cor. 15:56). In a secondary sense, man is in bondage to Satan as the head of the kingdom of darkness, and to the bondage of the fear of death (Acts 26:18 and Heb. 2:14, 15). But the ransom must not be paid to Satan. Sin is not against Satan; it entered into the world *by* Satan. Sin is against *God*. *God* must be satisfied with a ransom price in order that he might set His people free from bondage. And God alone decides what that price is! The price is death. The price is the death of the Son of God united to human nature. The price is voluntary, willing death. The price is loving God and keeping His law, in the midst of death and at the moment of death. "Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us" (Gal. 3:13). The idea of ransom reaches its deepest and fullest meaning in the substitutionary work of Jesus Christ!

Instructing His disciples in true greatness, Jesus said, "Even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give His life a ransom for many" (Matt. 20:18). Instructing the young Timothy in public prayer, that supplications and intercessions be made for all men (all kinds or classes of men, including kings and others in authority), Paul writes that this is good and acceptable to God, "who would have all men to be saved and come unto the knowledge of the truth. For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus; who gave himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time" (I Tim. 2:1-6). Christ gave Himself for all those given Him by the Father. Rich and poor, male and female, Jew and Gentile, of high and low estate, all are under universal bondage. And the only way to be saved is to be freed from sin and death, from the curse and all fear, by the ransom price that Christ alone can bring, and did bring. If He has made you free, then you are free indeed! □

Establishing Schools to Provide Reformed-Covenant Education (1)



This article is an introduction to several articles concerning the development and establishing of the Protestant Reformed Christian schools. Articles concerning the development of the PR schools are appropriate in view of the planning authorized by synod to commemorate and celebrate the 75th anniversary of the Protestant Reformed Churches in America.

Recalling and rereading this history will be a review for some. For others it will be an introduction. Those remembering the period 1934-1953 in the history of our churches will remember the establishment and operation of the First Reformed Christian School of Redlands, California. Some may remember attending this school and learning their lessons during those early days in the church basement of the Redlands PR Church.

The establishing and developing of the PR Christian schools is part of the past which serves as the foundation for our current schools. It is an important legacy that we ought to know and celebrate. It is part of the heritage out of which we live.

In this first article we intend to survey the literature and some of the writings that have provided the stimulus and positive direction for the development of the PR school movement.

Miss Lubbers is a member of First Protestant Reformed Church in Grand Rapids, Michigan.

Leadership was provided early in the days prior to the existence of the schools and in the early days of the PRC by Rev. Herman Hoeksema and other ministers who advocated our own Christian schools. These leaders and spokesmen for the cause taught and promoted the truth that believers could most correctly carry out their promise to instruct the seed of the covenant in the doctrines of Scriptures as these are summarized in the Three Forms of Unity by establishing PR schools that were staffed with teachers who were members of the church and had espoused the distinctive doctrines that led to the formation of the PRC. Not all agreed that such schools were necessary, but such leadership did serve to help in the founding of the fourteen schools that are in existence today.



Since October, 1924, when the first issue of the *Standard Bearer* appeared, over three hundred articles concerning Christian education and Christian schools have been written and published in the *Standard Bearer*. This plethora of information and this proliferation of articles is an indication of the importance that education of covenant children has in the lives and thinking of members of the Protestant Reformed Churches.

A perusal of the recently published index of the first 73 volumes

of the *Standard Bearer* makes obvious what I have indicated about the number of articles.

A review of the articles written will indicate that some of the articles were critical of the established Christian school movement supported primarily by the CRC. Others were more positive in that they provided specific direction for those developing Christian schools. A series of articles has traced the history of education during the sixteenth century Reformation. Other articles have urged parents to form societies and have exhorted parents concerning their responsibility to erect distinctively Reformed Christian schools staffed by well-prepared and orthodox teachers. Still other articles have been concerned with finances, intrusion by the government, place of doctrine in the schools, consistorial promotion of Christian schools, etc.

