



The Standard Bearer

**A Reformed
Semi-Monthly
Magazine**

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Walking in the Light

This then is the message which we have heard of him, and declare unto you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all. If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth: But if we walk in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin.

I John 1:5-7

The Word of life, Jesus Christ, the Incarnate Son of God.

The apostles heard Him with their own ears and saw Him with their own eyes and touched Him with their own hands. They had personal contact with the Savior.

Life, nothing less than *eternal* life, was manifested in Him. This was more than a revelation, more than an unveiling or uncovering of what formerly was hid. This was a manifestation of power and light, a piercing through which is simi-

lar to the sun's piercing through the clouds.

The purpose of this declaration was "that ye also may have fellowship with us." As apostles who had been entrusted with the proclamation of the gospel, they were beginning to see the beauty of God's covenant with His people, that it was a blessed fellowship and communion with the Lord their God. Such a fellowship is rich exactly because it is fellowship with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ. By implication the apostles were saying that by having fellowship with them one has fellowship with the Father and the Son.

All this results in yet a further fruit, "that your joy may be full."

That is why the apostles come with a specific message, that which they had heard from Jesus Christ Himself, "God is light, and in him is no darkness at all." This glorious truth is the basis for our fellowship with one another and with God and is, therefore, the fountain of all joy.

To help us understand this truth John uses the figure of the light, that which we see about us each and every day. Physical light is the life of all matter. In the beginning, what God created was characterized as chaos. All was dark and lifeless; thus, there was no movement, revelation, or communication. All was dead. We then read in Genesis 1 that the Spirit brooded over the waters, and

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this was followed by God's spoken Word, "Let there be light." Suddenly there was movement at the rate of 186,000 miles per second. We call it light. It is the life of the universe. With the light there came heat and power and fire, the conditions for all other life. Plants absorb light and heat, and man and animals cannot live without it. Further, light is that which reveals. It is therefore a means of communication. Light strikes an object and is reflected to the eyes; the image is sent to the mind, and we see. This takes place between the creatures themselves as well as between them and the world. Thus there is also communication between God and the world, and between God and man. God saw it, that it was good. What He saw was a reflection of His own glory, and therefore it was the object of His love.

In addition to physical light there is also figurative light, that is, intellectual light. In the back of the eye is the mind, with its understanding. That is why when we come to understand something we often say, "Now I see the light." In man is the light of God by which he is able to behold the revelation of God. Originally, man was created so he could see and think the thoughts of God and see things in their inner nature. That is why Adam could name the animals when God brought them before him, for he could read creation as a book.

Finally, there is spiritual light. When God created man He created him in His own image, so that man's life reflected back to God in true knowledge, righteousness, and holiness whereby he could love and obey his Maker. This spiritual light of God comes back in man's own spirit so that in that light he has fellowship with God. In that light he returns to God, walking and talking with God as friend with Friend. Light, then, is love, communion, and friendship. From this it follows that light in the spiri-

tual sense is also revelation, the Word of God, Christ, whereby we know God and His eternal plan of salvation for His people. Light is the source of one's spiritual life and is his salvation.

God is light. That is the essential message of the gospel and of this epistle. God is absolute, pure light. It is the very nature of His being. Absolute light means absolute knowledge. Thus God knows Himself perfectly. Included in this intellectual light of the mind and wisdom is ethical light. God and all His attributes are essentially good. He is holy, just, and righteous; there is no darkness in Him at all. Searching His depths you will find nothing but light. Darkness hides, but nothing is hid from God.

Therefore, light, all light, whether physical, intellectual, or spiritual, finds its source in God. The physical light God called forth in creation. Intellectual light is of Him, for all knowledge is of God. Also the spiritual is of God, for the Word is His, both the spoken Word and the Word Incarnate, Jesus Christ. No wonder the psalmist in Psalm 27 can sing, "Jehovah is my light and my salvation."

In this light we are called to walk as God is in the light. That is how God walks, in the light. Because God *is* light He is in the sphere of light. What is meant by that is that God lives a life that is characterized by light. Compare. God is love and lives a life of love. God is righteous and lives a life of righteousness. And so God lives the life of light that is perfect fellowship within Himself as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. All three are light, live in the sphere of that light, and therefore live in perfect communion and fellowship.

Now we have fellowship with Him insofar as we walk in the light as He is in the light. That is true, first of all, inwardly, for out of the heart are the issues of life. As instructed by Christ in His summary of the law, our whole heart, mind,

soul, and strength must be in the light. All of our inward life, our thoughts, joy, happiness, sorrows, and desires must be in harmony with the light, that is, out of the love of God. By nature we do not do this. By nature our walk is in darkness, in hatred and enmity against God. Lies, darkness, and deceit control our life. To walk in the light means that our heart must be changed, and thus, with it, our inward life. The apostle Paul writes in Ephesians 5:8, "Ye were once darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord." We can then see that our walk is first of all a matter of the heart.

As is our inward life, so then will be our outward life, for our outer life is but a manifestation of our inner life, the heart. It can only follow that if our heart is in the light, so will be our outward actions. To seek after holiness with the heart and then outwardly wallow in the mire of sin is impossible. Outward conversion can arise only out of a heart that is filled with the light of the love of God. By walking in that light we have union with God, a union which is possible only in Jesus Christ our Lord. In Christ we have fellowship in Him, for we are in Christ and He is in God.

In contrast, to walk out of the light is to have fellowship with the devil. If we walk in darkness and say that we have fellowship with God, we lie. The Scriptures are quite clear. God is light and in Him there is no darkness at all. God is truth; light is truth. The lie is darkness. Therefore, to have fellowship with God one must be in the light. As soon as we walk in iniquity and unrighteousness, we are in darkness. No light, no fellowship, no alternative. The wicked are liars and their sayings are in vain. Not everyone that saith "Lord, Lord" shall enter into the kingdom of heaven. Outward works may differ from the heart. Faith without works is dead.

This does not mean that we

teach some kind of perfectionism. You and I both know that we are not perfect, that we still sin. However, repeated sins are different than walking in sin. When we fall into sin we have remorse and sorrow. We confess to God and ask for forgiveness. This is also doing the truth. We have fellowship with God by His grace through Christ.

Such a walk and life will have the blessed fruit of fellowship with one another. We will fellowship "with them that call on the Lord out of a pure heart" (II Tim. 2:22). Together we "follow righteousness, faith, charity, peace" (same verse). We will be "likeminded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind" (Phil. 2:2). Fellowship is pursuing these graces. Could there be fellowship without peace? Without peace, there is no love, and love is the heart of fellowship. Lacking any of these graces we lack them all, for only the pure of heart have fellowship as children of the light.

This means that we walk in the same light. We will have the same desires, a common aim, the same motivation, all resulting in complete harmony between the saints

in our walk. It simply is not true that many ways and walks lead to the same end. It is absolutely impossible to hate the fellow saint with impunity. The spiritual family is characterized by intimate fellowship in love. The longing and striving that we have for ourselves is the same as that which we have for them. With unfailing zeal we want the brother to taste his salvation and to rejoice with us. That manifests itself in ardent prayer on his behalf and in our living in complete accord with him. We rejoice with them that rejoice and weep with them that weep. All of this is based on the fact that the love of God is essentially the love of the neighbor. This fruit is only in the light.

The second fruit, according to our text, is that "the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin." That, of course, speaks of the forgiveness of sins. It does not mean that, because we walk in the light, God forgives us. No, our sins are already forgiven, already we have been cleansed, all has been accomplished by the shedding of Christ's blood. It refers rather to the consciousness of that forgive-

ness. If we walk in the light and have fellowship, there is still sin in us. But walking in the light we seek forgiveness and are assured that our sins have been taken away. Our justification is perfect because Christ died once and for all. This truth becomes conscious in our minds and we experience the joy of fellowship with God in the way of repentance and forgiveness.

The blood of Christ is efficacious. He took away all our sin, past, present, and future, once and for all. We never outgrow our need for that blood. It seals the unbreakable bond that we have to Him. It melts our stubborn hearts. Thus, God's purpose is attained. In Christ He purposed to save and to cleanse, and unto this He was anointed. This blood is a manifestation of the unchangeable love of God for His elect.

This great comfort God gives us when we walk in the light. This is truly fellowship both with God and with His people. This is manifested by walking in the way of the Word of life, by walking in the love of God which can be done only by His grace through Jesus Christ who cleansed us from all our sins. □

Editorial

The Nearness of Christ's Coming

At the end of a year, and much more the end of a millennium, it is perfectly proper that we encourage ourselves with the thought of the end of the world. Not as though this is an occasional thing with us! But the end of a year and the close of a millennium impress upon us the swift passing of time. And time is hurrying toward its goal: the coming of Jesus Christ.

Not that there is any special significance for the end of the world in the arrival of a year with three zeros. 2000 has no more—but also no less!—significance for the coming of Christ than 1999 had, or than 2001 will have.

Nor does the Y2K scare, so closely associated with the year 2000, have some special importance for the last things. It is discouraging that professing Christians,

blind and unresponsive to the real signs of the end, react to a possible computer problem with eschatological excitement.

Y2K distracts the ungodly world from its real problem: the wrath of God now falling upon it with ever increasing heaviness. The seals are being opened; the trumpets are blowing.

Y2K draws the attention of many members of the churches

away from the genuine signs of the end: the preaching of the gospel everywhere in the world; the appalling lawlessness; the falling away of churches—in many cases, their own churches; the development of the nations of the West as malignant, antichristian states; and the coming together of all nations—“globalization!” “a new world order!”

Not Y2K, not the new millennium, but the biblical signs show that the coming of Jesus Christ and the end of the world are near.