The first of the more than 300 articles published in the *Standard Bearer* concerning Christian education was the text of a sermon preached by Rev. Herman Hoeksema prior to the existence of the PRC. Rev. H. Hoeksema preached this sermon in September of 1916, when he was a minister in the Fourteenth Street Christian Reformed Church, Holland, Michigan (cf. *Standard Bearer*, Volume 3, pp. 532-536, September 1, 1927).

The text for the sermon was Deuteronomy 6:7. In this classic and well-known passage Moses exhorts the people of Israel to teach the precepts of God diligently to

their children, to talk of them when they sit in their houses, when they walk by the way, when they lie down, and when their rise up.

Emphasized in the sermon was the truth that the education of the children must be specifically Christian and that education should be viewed as one of the most important tasks of the Christian parent. The sermon demonstrated the biblical basis of Christian education, particularly of Christian education in the school, and stated summarily and clearly the fundamental nature of such education.

Four years later, in a series of ten editorials running from November, 1931, to August, 1932, Herman Hoeksema subjected the principles of the existing Christian school movement to a careful examination. He contended that the Christian school movement (National Union of Christian Schools, now Christian Schools International) was governed by basic principles that are generally Christian but not specifically Reformed.

The positive purpose of these articles was to make clear to the Protestant Reformed supporters of Christian education their calling with respect to covenant education. In these articles Hoeksema argued that Protestant Reformed people use the existing Christian schools as long as nothing more ideal existed. He urged reformation of the Christian schools that were then being used but, if that did not succeed, he advocated an independent movement that would establish schools on fundamentally sound principles.

His tenth and final editorial in this series of articles concluded with the *six specific principles* Herman Hoeksema proposed as the basis for all Reformed Christian education. (Cf. *Standard Bearer*, August 1, 1932, Volume 8, pp. 488-489.)

These principles have been used by all of the school societies in the Protestant Reformed Churches in the Constitutions

adopted by the school societies.

We reproduce these principles because they should not merely gather dust in the constitutions and archives of our schools but they should be studied and understood. These six principles, composed more than six decades ago, articulate the basic reasons, the essentials, for the establishing and maintaining of Protestant Reformed Christian schools.



Six Fundamental Principles

1. The Bible is from beginning to end the written Word of God, given by infallible inspiration. All school administration, instruction, and discipline shall be based on it and permeated by its teaching, for we acknowledge that the fear of God is the beginning of wisdom.

2. God, who created and sustains all things and governs them according to His sovereign counsel; who is triune and, as such, lives an eternal covenant-life of friendship in infinite perfection; from eternity chose and in time forms a people unto Himself, to stand in covenant-relationship unto Him in Christ Jesus their Lord, that they might walk in all good works which He ordained for them, and in all their life in the world should be to the praise of His glory, children of light in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation.

3. From a fallen and wholly depraved human race, and in the midst of a world that lieth in darkness, a crooked and perverse generation, God saves His elect, establishing His covenant with them and their children in the line of continued generations, forming them by His sovereign grace in Christ into a people of Himself, that they might be His friends, and, living in every sphere of life from the principle of regeneration through faith, they should show forth His praises and walk as children of light in the world.

4. In the midst of and in distinction from the evil world that lieth

in darkness and is perverse in all its ways because of sin, it is the calling of the people of God to live by grace from the principle of regeneration according to the will of God in every sphere of life, individual, family, social, industrial, political, and ecclesiastical, so that they may be children of light in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation. Hence they insist that all education, that must prepare their children for such an all-sided Christian walk in the world, shall be adapted to this purpose.

5. It is the objective of the Christian school to furnish the pupil with an education which in all its branches is rooted in the principle of the fear of God as the beginning of wisdom; and thus to co-labor, in its own proper domain, alongside of and in distinction from the home and the church, to equip the pupil with that knowledge and wisdom which is necessary in order that he may be able to walk in the midst of the world worthy of the vocation wherewith God calls His people, and that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.