And now, when the church must testify and hear the nearness of the coming of Christ as never before, this nearness is denied.

Nearness Misunderstood

This denial of the nearness of Christ's coming is a threat to the hope of the church. For those who deny the nearness of Christ's coming are scholars and teachers within the churches. They are the unbelieving scoffers—the “liberals”—foretold by Peter in II Peter 3, who think that all things continue in history as they have from the beginning of the creation. They are also today the postmillennial Christian Reconstructionists who think that the near coming of Christ took place in the past, in AD 70, at the destruction of Jerusalem.

Scripture teaches that the second coming of Jesus Christ is near. Jesus taught this in Matthew 24:33: “So likewise ye, when ye shall see all these things, know that it is near, even at the doors.” Paul taught this in Philippians 4:5: “The Lord is at hand” (Greek: “near”). John taught this throughout that most eschatological of all the New Testament books, Revelation. He introduced the doctrines of the last things as “things which must shortly come to pass” (1:1). He concluded by quoting Jesus, “Surely I come quickly” (22:20).

The old liberalism stumbled over this biblical testimony to the nearness of Jesus' coming. Taking nearness in the sense of a few years

and pointing to the obvious historical fact that some 1800 or 1900 years had gone by since the time of the New Testament, the liberals concluded that Christ and the apostles were mistaken when they proclaimed the end as near. Of course, Scripture is then mistaken as well. The “delay of the parousia (coming of Christ)” exposes Christ as a fraud, the apostles as deceived, and Scripture as fallible in a major doctrine.

Both main forms of millennialism likewise seriously err in the matter of the Bible's teaching that the coming of Christ is near. Millennialism is the doctrine of the last things that looks for a literal fulfillment of the 1000-year period of Revelation 20 in the future, before the end, in the form of an earthly kingdom of Christ. Millennialism expects a “golden age” in which the saints will have earthly, political dominion over all the world.

One form of this millennial error is premillennial dispensationalism, which gives dominion to the Jews. The other is postmillennial Christian Reconstruction, which gives dominion to the church.

Both of these forms of millennialism misunderstand the nearness of Christ's coming. For both, this misunderstanding is fundamental to their millennial error.

The premillennialists explain the nearness of Christ's coming as His possible coming “at any moment.” C. I. Scofield taught that the meaning of nearness is that “no known or predicted event must intervene” between the church in the world and the coming of Christ for the church in the secret rapture. Nearness refers to the secret rapture “at any moment.” And this “at-any-moment-rapture” is fundamental to the entire premillennial doctrine of the last things.

The postmillennial Christian Reconstructionists, on the other hand, agree with the liberals that nearness is a few years of time, 40 at the most. But the Christian

Reconstructionists believe that Scripture cannot err. Therefore, they conclude that the near coming of Christ must have happened within a few years of the New Testament prophecy. In relation to us who live at the end of the 20th century, the near coming of Christ that is promised in the New Testament is past, *long* past. It happened, say the Christian Reconstructionists, in AD 70.

Just as in the case of the premillennialists, the explanation of nearness by these postmillennialists is fundamental to their millennial dreams. For now the second (third?) coming of Christ—the bodily coming—and the end of the world are far distant, perhaps as many as hundreds of thousands of years distant. Since apostasy, antichrist, and persecution of the church are connected in Scripture with the near coming of Christ, also these events are past. They all occurred in AD 70, or, according to some, during the later times of the Roman empire. Thus, the way is open for the world to be largely converted to Christ and for the church to take power and exercise dominion.

Note well: the coming of Christ is no longer near. Christ no longer comes quickly. These things were true only for the church before AD 70. The gospel of Christian Reconstruction for us today, if it ever mentions Christ's bodily coming and the end of all things, is: “The Lord is far, far off. The end is remote. Behold, He comes slowly. Rejoice that it is so.”

The Reality of Nearness

Against the common error of the liberals, premillennialists, and Christian Reconstructionists, the nearness of Christ's second coming in New Testament teaching is not proximity according to the standard of human clock-time and calendar-time. The Spirit of inspiration did not mean that Jesus' return was a few years off, or possibly at any moment. Fact is, that in

close connection with the assertion that Jesus' coming is near Scripture indicates that this coming is quite distant as regards clock- and calendar-time. According to natural human notions of time, the coming is a long ways off. Indeed, it seems to the waiting church that He delays coming.

In the very same discourse in which He says that His coming is near, Jesus cautions that He tarries: "While the bridegroom tarried" (Matt. 25:5). The reason why the scoffers of II Peter 3 pose a threat to the hope of the church is that many years pass without the fulfillment of the promise of Christ's coming. It is exactly the passing of decades, centuries, and now millennia that occasions the temptation to suppose that the Lord is slack concerning His promise.

II Thessalonians 2:1ff. is decisive against both forms of millennialism, as it is against the old liberalism. The apostle denies that the "day of Christ," which is the day of His coming, is "at hand" (v. 2). The word translated "at hand" is not the same word that is translated "at hand" in Philippians 4:5. That word is the word "near," as the King James Version also translates it in Matthew 24:32. The word in II Thessalonians 2:2 means "imminent," or "soon," in the exact sense of "any moment," or "any day now," or "just around the corner," or "within a few years."

Christ's coming could not occur at any moment or within a few years because it must be preceded by two events, which are, therefore, signs to the church of the coming of Christ. One is the great falling away, or apostasy, of churches and professing Christians. The other is the revelation of the man of sin, who is antichrist. Both of these events require many years of history, at least 2000 years as we now know.

Against the liberals, the passage proves that Christ and the apostles never expected the coming of Christ to be soon. Near?

Yes. Soon? No. There is a difference.

Against the premillennialists, the passage explicitly denies that the coming of Christ, which is the gathering of the church unto Him (v.1), is "at any moment." "Let no man deceive you by any means as that the day of Christ is at any moment" (vv. 2, 3). In addition, there *are* signs of His coming, signs to the church, signs that the believers can and must observe. They are apostasy in the churches and the revelation of the man of sin among the nations.

Against the postmillennial Christian Reconstructionists, the passage teaches that the nearness of Christ's coming does not mean a few years. Biblical nearness is not "soon by human standards." The same apostle who in Philippians 4:5 states that the Lord is near here teaches that a long period of time stretches out between the Thessalonian church at the end of the first century and the day of Christ. Also, the church in every age is here instructed that the one, future, bodily coming of Christ is preceded, not by the conversion of the world but by the apostasy of the churches, not by the earthly dominion of the men of the law but by the reign of the man of lawlessness. When Christ returns, in His one, future, bodily coming—the "day of Christ" (v. 2)—the antichrist, "that wicked (one)," will be on the scene (v. 8).

The nearness of Christ's coming is not proximity in time according to man's natural notions of "soon"—for a child, five minutes; for adults, next week; for premillennialists, any moment; and for Christian Reconstructionists, 40 years.

The nearness of Christ's coming is that the coming of Christ is the next great event on the schedule of God, after the ascension and Pentecost, for the redemption of the world.

The nearness of Christ's coming is that the coming of Christ

closes this present age, with no age intervening, e.g., a "golden age" of the earthly dominion of the saints, whether Jewish nation or Gentile church.

The nearness of Christ's coming is that the coming of Christ is rushing toward us. The exalted Christ at God's right hand governs history. He rules every creature and every event so as to bring about His coming as the goal of all that is. He rules all so that He comes as quickly as possible. In all that exists and happens, Christ is coming quickly (Rev. 22:20).

The end is in everything.
How near is His coming?

As near as the sermon preached last Sunday at church and as near as the preaching on the mission field at present. As near as the most recent earthquake, flood, and hurricane. As near as the latest denial of the truth of Scripture by a faithless Protestant church. As near as today's defense of fornication, divorce, remarriage, abortion, and homosexuality in society and in the churches. As near as the ongoing uniting of nations around Man.

The coming of Christ is near for the church at the end of the second millennium, as it was near for the church at the end of the first century.

It is also much closer to us than it was to them.

Now is no time for the churches to waste their energies in the vain and disobedient effort to obtain earthly power, or for the members of the churches to lose themselves in earthly pleasures.

Now is not the time to question whether the coming of Christ is near.

Now is the time to expect the Lord and His full redemption from sin and death.

Now is the time to pray earnestly and without ceasing, "Come, Lord Jesus, come quickly."

And now is the time to *live* in this hope. □

— DJE

Corrections:

In the meditation, "Jesus' Other Sheep" (the *Standard Bearer*, Sept. 15, 1999), the word "Him" in the fifth line from the top in the third column, page 483, should not have

been capitalized. Read: "... that through him we may hear Christ."

In the editorial, "The 75th Anniversary of the PRC: A Look Back" (the *Standard Bearer*, Nov. 1, 1999), William Harry Jellema is

said to have been a student at Calvin College during the common grace controversy of the early 1920s. In fact, he was an instructor at Calvin College during that time.

Guest Article

Prof. Herman Hanko

Training Men for the Gap (2)

And I sought for a man among them, that should make up the hedge, and stand in the gap before me for the land, that I should not destroy it: but I found none.

Ezekiel 22:30

Men For The Gap

God is pictured in the text as casting about for men who will stand in the gaps.

It is clear from the context that the prophet has officebearers in mind. This verse appears here in the text as the conclusion of sharp condemnation of Judah's prophets, priests, and kings. "There is a conspiracy of her prophets..." (v. 25). "Her priests have violated my law, and have profaned my holy things..." (v. 26). "Her princes ... are like wolves ravaging the prey, to shed blood, and to destroy souls..." (v. 27). "Her prophets have daubed ... with untempered mortar ... divining lies..." (v. 28).

This is the reason God could find no man to stand in the gap. The kind of men for whom God was looking were unavailable. The ones appointed to be in the gaps had joined the enemy and were working for Zion's destruction from within. Leaders had turned traitor. No one could be trusted to stand in the gap. The men available would only have knocked additional stones out of the wall to make the passage of the enemy into the city easier.

The prophet does not mean that the people of God themselves are not to stand in the gaps. Indeed they are. And the prophet has a word to say also about their contribution: "The people of the land have used oppression, and exercised robbery, and have vexed the poor and needy: yea, they have oppressed the stranger wrongfully" (v. 29).

But the point that has to be made is that no army can fight without leaders, no citizenry can be rallied to the battle without a clear trumpet call, no soldiers in the ranks can fight effectively without men to guide them to the gaps, lead the way into the gaps, and show them where and how to fight.

That totally pathetic word of Jehovah, that word which makes one who loves Zion weep with shame, that word which spells

Zion's doom, is "I looked for a man.... But I found none!"

The gaps are there. Where are the men to lead the people? Where are the preachers who will cease their endless prattle that all is well in Zion and shout to the people about Zion's dangers? Where are the leaders in the churches who will once and for all quit worrying about being nice, and pleasant, and good ol' fellows, and who will warn the people that Zion's walls are crumbling and the city is about to go down to defeat? Where are the leaders who will wave the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God (Eph. 6:17), at the head of Christian soldiers of the cross and call them to battle, to battle unto death? Where are they? Are they attending their committee meetings, visiting nicely over a cup of tea, soothing God's people by telling them that those who shout danger are the ones troubling Zion, healing the wounds of the daughters of God's people slightly, saying, "Peace, peace," when there is no peace?

It is not only that those who should be in the forefront of the battle are openly and boldly expressing their desire to see the enemy win. It is not only that so many are unfit that women are now set in those positions of leadership where only men ought to

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This is the second part of the speech delivered at the Convocation of the Protestant Reformed Theological School on September 7, 1999.

stand. But it is also that even those who profess to love Zion are timid, fearful, unwilling to move unless they can fight from positions of guaranteed safety, hiding in trembling and shaking fright behind every corner of every building in the city, carefully straightening their neckties while Jerusalem's walls are crumbling, and diligently counting the troops behind them so that they will be sure, before they march forth to battle, that they outnumber the enemy.

God, through Ezekiel the prophet, is disconcerting when he uses the singular: "I sought for a man among them...." One man. Just one.

I find two reasons for this disturbing, yet comforting singular.

The first is to the everlasting shame of the church. There is not even one!

The second is that God can use just one. One is enough. One will often do. An Athanasius *contra mundum* (against the world). An Augustine against Roman Catholic Pelagianism. A Gotteschalk against the powerful men who tortured him. A Luther at Worms with his "Here I stand. I can do naught else." Finally, a Hoeksema and an Ophoff: "I prefer facing a firing squad to signing the three points." One man and God, it has been said, is a majority.

This is because the strength of Zion is the Lord of Hosts, mighty in battle. And the Captain of our salvation is our ascended and exalted Lord Jesus Christ.

"But I found none." None. Not one.

Our Seminary and Men for the Gap

But this is seminary convocation; and I must make this text bear upon the work of another year in our theological school.

Let it be said, first of all, that I believe with all my heart that we have men in the PR churches to stand in the gap. There are men in the gap now. They are there every

Lord's Day. They are there during the week, fighting against the enemy.

We may and must be thankful for them. We must not sap their courage and attempt to destroy their morale with words of encouragement to the enemy. We must pray for them, follow them into battle, put ourselves under their leadership, march behind them in the cadenced steps of the Word of God.

But the seminary is my concern tonight. The seminary must prepare men to stand in the gaps. Such is, without any doubt, not only its most important calling, but its only calling.

The seminary is, so to speak, officers' training school. Especially the training of ministers.

Let me reiterate what it is in which that training consists.

Men attending seminary must, most importantly, be taught to preach. The church does not need executives, board chairmen, administrators, scholars with Ph.D.s from prestigious universities, church planters, number-sensitive leaders of megachurches who preach a "number-sensitive gospel." The church needs preachers. Nothing more, nothing less. Seminaries must teach men to preach. Nothing more, nothing less. Every subject of the curriculum must be taught only if it helps men be better preachers.

The strength of Zion is Jehovah God; and the battle for Zion is fought with only one weapon: the Word of God. By that Word Zion's recruits are irresistibly called into battle, are armed with the weapons needed to fight, are taught the wiles of the devil, and are steeled for the rigors of hard and ceaseless sacrifice.

Let the seminary continue to train preachers.

In the second place, these preachers must be taught to fight. The gaps are there. They are the vulnerable points in Zion's defenses. They are the places where the enemy concentrates her forces. They are where the battle is the hottest. Men must be prepared for war. It is all-out war. It is a battle to the death. It is heated and fierce. Men who will not fight against the enemy get in the way when they stand in the gap. Stand aside, God says to them. Let the warriors in. The gaps must be defended. The way to defend is not the way of white flags, coffee with the enemy, blandishing words of praise to those whose only purpose is Zion's destruction. The way to defend is to fight. I know of no other way than that.

In the third place, the text reminds us too that the walls have to be built.

Undoubtedly the reference is first of all to those parts of the walls where there are breaches, where stones have been knocked out of place, where gaps appear that need to be repaired.

Two things come to mind.

The first is that the walls are rebuilt by sound doctrine. The walls are, after all, the doctrines of the church, which have ever been Zion's strength.

Preachers must be trained in the seminary to know, understand, love, and defend sound doctrine.

If they are not prepared for that, they are of no use in the battle. Preachers have to be taught to rebuild the gaps by teaching and preaching sound doctrine, so that the truth may stand firm once more over against the lie.

But, secondly, these same preachers must develop the truth as well. The truth is always developed in battle with the lie. No truth comes out of ivory towers, far

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from the noise and smoke of battle. No truth comes out of morality-preachers who cave in to the incessant cry for practical preaching. The walls of Zion are built under fire, with the enemy at hand, amid the arrows and shot of a powerful foe. The truth is developed when the truth is attacked.

Such men the seminary must train. Consciously, deliberately, with all its energies fixed upon that goal.

For 75 years the seminary has been committed to training such men. We ought to be thankful for this. It is the strength of our churches. It has not happened often that God sustains a seminary that long in the truth of His Word. May that training be our goal in the year ahead.

Judgment for Unfaithfulness

The Lord speaks in the text and in the following verse of His anger that in His search for a man, none could be found: "Therefore have I poured out my indignation upon them; I have consumed them with the fire of my wrath."

The nation was destroyed. Judah was led into captivity. Jerusalem was left a smoldering heap of rubble. Zion's walls existed no longer.

But the nation is punished, for the nation is responsible for the lack of a man for the gap.

So it always is.

The responsibility for men to fill the gap lies, in the first place, in the home and in the local congregation. Parents are to blame when none can be found to build the wall. Congregations must answer to God when no men climb Seminary Hill to attend classes there.

Not only must parents and congregations point the young men of families and churches to the magnificent calling of being warriors on behalf of God's troops, but homes

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and congregations must tell their young men of Zion's wars, Jerusalem's present dangers, and the need for men to stand in the gap. Let them show their sons that the battles to be fought are a part of the battle of the ages, that the warfare is unending, and that life itself is a battlefield. Let them try to turn the ears of their sons to the call of the trumpets, the cadence of marching feet, the noise and fury of the combat.

When parents, congregations, and the seminary do their work, then men will be there to stand in the gaps.

But where no men are found, judgment will come. I presume there are many denominations which are full of ministers. I recently read that the list of ministers looking for positions is very long. The pulpits have their robed orators; the land is flooded with administrators. But where in all God's world are there men for the gap? When none can be found, none among the thousands of ministers, then judgment comes.

God is angry. The cause of His truth and His righteousness is the only cause of value in the world. But none can be found to stand for it. Judgment is the inevitable result.

Such judgment is inevitable because when no one can be found in the gaps, the enemy pours in. Soon his brigades flood the pulpits of the churches, take over the positions of power, implement their devil's agenda, and make the church a habitation of dragons.

The gaps are undefended. What else can be expected?

But let it be clearly understood that apostasy, worldliness, and the resulting unfaithfulness of churches is God's judgment upon those who will not fight for God's

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truth and for the cause of God's Son. The enemy is unopposed because professed preachers commit treason. The gaps are undefended because good men are too timid to fight and look askance at the slaughter in the gaps. The breaches are enlarged by the enemy because too many shout "Peace, peace!" — when there is no peace.

Will it be so in our churches? May God graciously forbid.

Maybe the day is not so far off when retreat to the "keep" will be necessary. So let it be.

I wish to close with two reminders.

The one is this. The cause of God cannot go down to defeat. It will be victorious, for the enemy has been defeated at Calvary, where the Captain of our salvation fought alone and conquered; the enemy is in the hands of our Christ, who moves their armies according to the will of God and who cannot permit any harm to come to His cause. The strength of Zion is her God. And God cannot be defeated in any battle.

The second is this. It is a glorious thing to fight on behalf of the King of kings. It is not an onerous task, a burdensome obligation, a ceaseless grief. It is glorious.

It is thrilling. It is filled with the excitement of salvation. For we fight in a cause which cannot go down to defeat. The day comes when the shouting and the tumult dies, when the battlefield is stilled, when the smoke of battle drifts away, when the enemy is slaughtered in the streets of

the Holy City which has become Egypt and Sodom, and when the weary Christian warrior exchanges his helmet for a laurel wreath, his armor for a white garment of spotless purity, and his sword for a palm branch of victory.