6. In determining the Course of Study of the Christian school the principles heretofore set forth should be adopted as a basis for the entire curriculum. And of the teacher, upon whom rests the responsible task of carrying out this course of study, it shall be required that he present a testimonial from a Reformed Normal School. It shall also be required of him that he express full and wholehearted agreement with the basic principles heretofore set forth and that he declare his purpose to make of the teaching profession no stepping-stone but his life-task.



The language of these six principles is non-compromising and confessionally Reformed. They may appear to be out-of-date to some, but to the Reformed Christian these principles express the Reformed distinctives that must

regulate the instruction, discipline, and administration of truly Christian schools. These Reformed distinctives are those that should drive and give direction to all fourteen of the Protestant Reformed Christian school societies that have established schools and have employed teachers to educate the children and youth attending these schools.

It should be apparent that genuine interest and concern for the education of the covenant seed has always been the concern of Reformed believers because of their responsibility as a covenant people. Truly Reformed Christian education was a significant concern of the early leaders of our churches and of the people of the churches. Interest in the PRC for distinctive

Reformed Christian education free from the errors and influence of the common grace theories and the deviant world view advocated by Abraham Kuyper and adopted by the Christian Reformed Church in 1924 goes back to the origin and early days of the Protestant Reformed Churches.

A goodly heritage is ours, marked out with gracious care. □

All Around Us

Rev. Gise VanBaren

■ Towards Greater Unity?

A number of newspapers have reported an event towards which four major denominations have been working for a long time. The Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, the Presbyterian Church (USA), the United Church of Christ, and the Reformed Church in America recently signed an agreement to have "full communion" together. The Greeley Tribune gave a report titled "Sharing the Word":

With choir members providing the background music, the people who filled the pews at First Congregational Church Sunday morning broke bread together.

Then the people drank wine together.

Though the two traditions are not unusual to see in a church, Sunday's 11 a.m. service was not of the usual kind.

Five Greeley congregations entered into "full communion" together. This means that the denominations have decided to heal their disagreements with each other, both nationally and locally, and recognize each others' baptisms and ministries. They also will accept members of the other churches to take communion.

...The Greeley service was one of many occurring around the nation to recognize the common ground four national churches have found....

... "It was great," Bob Bischoff said. "There was just the right humor in it (the sermon)."

Bersagel's sermon began with some words on how the different churches gathered together for the morning.

... "It's so neat to get everyone together," said Bernie Bliss, who attends First Congregational.

"We've let stuff on paper keep us apart when the underlying reason we are all here is to worship."

Along the same vein, the San Francisco *Chronicle*, Oct. 7, 1998, stated:

Overcoming 470 years of division, members of four Protestant denominations came together in a historic "full communion" service in Berkeley yesterday but confessed that they still have a long way to go.

The service, held in the chapel at the Pacific School of Religion, was the first church-sanctioned communion service in Northern California where members of the Lutheran and Reformed churches shared in the Christian liturgy of bread and wine.

It took 35 years of ecumenical negotiations for the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, the Presbyterian Church USA, the United Church of Christ and the Reformed Church in America to make it to the altar.

While not an actual merger, the Protestant pact calls for much greater cooperation among the denominations, even allowing Lutheran clergy to pastor Presbyterian churches, and vice versa. Together, the four churches claim more than 10 million members.

Nevertheless, the Rev. Timothy Lull, president of Pacific Lutheran Theological Seminary, conceded that yesterday's event – patterned after a larger national gathering two days earlier in Chicago – was history with a very small "h."

...Even in the American heartland, Lull said, the Lutherans, Presbyterians and Congregationalists can no longer pretend to be the "mainline" Protestants. They are fast losing "market share," while in the Bay area, "the tide of Christendom seems to be ebbing, and vital religion manifests itself in other traditions."

Lull's sermon did manage to find a few rays of light. He noted that the "formula of agreement" between the four denominations heals a wound that opened at the Colloquy of Marburg in 1529. That was the fateful session where Martin Luther, the German Reformer, and Ulrich Zwingli, his Swiss counterpart, could not agree on whether the bread and wine were really the body and blood of Christ. Luther favored the more traditional teachings, splintering the young Protestant movement.