May that hope press upon you and give you faithfulness. □

Beginning Our Work in Hope

The letter arrived. You've been nominated for the office of elder. After careful thought, you let the deadline pass for declining the nomination. At the congregational meeting, the members chose you. I thank God for you. (The others were not elected. In His inscrutable wisdom, the Lord did not appoint the others, but appointed you to the work of elder.) Ordination has taken place. The questions have been asked: "Do you feel in your hearts...? Do you believe the books...? Do you reject the heresies...? Do you promise... to discharge your office...? To walk in all godliness...?" Yes. "The Almighty God and Father replenish you all with His grace, that ye may faithfully and fruitfully discharge your respective offices. Amen."

You are an elder in the church of Jesus Christ.

Now the doubts trickle in. You never disbelieved the office was a high calling, the responsibilities heavy. You meant your "yes" to the questions. You did not lie when you promised you would faithfully, according to your ability, discharge your office. You prayed along sincerely with the minister when the form asked for "wisdom, courage, discretion" so that you could "acquit yourself as is becoming" and take "diligent

heed unto the doctrine and conversation...."

But doubts linger, are unsettling. What are my abilities? Where is my wisdom, courage, discretion? What shall I say? Will the people receive the word I bring? How will I prepare for the visits to the families? What if I am sent on a discipline call? Can I teach catechism? Lead a service in the absence of the pastor? What do I know of being a watchman over the house and city of God? "Admonish and caution every one against his ruin"? "Reprove disorderly persons"? No wonder that prayer at the end of the ordination ceremony sticks: "and we hope endowed with thy Spirit." We hope. We are not so sure.

If these doubts and fears drive you to constant prayer and carefulness in continual preparation, may our God be praised. None of us is as qualified as he desires to be. Our weaknesses will always be apparent to ourselves most of all, and will be matter to humble us and compel us to pray for the necessary gifts.

But if these doubts paralyze you for your work, hear this word of God: He has called and therefore will qualify you for labor among His beloved sheep. Christ is in you. His care for His flock assures us that He will enable us to minister to them.

Nor may the variety of gifts among the elders feed our doubts. A difference in ability, even great difference, is expected. As in the human body and in the congrega-

tion (also among ministers of the Word!), so in the eldership: "the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body.... God set the members every one of them in the body, as it hath pleased him."

A great comfort to me in the early part of my ministry was the encouragement given by a wise older minister. Speaking to the youthful fears of counseling a member for the first time, he said: "God used your first sermons too, didn't he?" I can hardly imagine how there could have been any profit in those sermons. But God used them. So He'll use your efforts as an elder, in the beginning and at the end of your service.

Just don't be jealous of the other members. For our sovereign and all-wise God divides "to every man severally as he will."

We may be confident that God qualifies elders for their work. If the Lord assures the members of the congregation that they are "full of goodness, filled with all knowledge, able also to admonish one another," certainly the elders may know that Christ will give them some goodness, knowledge, ability (Rom. 15:14).

Romans 15:14 is Paul's encouragement to the saints. He is convinced that because they have goodness and knowledge, they are able to "admonish" the other saints. To admonish the saints is to bring to their mind the Word of God as resolution to problems they have. Doubts. Unbelief. Fear.

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Sloth. Sorrows. Stubbornness. Greed. Discouragement. Or a hundred other problems the people of God face. The common members are able to do such a work for the building up of the saints. Certainly you can whom God calls for the special work of ministering to the saints.

What makes this passage striking is that Paul uses the same verb to describe his own work as apostle/elder. Colossians 1:28 has Paul preaching Christ, "warning every man, and teaching every man in all wisdom...." Warning, there, is the same as admonishing in Romans 15. In Acts 20:31, Paul reminds the elders of Ephesus that for three years he "ceased not to warn every one night and day with tears." To warn certainly includes much more than cautions and threats. It means to instruct, advise, remind, counsel. This was the apostle's labor. The apostle says the saints of Rome are able to do such. You also are able.

God qualifies because God calls. The same God who called you to the office will fit you for the work. You know that. You answered "yes" to that specific query. It was the first question put to you. "Whether you do not feel in your hearts that ye are lawfully called of God's church, and consequently of God himself, to these your respective offices?" The call of the congregation is the call of God Himself. God called. God will qualify.

The qualification is Christ in you.

Christ is not in every officebearer. We leave open the real possibility that a man wrongly accepted a nomination. The council carelessly nominated him. The misguided or apostatizing congregation elected him. He has no love for the Lord. The welfare of God's people does not move him. God did not call him. God will not qualify him. The "we hope" in the Form's ending prayer is realistic.

Certainly, God can use an

unregenerated man. He qualified Saul with some gifts for a while to work among the prophets. The "dumb ass" spoke (II Pet. 2:16). The old elders and ministers used to say that God can use "crooked sticks." Most books on officebearers speak of that possibility. But the exception does not make the rule. God doesn't usually use dumb asses. He did once. That He can, however, does not mean He will. I haven't heard of a donkey speaking since then. They usually just bray, kick, and remain obstinate.

God qualifies you who accepted the nomination in faith. God qualifies those in whom He works a pious desire to serve the kingdom. Christ is in you who love God's church, who love God whose sheep these are.

That presence of Christ in you qualifies you in two ways.

First, your own experience of Christ's work in you and your own urgent and conscious need of Him prepare you to minister to the flock. You know what they need. Your needs are the same. Their struggles are yours. Their faults are yours. What they need, you have received. "Blessed be God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ...the God of all comfort; Who comforteth us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble, by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God" (II Cor. 1:3, 4).

Elders of God's church, let us examine our own hearts to see our own needs, faults, weaknesses, shortcomings. Let us confess them. Be humbled by them. Find forgiveness for them. Live the Christian life. Then you will know how to serve the flock.

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Second, as Christ dwells in you, He speaks through you. Christ's voice is really heard as you speak to the sheep. This is true not only for pastors, but elders and deacons also. We thank God when the sheep receive it so. Especially we thank God that it is so. The word the flock hears from you is "not the word of men, but ...it is in truth, the word of God, which effectually worketh also in (them) that believe" (I Thess. 2:13). The word of Jesus Christ is heard through our mouths!

All we are is earthen vessels—weak containers made of clay (II Cor. 4:7). It's good for us to remember that. But "weakest means fulfill his will, mighty enemies to still." For Christ dwells in our hearts by faith.

But always and only through His Word and by the power of His Spirit. The earth-shaking, heart-breaking, will-bending Spirit uses the Word, the Scriptures.

Not your words. Not your experience. God forbid that we would suppose so. In their weakness, the people sometimes may be interested in your experience. It may even help sometimes to relate how God worked in you. But that's not the power of God unto salvation.

The words and experiences of the Lord Jesus Christ. By this we were comforted. We know that, too. By this we comfort the saints.

I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me. Oh, how He strengthens! "Now unto him who is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us, unto him be glory in the church throughout all ages, world without end. Amen." □

Passion for the Gates of Zion

The Lord loveth the gates of Zion more than all the dwellings of Jacob.

Psalm 87:2

Zion refers to the body of Jesus Christ, the members of which are in *living fellowship* one with another, and with Christ the Head. The gates refer specifically to the points at which the body enters into living fellowship. The entrance into living fellowship comes through public worship as well as in all the covenantal duties to which the body of Christ is called. The psalmist expresses the love of the Lord toward the gates of Zion as being more than His love toward the dwellings of Jacob. You might say the Lord is *passionate* about the "gates of Zion."

The "dwellings of Jacob" refer to the "tent" of each particular member of the church. *My house. Your house.* Many causes compete for attention in each of our homes. Are any of these causes *more urgent* than the gates of Zion? Above and beyond your needs and my needs, which He graciously supplies, is the living fellowship of the body of Jesus Christ! The Lord is passionate about it! Are we?

There is one specific covenantal duty which requires our immediate and continued passion. Christian education of covenant youth. The need is most desperate! The current conditions in the area of Christian education give a unique urgency, which was not

present in our forefathers' lifetime. Our forefathers saw the erosion of the truth in the churches. There was a period of time during which the erosion of truth was "happening." During this time the Lord built Christian schools upon the blood, sweat, and tears of our forefathers. Upon their passion. Today, the erosion of truth (except for the small, weak, and fragmented remnant) is *complete*. There are no good-enough-for-the-time-being day school alternatives left. There is nothing to excuse the *entire* body of Jesus Christ from continuing an urgent passion for this cause!

Thanks be to God that a passion for Christian education has been a distinctive mark of the Reformation church as a whole and this denomination (the PRC) in specific. Much has been done. *There is much to do.* Even if your own children are attending a Reformed and covenantal school, your passion may not find root in your own tent. There are many covenant children who yet travel outside the walls of Zion for schooling! We are obligated to press forward, in living fellowship, with a *passion for Zion's gates!* Our passion must be rooted in the passion of God Himself!

The atmosphere which exists within the Christian schools is demonic in its cleverness. This atmosphere is *devoid of structure* in theology. This atmosphere is *filled with the illusion* of true religion. This atmosphere *obliterates a knowledge of the covenant*. This atmosphere forms the consistent, daily experience of many covenant children. Because many of the read-

ers may not have had recent contact with the current Christian educational scene, the following is given as a word picture (incomplete) of the *spiritual wilderness* into which many covenant children travel each day.

Whole Language Theology

"Whole Language Theology" is a term which this writer has coined to identify the widespread approach to the teaching of God and His Word. Many of you may know of "Whole Language" as a method of teaching reading. *This is now the method of choice with respect to teaching theology.* It goes something like this: Memorize a myriad of combinations of words and stories from Holy Scripture; recall them; systematize to maintain consistency; comprehend; and apply to all of life. Do all this *outside of a context*. Do all this *with no creed but Christ*. Or worse, do this *with any creed at all!*

The key to this approach in reading is to *remove structure from the language*. So it is with teaching the things of God. *Remove structure*. Imagine an atmosphere where all the facts of Scripture are independent facts: no unifying principles allowed! In a few exceptions, unifying principles are allowed, but it's "each man for himself." Your "principles" are good for you, mine are good for me! No person is wrong, God comes to each of us in different ways. The amazing thing is that the Christian school community as a whole rejected Whole Language as a method of teaching reading!

Preposterous. If it was ineffec-

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tive with respect to teaching reading, it is nothing less than insane to adopt it as a method to impart information of import to the soul! Whole Language Theology could be likened to sending a child into the continent of Asia. While in Asia he must travel every road. He must do so without a map or compass. He must be unaccompanied. When he returns, he must *map the continent!*

Created in God's image, man craves a structured context for his life. In the absence of *the* truth, he becomes his own context. All that he has learned from Holy Scripture is then subject to his own intellect, emotion, and mental acumen. This "theology" isn't new, it has simply grown to alarming proportions under the battering ram of Satan. As a result, it is exceptionally rare to find a Christian school in this day that will *consistently* teach and defend *any* system of theology, let alone one that is truth!

In the environment of Whole Language Theology all standards pertaining to an understanding of God and His Word are arbitrary or non-existent. It would be preferable in some respects for covenant children to be taught false theology, but in an environment where that false standard is consistently held. At least the value of *having* a standard would be learned. (Though neither scenario is acceptable). It is difficult to conceive that one could come to know God under the training of "Whole Language Theology."

Chronic Spiritual Illusion

Into the vacuum created by Whole Language Theology moves the Chronic Spiritual Illusion. Since there is no standard in *truth*, the illusion of something real must be maintained. Imagine your wife as an illusion. In order to maintain "her," you must control your environment in such a way as to produce regularly intensifying "experiences" with "her." If you do this, you can continue to believe

that you *have* her! *Spiritually*, covenant children are living this every day, *and it looks good to them*. Christian schools of today control the environment in such a way as to produce regularly intensifying experiences.

In the absence of spiritual reality (knowledge in the truth), the students become like drug addicts. Spiritual Illusion (experience without knowledge) is their drug. Day after day they need a new fix. Every year the "dealers" have to up the dose. Impress me! Thrill me! One has to wonder why teenagers attending a church event, and targeted in a recent shooting spree, had the idea that the shooter was merely acting out a skit. Several people were shot and killed before they realized it was a real shooting! What is it that they were accustomed to in the house of God? To what level of dosage had they been raised so that the spiritual illusion could be maintained?

Don't misunderstand. The whole environment looks nice. Everyone hugs. Everyone knows Bible verses. (The "judge not" verse is very popular.) Everyone is "concerned," "open," and "enabling." Everyone wants to help you "grow your children." You can find assistance to become "informed," "empowered," and "entrusted" on any weekday. *Foremost*, everyone knows how to exit the room when a question about *truth* is asked. What does it mean to observe the Lord's Day? Exit. For whom did Christ die? Exit. Is it important to have a doctrinal standard? Exit. Does God send affliction to His children? Exit. *Can we have a class to help empower ministry-gifted mothers to cast a vision from God so that others can pray for the enabling of their children as we partner together to grow them up in grace? Wouldn't you know it? The room fills up!*

Operation Mission Station

Like a canopy over all the other insanity rests the directive of Op-

eration Mission Station. The teacher and administrator assume the role of "missionary." The saviors of the community. The reformers of the culture. By saving the students, they will make their mark on the culture. They'll enter (with all the children they've saved) into a brave new world. The school will have a heavenly impact on an earthly community. The reality is that the covenant child is in an environment where his conduct, academic performance, good choices, and emotional outpourings become the measure of his faith. He needn't flee to Christ, he merely has to impress his teacher. How easy it is to do! *And how quickly our children learn to do it!*

The teacher's intent being to "save" the child, he/she uses creative techniques to elicit emotional acceptances of Jesus Christ. While this may take on various outward forms, depending on the denomination from which the school is derived, it occurs across the broad spectrum of Christian education. In certain circles this is harder to detect, because Operation Mission Station is still packaged in Reformed words. But make no mistake, the covenant is all but gone. Where it is spoken of, it is wrongly applied.

It is God's command that His people train their children within the context of His covenant. A child can gain mastery of academic material in any school, providing the parents of the child are committed to that goal. There is one thing that the Christian school teacher mirrors to children (in the stead of his/her parents) that no other teacher can or will: The covenant love of God. The atmosphere of a Christian school must be covenantal! The absence of this severely compromises a child's ability to know God as He is revealed.

It's About Zion's Gates

One must admit that the results of the modern Christian school movement are provocative. In

large percentages the resulting scholars head for and complete higher education. They end up on a church roll somewhere. They have an obligatory number of children, buy a middle class American home, and send their own children to Christian school. They wear the right clothes, go to church when it is convenient, talk about it a lot, say some Bible verses once in a while, and quietly exit the room when a question about *truth* is asked. Let's face it. Not one of us, I hope, would be satisfied to place membership in a church of this description. Why should we feel anything but desperate urgency when we are sending *any* covenant children, at *any* level of education, into schools matching this description?

The existing Protestant Reformed Christian schools are also provocative to us, and rightly so. They could boast an impressive outward appearance of success. Add in correct doctrine, consistent adherence to a standard of truth, covenantal atmosphere, and committed parents. Now mix together well, protect from outside influence, simmer for two or three generations and what do you have? *Pray that we still have passion!* Almighty God is looking at *your* heart to find passion for the gates of Zion. It just won't do to start boasting about the wonderful schools your *forefathers* had the passion to build!

The argument has been raised that if we teach them well at home and in Catechism class they will "be fine." Seven hours a day, five days a week, ten months a year. That is the period of time which covenant children will spend, every year, in an environment diabolically opposed to the truth. Maybe they will "be fine," and maybe they won't. The question is: Are *you* passionate about the gates of Zion?

The argument has been raised that Christian schools, due to their emphasis on "works," are a fairly convenient way of keeping our cov-

enant children on the right path. You know, sort of a behavioral modification training. Is our first concern whether or not our children "stayed clean"? It's nice if they do, no doubt. *Were they confronted with the truth?* Let it never be said that we were satisfied with the outward signs of the truth and had no passion for presenting the *truth itself* within the walls of Zion. The question remains: Are *you* passionate about the gates of Zion?

The argument has been raised that there is not enough time or money or students or teachers or buildings or programs or.... All may be true. Any combination may be true. Irrelevant. Suppose you have a passion to travel to worship on the Lord's Day. Can we agree that if you never leave your "tent," you will never arrive at worship services? While many possible calamities exist between your tent and the worship service, your *passion* to be with God's people on the Lord's day causes you to *leave your tent*. There are many possible calamities between *a passion* for a Christian school and *having* a Christian school. The question still remains: Will *your* passion for the gates of Zion cause you to *leave your tent*?

One last argument: That the writer of this article has subjectively interpreted the atmosphere in Christian schools and has exaggerated the case. Or that the case as stated by the writer of this article is an isolated or unusual situation; the situation is *not* desperate, urgent or dangerous. The principles of God's Word are *objective*. As far as doctrine and theology go, the spiritual condition in Christian school circles is *desperate, urgent, and dangerous*. Objectively. The writer's analysis of the degree to which it is desperate, urgent, and dangerous is *subjective*. And the point is? The nagging *objective* question *still* remains: Are *you* passionate about the gates of Zion?

It is not enough to be thankful for your *local* Christian school; to

love your *local* Christian school; to support your *local* Christian school. As individuals and as a denomination we are called to a passionate zeal for the gates of Zion. If we have that passionate zeal we will seek a way, by God's grace, to play a part in the furtherance of Christian education. Elementary. Secondary. Undergraduate. Graduate. *Everywhere and anywhere that covenant children are being schooled outside the walls of Zion*. There is not a single Christian who cannot find an outlet for this passion. From the wealthy businessman's check to the lonely widow on her knees in prayer.

To reiterate. It's not about whether children turn out good! It's not about your children or grandchildren! It's not about keeping kids clean! It's not about academic excellence! It's not about programs! It's not about me! It's not about you! It's *all* about God. And *He* loveth the gates of Zion more than all the dwellings of Jacob. *Do you dare to run for your own tent?*

We must not speak against God (Ps. 78:19). God is able, according to His will, to furnish a table in a spiritual wilderness. He can furnish it even in the spiritual wilderness through which many of our covenant children travel each school day. We must pray, every day, that a passion for the gates of Zion will be a means used of God to furnish their tables. *However, God's ability to furnish a table in the wilderness does not preclude my responsibility.*

As a member of the body of Jesus Christ, I have a personal responsibility to be passionate about the gates of Zion. With respect to Christian education, this passion must include your children as well as mine. This passion must be directed to those afar off. This passion must not wane when my own children are grown. This passion must be mine married or single, fruitful or barren, male or female. This passion must be rooted in

nothing less than God Himself (Ps. 87:2).

As we draw ever nearer to *the* gates of Zion, may we continue to exhibit a fervent passion for Reformed, covenantal, Christian edu-

cation. When we are passionate for this, we not only witness to our children a love for the gates of Zion, we set them at the feet of Christ. We do not know what the Lord will or will not provide in the

way of Christian schools. But we do know this: He knows exactly where our passion lies. May He grant that a fervent passion for the gates of Zion be found among us. For He alone can *do it!* □

When Thou Sittest in Thine House

Mrs. MaryBeth Lubbers

Luther Knocks Down the Door

To be read to your children and grandchildren.