... "We have sinned by claiming our differences as more important than our oneness in the Body of Christ," said seminary student Kirk Wegter-McNelly, addressing the congregation.

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

"Forgive us, O God," the congregation replied.

It is a truism that the oneness of the body of Christ is of utmost importance. Christ Himself prayed that "they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me" (John 17:21). The question remains prominently before us, "Is this beginning of unity between the denominations, the unity which reflects that between the Father and Christ?" Such unity is based on truth. The "unity" now being practiced by the aforementioned denominations can only be on the basis of the "lowest common denominator." If "truth" is sacrificed on this altar of "unity," then one must despair of the consequences. One will surely see this "unity" resulting further in loss of "market share." And why? If doctrine no longer is significant, if "unity" remains the common theme, why belong to such churches? There could be perhaps a measure of excitement for a time, but when the foundations are destroyed, what else can the righteous do—but seek that which still highly values the truth of God's Word and holds to the old creeds of His church?

■ 501(c)3—Bane or Blessing?

Christian Renewal, Oct. 5, 1998, contains several articles treating the question of taxation of non-profit organizations, including churches, in the USA and also in Canada. Matters of some serious import are presented there. I quote just part of the article pertaining to the taxation laws of the USA:

... My focus here will be on taxation of the church, which remains tax exempt, but only it seems if it also remains largely silent on issues that the Church of Jesus Christ is obligated to address. In the U.S., we have an In-

ternal Revenue Service code known as 501(c)3. This IRS rule (it is not Constitutional law) was introduced during the Roosevelt administration as a way to further codify the modernist interpretation of the separation between church and state. Under this law, churches or any other non-profit organization are exempt from government taxation so long as only a minimal amount of the organization's money and/or resources are employed in political activity.

Over the years, the IRS has said these moneys and resources cannot extend beyond 5% of a church's or non-profit organization's budget. The IRS also has ensured this rule covers specific activities: endorsing or opposing a political candidate for office, directing funds to any one political candidate or Political Action Committee, and making a church mailing list available to one candidate but not another. Although this IRS rule has kept the church from being taxed as an organization in the U.S., it also has contributed to muzzling the church from speaking against unrighteousness in our land for fear that particular declarations against abortion, the public countenancing of homosexuality, or any other nefarious activity, such as government welfare, would place the church in a position of endorsing one political platform over another.

As a result, the church has sheepishly fallen prey to the modernist interpretation of separation between church and state. Sermons, teaching, and Christian activity are hardly ever extended to society at large as they were during the Reformation, but only to the Christian heart that somehow must survive in a culture that has long been given away. Even Calvinistic churches, which have long stood for the Gospel's power of cultural transformation, have receded into the woodwork, teaching holiness for holiness' sake, and not for the glory of God as it impacts the society in which Christians live, work and have a state.

Todd Polyniak, a Reformed churchman, CPA and partner of

the firm Singer, Wolf and Mongelli, said that the IRS's 501(c)3 effectively operates as a statist doctrine that tells churches, "We'll leave you alone if you leave us alone." In other words, so long as the church sticks to its knitting defined by the state, then its tax-exempt status is secure. If it ventures beyond these parameters, however, be assured that the IRS will take notice and begin to come in for a closer look. Is this any different in principle from what is occurring in China? Churches have largely played along, but some non-profit groups have not.

There's much more, of course, in that article as well as another which examines the tax situation in Canada. That of Canada may, if possible, be even more serious than that of the IRS in the USA. One is, however, reminded of the attempt of governments to erode, little-by-little, the position of Christ's church. Some countries have simply outlawed the church. But perhaps of greater concern is the gradual erosion of the duty and responsibility of the church by the state under the guise of "separation between church and state." It reminds me again of the story of the frog. When thrown into hot, boiling water, it will (so I was told) immediately seek to escape. But when the frog is placed in cold water which is gradually heated, presumably it does nothing and is cooked. Is this what is now happening to the churches of our North American countries? □



Book Reviews

Abraham Kuyper: A Centennial Reader, ed. James D. Bratt. Grand Rapids, MI/Cambridge, U.K.: Eerdmans/Paternoster, 1998. xiv + 498 pages. \$29.00 (paper). [Reviewed by the editor.]

Most of the sixteen pieces by Abraham Kuyper that are the content of this book have never before been translated into English. They are either published speeches by the great Dutch theologian and politician, shorter articles, or excerpts from longer works. Among them are Kuyper's account of his spiritual conversion ("Confidentially"); his critique of theological liberalism ("Modernism: A Fata Morgana in the Christian Domain"); a well-chosen selection from Kuyper's still untranslated three-volume work on common grace ("Common Grace"); a great analysis of the Boer War ("The South African Crisis"); Kuyper's penetrating exposures of pantheism and of evolution ("The Blurring of the Boundaries" and "Evo-

lution"); and his famed inaugural address at the Free University ("Sphere Sovereignty").

The articles come from all periods of Kuyper's life and cover all the amazing Dutchman's interests: theology, politics, and culture.

All of the articles demonstrate the brilliant mind of a great scholar. Many shine the light of biblical, Reformed truth upon vital issues in church and society. Some display disquieting weaknesses in the influential thought of one who claimed in all things to be a Calvinist.

Editor James D. Bratt introduces each piece, setting it in historical context and offering pointed analysis. The introductions are helpful. Bratt acknowledges Kuyper's personal, political motive in writing the series of articles on common grace: with his writings on common grace Kuyper wanted to bring the Reformed people in the Netherlands "back in touch with the larger society and culture—also for immediate political purposes.

He completed the series simultaneously with his election as prime minister" (p. 165).

Adding to the value and pleasure of the work are the pictures, editorial cartoons from newspapers of the time, and short quotations from Kuyper's church paper and newspaper. Outstanding is the meditation on death written by Kuyper on the occasion of the death of his wife (pp. 408-415). One of the quotations sprinkled throughout the book is Kuyper's response to criticism from some of his own followers, that wine was served at the banquet attending the inaugural of the Free University: "... the Reformed are not the sort to water down their wine.... From the chocolate kettle and the milk and water bottle rises no race of bold Calvinists" (p. 489).

There are some memorable lines, e.g., "From ... Scripture (we have) learned that those can live who are prepared to die and that where God is with us no bully can make us crawl" (p. 44). □

News From Our Churches

Mr. Benjamin Wigger

Congregational Activities

The Hull, IA PRC recently adopted a proposal to build a new parsonage. Their building committee is now in the process of letting out the project for bids. It is hoped that this new home can be completed by June of next year.

On Saturday, September 16, the walls of the Bethel PRC in Itasca, IL were raised. This, after a week when men from Bethel worked every day at the new church site, cutting, drilling, and laying out the

top and bottom plates for those exterior walls.

Of course, this being mid-November, we can only assume that work has continued at Bethel way beyond the point of wall raising. If you have access to a computer you can check it out for yourself on Bethel's web site. They have many pictures which show the progress. Simply go to our denominational web site at www.prca.org, then go to Bethel under the listing of churches and click on their "new location."

Work also continues at the new church site of the Georgetown PRC in Hudsonville, MI. The bulletin of October 4 reported that the bricklayers were continuing to lay

the exterior walls. The storm line has been placed in the parking lot, and water and sewer lines have been brought to the building.

This time of year many of our congregations are holding their annual congregational meetings. The Grace PRC in Standale, MI recently held theirs, and we are thankful that we can report that their budget for 1999 was approved with no General Fund subsidy being requested from Hope Church. We join in their thanks to God for reaching this milestone of being self-supporting, as well as thanks to Hope, their "mother church," for the years of generous assistance that she provided.