The Protestant church has always held Martin Luther in esteem. The Reformed church holds a special warm and grateful place in its heart for him, owing its very heartbeat to the work which God accomplished through Martin Luther. It is satisfying that the world also recognizes the vast importance of this man. In a special millennium issue of *Life* magazine published in October, 1998, a collection of experts and scholars took it upon themselves to judge and rank the 100 most important events that changed the world of the last millennium. The Protestant Reformation of 1517, precipitated by Luther nailing 95 theses to the church door of Wittenberg, ranked as the third most important event of the last 1000 years. It was superseded only by the discovery of America (2) and the printing of Gutenberg's Bible (1) in importance.

It was of interest to note that although a particular event made the rankings, the man who was responsible for the event did not necessarily rank. For example, Gutenberg's Bible was rated as the number one most important event of the millennium, but Johann Gutenberg, the man, a relatively obscure and colorless individual, did not place in *Life's* ratings of the 100 most important people of this millennium. Not so with Martin Luther. He ranked as the third most important individual, surpassed only by Christopher Columbus (2) and Thomas Edison (1). It occurs to me that *Life's* rankings depend on which kind of light one deems most important. Nevertheless, Martin Luther and the Reformation which he began impacted the church, the world, and all society profoundly.

As this millennium draws to a close, may we and our children never minimize the glorious work of the Reformation of 1517.

Mrs. Lubbers is a wife and mother in the Protestant Reformed Church of South Holland, Illinois.

This is a set of 34 speeches given to the South Holland Ladies' Auxiliary on October 19, 1999 by the first and second graders of South Holland Protestant Reformed Christian School.

SING: *A Mighty Fortress Is Our God*

When Martin Luther was a boy,
Singing was his greatest joy.

He sang to earn his daily bread;
"I help my family thus," he said.

He sang so well, in tones so sweet
That people stopped him on the street.

Later, he taught all to sing,
And lift their voices to their King.

In Luther's church, you paid for sin
By dropping money in a tin.

The church was evil, in and out,
And Luther soon began to doubt.

One day, he found a Bible, chained,
Penned in Latin, old and stained.

"The just shall live by faith," he read;
Christ paid the full price in my stead.

This verse in Romans changed his life;
But soon his days were filled with strife.

King and pope, church and state,
Upon this monk poured out their hate.

His books they burned, they mocked
and scorned;

Then was THE REFORMATION born!

They brought him to a rigged-up trial,
And questioned him for quite a while.

They wanted him to shame God's
Word,

But this is what those scoffers heard:

HERE I STAND. I CANNOT DO
OTHERWISE. GOD HELP ME.

December 1, 1999/Standard Bearer/111

My conscience by God's Word is bound;
My feet will stand on solid ground.
Martin Luther would not budge.
He knew God would be his Judge.

SING: *Be Thou My Judge*
(Psalter #69)

He nailed the theses blow by blow,
So Germans would God's goodness know.

Though Satan and his hosts assailed,
The mighty Word of God prevailed.

Those hammer thuds that shook the world
Stilled all the lies that Satan hurled.

This great event changed Europe's map;
The German monk caused quite a flap.

October 31, 1517
Was NOT a day of Halloween!

We never for our sins must pay;
O blessed REFORMATION DAY!

And all the while, he preached fine sermons;

He wrote a Bible for the Germans.

One night, at work by candle's glow,
He sensed the presence of a foe.

"Satan is in this room," I think;
Full force he threw a jar of ink.

On castle wall there still remains
The faint outline of blackened stains.

This learned man did seldom tire;
He answered all who did inquire.

But Luther's love for children, wife,
Were treasured moments in his life.

Children's singing loud and clear,
To Luther's heart was very dear.

He thought, especially, singing psalms
Refreshed the soul like soothing balms.

SING: Psalter #2

A mighty fortress is our God,
Who caused His Word to spread abroad.

Protecting it from Satan's lies,
And men who did the Truth despise.

So that this Truth is now our own —
"The just shall live by faith alone."

The Reformation now is past;
Faith of our fathers — it will last.

And little children still give praise
For this Reformer God did raise.

SING: *A Mighty Fortress Is Our God* □

Go Ye Into All the World



Rev. Daniel Kleyn

Mission Work in the Philippines

Recently Rev. Rodney Miersma and I returned from a journey halfway around the world to the country of the Philippines. Traveling there on behalf of the Foreign Mission Committee of our Protestant Reformed Churches, we visited contacts in four cities: Manila, Daet, Cagayan de Oro, and Bacolod. We both felt it a great blessing and privilege that we were able to make this trip. It was especially a blessing to meet and to fellowship with people of God who, though far from us in miles, are one with us in the faith

we confess in Jesus Christ. We enjoyed the trip and feel that it was profitable in giving us a better insight into the growing desire in the Philippines for the truths of the Reformed faith.

For quite a few years now, the Foreign Mission Committee (FMC) has been in touch with many in the Philippines who have expressed an interest in the truths of the Reformed faith. These men and groups of men have received and studied much of our literature, including the *Standard Bearer*, numerous pamphlets, and many of the publications of the Reformed Free Publishing Association. Through correspondence, but especially through visits, we have seen much evidence of a sincere hunger and thirst for the truth.

On account of this the FMC,

with the approval of synod, continues to investigate the possibility of a mission field for our churches in the Philippines. As churches we are certainly called to preach the gospel to the ends of the earth (Matt. 28:19, 20). For that reason we consider seriously whether or not the Philippines is a



Rev. Miersma at conference in Daet

Rev. Kleyn is pastor of the Protestant Reformed Church of Edgerton, Minnesota.



Rev. Kleyn leads Bible Study

place to which the Lord calls us to labor in fulfillment of His great commission.

Within the sprawling metropolis of Manila (the capital city of the Philippines), we met with men from two separate groups that have expressed interest in our churches. Many of these men, along with their families, have left other churches because of departure from the truth. They had many questions about our churches and about specific points of doctrine which they were studying, such as predestination, common grace, infant baptism, Bible translations, exegesis of Scripture, and eschatology. These meetings gave us the opportunity to find out more about these men, their church affiliation, and their present study of the Scriptures and the Reformed faith. We were also able, through this visit, to put the two groups in Manila in touch with each other.

In the Daet area, which is on the same island as Manila, but in the far southeast of that island, we visited a group of approximately seven churches, each made up of about 10 to 15 families. The churches are located in Daet, Labo, Nabua, and Jose Panganiban. Although these are independent churches, they are currently in the process of federating. The background for many of them has been either Baptist or Pentecostal.

Our three-day visit to these churches involved, first of all, an informal meeting with the pastors and elders. At this meeting we dis-

cussed our present as well as possible future work among them. The men were also keen to discuss various doctrinal questions, which we did for several hours.

On Saturday a full-day conference was scheduled on the subject of the covenant of grace. Mostly men, but also a few women, attended. Four aspects of the truth of the covenant were dealt with: (1) The Idea of the Covenant, (2) The Establishment of the Covenant, (3) The Participants in the Covenant, and (4) Our Part in the Covenant. This was a day to remember. Both during and after the presentation of the material many questions were asked and lengthy and lively discussion followed. This included questions concerning infant baptism and dispensationalism, two truths very closely related to the covenant of grace. What a joy it was to bring these truths and to observe how well they were received.

On Saturday evening we at-

tended a Bible study in the home of one of the families. Men and women of all ages filled the living room, some even sitting on the floor. The topic was the preservation of the saints. Many questions were raised and various difficult passages of Scripture discussed. It seemed they would gladly have met with us until midnight, or later. They were disappointed, therefore, that the meeting had to end so that Rev. Miersma and I could prepare for Sunday. It was time to head back to the hotel, for each of us had to lead a Bible study and preach twice (in four different churches) the next day.

Our visits in the two other cities, Cagayan de Oro and Bacolod, were similar. Again we met with the contacts there and had the opportunity to become acquainted with their circumstances as well as their understanding of the Reformed faith. In the evenings and on Saturday we gave instruction on the subject of the covenant of grace. And in Bacolod we led a worship service on Sunday morning.

In these places, too, there was clear evidence among the men we visited of an eagerness to learn as much as they could, in the short time that we were with them, of the truths of the Reformed faith as God has entrusted and preserved them in our churches.

All our preaching and lecturing was done in English — that is, without translation. Some of the previous delegations, such as that



Congregation in the Daet area



Rev. Kleyn leading worship service

of Rev. Kortering and me in May of this year, had some speeches and sermons translated into a Filipino dialect. That certainly adds a different dimension to preaching. And it takes some getting used to. But it goes well. It definitely gives one more time to choose carefully the words he will use.

The Filipinos have many different dialects. The two main ones are Cebuano and Tagalog, the latter being the official Filipino dialect. Most of the time the Filipinos speak amongst themselves in their native tongue. Sometimes, therefore, we had no idea of what was being said. Imagine, for example, not understanding a prayer during the Sunday worship service! For the most part, however, Filipinos understand and speak English fairly well. That is especially true of the younger generation, which is educated in the English language.

It is interesting to note that some of the men we met in Manila, as well as others throughout the Philippines, have learned much about the PRC through our homepage. These men have downloaded and printed pages and pages of material from the Internet, such as pamphlets — even complete books! So even our homepage has been and still is a means for the spreading of the gospel.

A significant part of the work we are currently doing in the Philippines has been the distribution of literature. Some of this work

has been done by various evangelism committees of our churches. But also the delegations have brought and distributed much literature. On this trip, for example, we were able to distribute copies of *God's Everlasting Covenant of Grace*, a book which related directly to the instruction we gave on that subject. Some other books that have had significant distribution are *Reformed Dogmatics* and *Saved By Grace*. The latter has been an extremely valuable tool in the progress and growth of the contacts in their understanding of the five points of Calvinism. Other literature includes pamphlets, the Psalter, the Three Forms of Unity, subscriptions to the *Standard Bearer*, Reformed Witness Hour messages (in printed form), and copies of sermons on cassette.

All of this literature certainly serves as an important way for the contacts to become better acquainted with the PRC and with what we believe. They appreciate very much the literature that we bring, especially because good Reformed books are difficult for them to find, and practically impossible for them to purchase, in their land. They have found the literature useful not only in their personal study of God's Word, but also for leading Bible studies and for preparation of sermons.

The FMC is greatly encouraged by the progress and development that can be seen among the contacts in the Philippines in their understanding of and appreciation for the Reformed faith. It is heartwarming to observe this firsthand through the many questions which are asked. The men avail themselves of every opportunity to ask questions. Even when we travel together in jeepneys, vans, or buses, they used every spare moment to discuss further the truths of the Scriptures and the Reformed faith, as well as the application of these truths to the daily lives of God's people as individuals and families.

As mentioned earlier, there is definitely a receptivity to our teaching and preaching. Even if the truth that we present is new to them, which is very often the case, when they hear and see that this is indeed what the Scriptures teach, they show a willingness to accept these truths.

There is also, throughout the islands of the Philippines, an increasing interest in the truth. As our literature is distributed and studied, more contacts are made. While in some cases we eventually find out that some are not interested in the truth, in most cases the interest grows and the contacts express a keen desire for us to come back again. On this trip, for example, some would gladly have had us stay much longer among them, even suggesting that perhaps we could return "next week" or "next month" to give more instruction in the truth and to answer more of their questions. They certainly desire our help in establishing Reformed churches in their country.

It was no accident that we have come into contact with God's people in the Philippines. The Lord has given us a work to do in that land. May we continue to bring them His Word and truth, in the desire to be used of Him for the gathering of His church from all nations under heaven. □



Little ones of the congregation

October 7, 1999

Dear RFPA Members and Friends,
We have recently completed another year at the RFPA, where the gracious provision by our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ was clearly evident. We now look forward to beginning our 76th year of publishing the *Standard Bearer* and our 33rd year of publishing books. Generations of Protestant Reformed believers have found blessing in the witness of the RFPA, as well as many believers in foreign lands and various denominations. Our witness is not always and everywhere heeded, but it is heard, even in far off and significant places.

We send our *Standard Bearer* to every state in the Union except Alaska, North Dakota, Rhode Island, and Utah. We mail to 31 different foreign countries: Australia, Bolivia, Bulgaria, Cameroon, Canada, Denmark, Ethiopia, Germany, Ghana, Honduras, Hong Kong, Hungary, India, Indonesia, Malta, Mexico, Myanmar, Nepal, Netherlands, New Zealand, Peru, Philippines, Republic of Ireland, Republic of South Africa, Romania, Singapore, South Korea, Switzerland, United Kingdom, Yugoslavia, and Zambia.

Our subscription base has increased over the past year to 2,678 copies mailed each issue. Last November a special effort was made to encourage our subscribers to submit gift subscriptions for friends, acquaintances, and co-workers who do not yet read the *SB*. This effort gained 123 new mailings of our magazine and we want to thank those who partici-

pated in this effort. In a letter at that time we reminded our readers that an effort like this is not to increase the subscription list for its own sake. Emphatically not! Rather the cause is the *truth*, as that truth is set forth in the Scriptures and systematized in the Reformed and Presbyterian creeds — a cause than which there is none greater or closer to our hearts. We again remind our subscribers and friends that gift subscriptions to an acquaintance or friend is a great opportunity to be involved in the dissemination of that precious truth.

All that's ever been written in the *SB* will now be at the fingertips of those with computer savvy — at a small fraction of the cost of the bound volumes and even smaller fraction of the required space on your library bookshelf. That's not even to mention the fact that earlier bound volumes of the *SB* are not available at any price. By early November, the 75 volumes, plus the printed subject index of these volumes, and Adobe Reader software for searching and viewing will be available for purchase in a three-CD set. Even those who know Dutch and would like to have access to the many articles which were written in Dutch in the early volumes of the *SB* will be able to do word-searches in that language.

Regular gifts to the *SB* dipped slightly to \$47,500 this past year. A special estate gift of \$25,164, however, brought our total gifts to the *SB* to an all-time high. This is very encouraging to all of us involved in the publication and promotion of the *SB*. We take this opportunity therefore to thank our subscribers and friends heartily for these generous gifts and support again this past year.

Efforts in the area of book planning and publishing this past year are notable. Two new books were published and much work contin-

ues on various other book-publishing projects.

Marriage, the Mystery of Christ and the Church was republished after being expanded by the author to include a scholarly treatment of the history of marriage and has been our top seller at 1,187 copies sold to date. We have just completed and shipped to all book club members our latest new book entitled *Portraits of Faithful Saints*, by Professor Hanko.

Our next publication, scheduled to arrive this coming spring, is entitled *For Thy Truth's Sake*. This book was commissioned by the synod of the PRC for the commemoration of these churches' 75th anniversary. Written by Professor Hanko, it is an enthusiastic and thorough doctrinal history of the PRC, written with the conviction that God used the PRC through its own history, doctrinal struggles, and controversies to develop and contribute to the enriching and strengthening of the Reformed faith. The Foreword to this book states: "This is a significant book.... In many areas it breaks new ground ... without a doubt destined to become a classic reference work in the PRC as well as outside of them."

Handsome, newly-designed covers have been completed for our latest printing and restocking of our three-volume *Triple Knowledge* set on the Heidelberg Catechism, which continues as one of our top sellers. Our Bible story book, *Come Ye Children*, by Gertrude Hoeksema, has been reprinted, since stock of the first 4,000 copies was depleted and demand remains strong.

Work on a revised edition of *Reformed Dogmatics* that began last year is progressing very well. Hopefully the new book will be available late in 2000. Enhancements to the *Dogmatics* include: A broad subject index, an exhaustive

Mr. Kamps is the secretary of the Board for the Reformed Free Publishing Association.

index for scholars by key words, an index to the Reformed confessions, Scripture index, index of works cited, and index of foreign expressions. Other enhancements, such as chapter subheadings, revised table of contents, translations of foreign language material, proof texts moved to the body of the material, and more, will be provided. *Reformed Dogmatics* is currently sold out and we look forward to its being available once more.

We are planning to publish an Old Testament History series comprising nine to ten volumes when finished. The material, originally written by the late Homer Hoeksema, unique for its distinctive covenantal perspective of the Old Testament, comprises Genesis through the book of Judges. Professor Engelsma, current professor of Old Testament at the PR seminary, intends to continue this work, picking up where Professor Hoeksema left off in Judges and completing the work through the inter-testamentary period up to Christ. Mr. Mark Hoeksema is serving as editor for this project. We will be publishing one volume at a time beginning with Genesis and, the Lord willing, will eventually have a nine-ten volume set of Old Testament History by these two authors.

Mr. Marvin Kamps has finished the translation of *God's Grace Is Particular*, written by Dr. Abraham Kuyper. This work, originally published in 1884, is a thrilling defense of the Reformed, sacred, biblical truth of particular grace over against the heresy of a general, ineffectual grace of God. We very much look forward to the publishing of this profound and significant work from the great Dr. Kuyper. Now that the tedious and hard work of translating is completed we will begin the process of copyediting, layout, and design. Plans are to publish one other work by Dr. Kuyper this coming year entitled, *When Thou Sittest in Thy House*. This book, first published

in the Netherlands in 1899, was translated by Rev. Henri DeVries and published in English in 1929. It has since been out of print, and we look forward to making this beautiful volume of meditations on the family and home life available once more.

Book sales have been steady again this past year, as indicated by the fact that over 7,000 volumes were sold. Book promotion activity included a new catalog mailed to 3,800 book customers this past spring, advertisements in *World* magazine, and promotion via our Internet Web Page. Our Book Club Membership program, through which new books are launched, continues to increase and now numbers 750 members. Our office staff says the phone calls and Internet messages that come to the RFPA office on a daily basis constantly inspire them in the work.

We remind our supporters and friends that the publishing of any one book can cost upwards of 20 and even 30 thousand dollars. When a book becomes sold out and needs reprinting it can be especially burdensome financially for the RFPA. Reprints are not sent to book club members, and consequently there is no initial burst of sales to help finance these projects. Reprints are simply placed in inventory and available for regular sales activity. We are facing several major reprint projects this coming year, since our inventory is either sold out or will be sold out soon. Books needing reprinting are *Reformed Dogmatics*, *Behold He Cometh*, *Saved By Grace*, *Calvin's Calvinism*, and *Whosoever Will*. As this report indicates, we have many books to publish and reprint. We believe these books should be available to those who want to read them. Please consider this need and make a gift to the RFPA designated for book publishing.

We express our sincere appreciation to Professor Engelsma for his tireless work as our *Standard Bearer* Editor-in-Chief. We appre-

ciate his uncompromising spirit and unyielding commitment to our distinctive Reformed heritage and precious faith. We take this opportunity to thank him for his hard work, dedicated labors, and leadership. We also appreciate and recognize the efforts and hard work of our regular department editors and contributors as well. We genuinely thank them for the many wonderful articles again this past year.

We thank both our *Standard Bearer* Business Manager Don Doezeema and Book and Publications Manager Evelyn Langerak for the immense amount of work they do each day to make our publications available to our readers. We thank our capable assistants and staff members: Judi Doezeema for her faithful work in financial record keeping and reporting for the *SB* and for typesetting each issue of the magazine; and Natalie Jefferson for her conscientious and fine work of copyediting and proofreading for our books. We commend you for your perseverance in the work and for the many daily tasks and responsibilities carried out so well by you on behalf of the RFPA.