On October 16 the Covenant

Mr. Wigger is an elder in the Protestant Reformed Church of Hudsonville, Michigan.

Ladies Circle of the First PRC in Edmonton, Alberta, Canada sponsored an evening of fellowship for women from their congregation, and their teenage daughters, as well as those from Immanuel PRC in Lacombe and women from the area. Rev. M. DeVries gave a short meditation on the topic, "The Godly Woman: A Life of Self-Denial or Self-Fulfillment." A lunch followed, as well as some special numbers provided by various members of the group.

Evangelism Activities

The congregation of the Kalamazoo, MI PRC were encouraged to set aside Thursdays in October to attend their churches' "Fall Seminars." The theme for this year's three seminars was "The Church: God's Glorious Bride." Rev. W. Bruinsma presented the first seminar, October 8, on "The Church and Her Role in Society." Following one week later was Rev. B. Gritters, speaking on the subject, "The True Versus the False Church." Rev. Bruinsma concluded the short series October 22, speaking on the theme of "Our Calling Toward the Church."

The Evangelism Committee of the Grandville, MI PRC recently

hosted a fall lecture in Grandville, with Prof. R. Dykstra speaking on the topic, "God's Priceless Gift—The Family."

On October 16 Rev. M. VanderWal, pastor of Covenant PRC in Wyckoff, New Jersey, gave a lecture entitled "Jesus Christ: Victor Over Hell." This was the final lecture in a three-part series sponsored by Covenant's Evangelism Society.

A group of men from the Southwest PRC in Grandville, MI, the calling church for our mission work in Pittsburgh, PA, traveled there in late September to work on the home recently purchased for our missionary, Rev. Mahtani, and his family. Various repairs and renovations were planned and a study was built in the basement.

One of the special projects the Young People's Society of the First PRC in Holland, MI is busily engaged in this year is the writing of monthly letters and or cards to our missionaries and their families. Not a bad idea for the rest of us as well.

The delegation of Revs. A. denHartog and R. Smit have returned home again in late October from their travels to the Philippines on behalf of the FMC of our

churches. Their mandate for that visit of more than two weeks was to develop our contacts there and investigate the possibility of recommending the Philippines as a field of mission labor. They are scheduled to report their findings to the FMC on November 16, D.V.

Denominational Activities

The annual meeting of the RFPA was held in late September at Grace PRC in Standale, MI. Rev. S. Key spoke on the topic, "Reading, Writing, and Heretics."

In late September Rev. C. Hanco led the men and women of the Eastern Men's and Ladies' League in an informal talk on the topic, "Spiritual Life of the Family after the Children are Grown."

Minister Activities

On October 7 Rev. and Mrs. J. Laning were blessed with the birth of a son, Samuel Scott. Samuel was born about three months prematurely. He is expected to be in De Vos Children's Hospital in Grand Rapids, MI for ten weeks or so.

Rev. and Mrs. R. Smit thankfully received the blessed gift of a daughter, Rebekah Ann, born into their family on September 24. □

ANNOUNCEMENTS

RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The council of Faith PRC express their Christian sympathy to Elder Gerald Feenstra and his family in the loss of his mother,

JEANETTE FEENSTRA.

May they find comfort in these words: "And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose" (Romans 8:28).

Rev. Kenneth Koole, Pres.
Arie E. Griffioen, Clerk

RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The Men's Society of the Hope Protestant Reformed Church of Redlands, CA extend their Christian sympathy to the children, grandchildren, and relatives of

MRS. JEANETTE FEENSTRA

in her passing to glory. May our gracious God comfort them by His Word. "The Lord is my rock, and my fortress, and my deliverer; my God, my strength, in whom I will trust" (Psalm 18:2).

Rev. denHartog, President
Mr. Earl Grothman, Sec'y.

RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The council and congregation of Southeast PRC express their sincere sympathy to Mrs. Pauline Breen and her husband in the death of her brother,

MR. HAROLD STEGENGA.

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

Rev. Dale Kuiper, Pres.
Tim Pipe, Clerk

RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The Adult Bible Society of Doon PRC express their Christian sympathy to our fellow member Charlene Van Egdom in the death of her infant daughter,

EMILY DAWN.

May she and her family find comfort in God's Word, "He shall feed his flock like a shepherd: he shall gather the lambs with his arm, and carry them in his bosom, and shall gently lead those that are with young" (Isaiah 40:11).

Rev. Richard Smit, Pres.
Karen VanDenTop, Sec.

WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

On December 10, 1998, our parents,

BILL and SHIRLEY FEENSTRA, will celebrate their 50th wedding anniversary. It is with thanksgiving to our heavenly Father that we celebrate this event with them. "The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want.... Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life: and I will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever" (Psalm 23). We are thankful for Christian parents who saw the need to educate us at Christian schools and faithfully lead us in the life of God's church. May the everlasting love of our God dwell in your hearts for years to come.

- ❖ Larry and Linda Feenstra
Luke, Jennie, Jackie
- ❖ Wayne and Janice Baker
Bryan, Jacinta, Courtney,
Kellie, Kindra
- ❖ Joanne Feenstra
Keri, Kim
- ❖ Steven and Neva Feenstra
Josh, Travis, Jeremy,
Brandon, Grant
Redlands, California

WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

With thankfulness to our heavenly father we celebrated on September 25 the 40th anniversary of our parents,

JOHN and DELORES KUIPER.

We are grateful to God for the covenant instruction and godly example that they have given us. May God continue to guide them by His counsel through the years to come.

"But the mercy of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting upon them that fear him, and his righteousness unto children's children" (Psalm 103:7).

- ❖ Scott and Joyce Boverhof
- ❖ Ron and Marlys Kuiper
- ❖ John Kuiper
- ❖ Dave and Pam Moelker

Jenison, Michigan

WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

On November 8, our parents,
DAVID and BONNIE MOELKER, celebrated 30 years of marriage.

We thank our heavenly Father for their godly example, and pray that they will continue to experience the covenant love of God in their life together. We thank God for giving them to us. "Hear, ye children, the instruction of a father, and attend to know understanding.... Take fast hold of instruction; let her not go: keep her; for she is thy life" (Proverbs 4:1, 13).

- ❖ Kris
- ❖ Keven
- ❖ Kari
- ❖ Kolleen
- ❖ Katie

Grand Rapids, Michigan

NOTICE!!

Classis East will meet in regular session on Wednesday, January 13, 1999, at the Byron Center Protestant Reformed Church, Byron Center, MI. Material for this session must be in the hands of the Stated Clerk by December 14, 1998.

Jon J. Huiskens
Stated Clerk

RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The Sr. Mr. and Mrs. Society of Hope PRC (Walker) expresses its sincerest sympathy to fellow members Mr. and Mrs. Dan DeMeester, Mr. and Mrs. Eugene Kamps, and Mr. and Mrs. Gary Nienhuis in the death of their sister-in-law,

LISA KAMPS.

May the Lord continue to be their strength and comfort: "Then spake Jesus again unto them, saying, I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life" (John 8:12).

Rev. J. Laning, President
Mrs. Connie Meyer, Secretary

RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The Adult Bible Society of Doon PRC express their Christian sympathy to our fellow member Jean Wynia in the death of her mother-in-law,

MRS. JOHANNA WYNIA.

May she with her husband and family find comfort in God's Word, "It is of the Lord's mercies that we are not consumed, because his compassions fail not. They are new every morning: great is thy faithfulness. The Lord is my portion, saith my soul; therefore will I hope in him" (Lamentations 3:22-24).

Rev. Richard Smit, Pres.
Karen VanDenTop, Sec

RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The council and congregation of the Southeast PRC extend their Christian sympathy to the children and grandchildren of

MRS. JULIA KORHORN

in her passing to glory. The family can be comforted with God's Word, I Corinthians 15:55, "O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ."

Rev. Dale Kuiper, Pres.
Tim Pipe, Clerk