We also thank our volunteer assistants: Mrs. John Veldman and Dave and Karen Dykstra for their regular, faithful help in mailing each issue of the *SB*; and Suet Yin, our imported Singaporean assistant, who gives general assistance to book publishing and mailing. The RFPA has further need of volunteer assistants in the area of maintaining our Web Page and in proofreading. If you have skills in these areas and would like to give help, please contact us.

Our prayer as we look forward to another year is that God will continue to bless and prosper the work of the RFPA for the sake of His truth and to the glory of His name.

Henry Kamps
RFPA Secretary □

Reformed Confessions: Theology from Zurich to Barmen, by Jan Rohls. Tr. John Hoffmeyer. Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster John Knox Press, 1998. xxiii + 311pp. \$35 (cloth). [Reviewed by the editor]

To read *Reformed Confessions* is to receive a sound, thorough education in the theology of Reformed orthodoxy. Following the order of the six loci of dogmatics (although strangely there is no treatment of eschatology), Jan Rohls sets forth the teaching of the Reformed creeds on all the leading doctrines of Scripture. The book is a comparative study of the creeds. The purpose is not to comment on the creedal teaching, but simply to present it. Although the creeds are in basic agreement, the occasional difference is noted.

The author concentrates on the confessions of the 16th and 17th centuries, beginning with the creedal statements of Zwingli and concluding with the Helvetic Consensus Formula.

The last section of the book considers the history of confessions in the Reformed churches after 1675. This includes an analysis of the Barmen Declaration of 1934. In this section, Rohls notes that the authority of the confessions came under attack from two quarters, pietism and the Enlightenment.

Encrusted orthodoxy was opposed both by Pietism, influenced by Dutch precisianism and English Puritanism, and by the Enlightenment, which was making its way from Western Europe.... The Enlightenment and Pietism agreed in emphasizing the priority of scripture over the confessional writings and symbolic books. There was a corresponding opposition to the Orthodox "papacy of the confessions" . . . In the new view, a con-

fession could no longer be a *rule of faith*, but only the articulation of a specific *type of doctrine* (pp. 265, 266).

Rohls' exposition is sound. With only the rare lapse, he does justice to the confessions and, thus, to Reformed orthodoxy. In addition, he unfailingly hones in on the exact issue. In treating of "reconciliation and substitution," Rohls points out that Christ reconciled us to God, and not God to us (pp. 90, 91). In the section on "justification and faith," he is at pains to demonstrate that the creeds condemn viewing faith as another work of the sinner: "It is impossible to regard faith as that on the basis of which we are justified" (p. 126). Faith is the gift of God to the elect sinner (pp. 128, 129).

Posing the problem that "the particularity of election seems to call into question the universality of grace," Rohls observes, correctly, that

the universalistic statements of the Bible are understood (by the Reformed confessions—DJE) in such a way that the expressions "world," "all," and "many" apply exclusively to God's church in the sense of the communion of those who have been elected from eternity (pp. 162, 163).

Not only does Rohls invariably strike to the heart of the creedal statements of Reformed doctrine, but he also has the gift of expressing that heart in a memorable way. Regarding the doctrine of the person and natures of Jesus Christ, "Christology is about the fact that God is human, and specifically that God is human without ceasing to be God" (p. 108).

A rare lapse is his treatment of reprobation. It is Rohls' understanding of the creeds that unlike election (for which he reserves the

term "predestination") "reprobation can in no way be considered a positive act of God's will, so that election and rejection also cannot be understood as two parallel acts of the divine will" (p. 153). Rohls supposes that reprobation in the creeds is "exclusively ... a passing over or overlooking of some sinners in the act of election, which is the sole positive act of the divine will" (p. 154).

But the Canons of Dort speak of one eternal decree of election and reprobation according to which God gives faith to some and withholds faith from others (I/6). Further, the Canons teach that God has "decreed to leave (others) in the common misery" (I/15). The Westminster Confession of Faith teaches one decree by which some "are predestinated unto everlasting life, and others foreordained to everlasting death" (3.3). In 3.7 Westminster views reprobation as the divine counsel that not only "passes by" but also "ordains" some humans to dishonor and wrath.

This reviewer protests vehemently against the profaning of language that results from politically correct deference to feminism. As theologians increasingly cower before the feminists, we will have to read books that defile the English language. But how can one not be disgusted with such a sentence as this? "In the words of the Westminster Confession, God has the divine life 'in Godself' ... and 'from Godself'" (p. 46). In fact, these are *not* the words of the Westminster Confession. The Holy Spirit, God *Himself*, who guided the divines at Westminster into the knowledge of the truth, also protected them from such barbarisms.

This aside, the book must be part of the library of all, whether friend or foe, who would know the Reformed faith from its creeds. □

Minister Activities

Our PR readers may remember back in the summer when an announcement appeared in your bulletins asking for your help with plans to commemorate Rev. C. Hanko's 70 years in the ministry. We can report that, thanks to your contributions, an album of memories was put together and given to Rev. Hanko on September 24, the 70th anniversary. In response to that observation, Rev. Hanko writes: "I wish to thank the Hudsonville consistory for so thoughtfully remembering my 70 years in the ministry. I also wish to thank the many friends from various churches who sent a card or wrote me recounting some experience of the past. These letters have all been placed in an album to be referred to whenever the occasion offers. Above all, our humble thanks to our covenant God who has cared for us as churches and as individuals these many years. To Him be the praise."

Rev. Dale Kuiper, pastor of the Southeast PRC in Grand Rapids, MI, has declined the call he received from the Hull, IA PRC. Hull's new trio, from which they will call a pastor on November 8, consists of the Revs. Bruinsma, Koole, and Doug Kuiper.

Most of our readers wouldn't know the difference, but we want to get our facts straight. In the October 15 "News" we mixed up a couple of facts concerning Rev. Nathan Brummel's ordination. His

brother, Rev. A. Brummel, read the Ordination Form and his brother-in-law, Rev. Dick, gave the closing admonitions and prayer, not the other way around.

Mission Activities

The last week in October saw two couples from the Grandville, MI PRC leave for destinations on opposite sides of the globe. Mr. and Mrs. John Bouma left to serve as missionary assistants to Rev. and Mrs. Moore in Ghana, West Africa, and Mr. and Mrs. Jack Feenstra departed to begin service to our sister churches in Singapore. May the Lord bless and encourage them as they begin a new work in the service of God's kingdom far from their homes.

Prof. H. Hanko left on October 23 for a brief five-day visit to Myanmar. He planned to teach a course on the subject of biblical interpretation and sermon making. Though the teaching cannot be so thorough and extensive as the professor would have liked, this will give the Myanmar pastors help in sound preaching. Prof. Hanko was to be joined by Rev. Cheah and others later that same week. Myanmar had been closed to such visits for teaching, but the Lord provided an open door when the government recently resumed granting visitor visas.

School News

Adams Christian School invited supporters to join them for a Ground Breaking-Open House Celebration on October 9. They could visit the school and also witness ground breaking for a future gymnasium, science classroom, and rest rooms. The Lord willing, this addition will be completed in about a year.

On October 30 the members of the Association for the Heidelberg PR Christian School invited sup-

porters to an Open House for the purpose of fellowship and celebration. This Open House took place in Elgin, IL. Food, activities, and entertainment were also provided.

October 21 and 22 the teachers of all our schools held their 45th annual convention at Covenant Christian High School in Grand Rapids, MI. Rev. Doug Kuiper gave the keynote address on October 21 at Southwest PRC in Grandville, MI, entitled, "The Christian Home and School Connection to Raising Strangers and Pilgrims in the New Millennium."

Denomination Activities

This year's annual meeting of the Reformed Free Publishing Association was held at the Hope PRC in Walker, MI. Rev. W. Bruinsma, pastor of the Kalamazoo, MI PRC, spoke on "The Standard for the New Millennium."

Evangelism Activities

A conference/panel discussion was held at the Faith PRC in Jenison, MI on October 28 and 29. The first night Rev. M. Dick spoke on "The Reformation and Evangelism." The next evening there were two panel discussions. The first was led by Rev. J. Slopsema, on "Pamphlets, Pamphleteering, and the Circular File," and the second was led by Rev. R. VanOverloop, on "From the Weather to the Water of Life."

The Reformed Witness Committee, made up of members from the Doon and Hull, IA PRCs, along with the Edgerton, MN PRC, sponsored their annual Reformation Lecture. This year Prof. R. Dykstra spoke at the B.J. Hann Auditorium on the Dordt College campus on October 29. He spoke on the theme, "Martin Luther and 1517: Unfortunate Rift? or Necessary Reformation?"

That same evening Prof. R.

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

Decker was at the Randolph, WI PRC to speak for their Reformation Lecture. Prof. Decker chose to speak on preaching as the heart of reformation and worship. His topic was "Christ's Real Presence in the Preaching of the Gospel."

Rev. T. Miersma, missionary in our churches for the past five years, was the featured speaker at a public lecture sponsored by the Evangelism Committee of the Lynden, WA PRC. He spoke on October 29 on the subject, "Gospel of Christ Crucified: The Heart of the Reformation."

Food For Thought

"We can learn nothing of the gospel except by feeling its truths. There are some sciences that may be learned by the head, but the science of Christ crucified can only be learned by the heart."

—C.H. Spurgeon □

ANNOUNCEMENTS

RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The Mary-Martha Society of Hope PRC in Redlands, CA expresses their heartfelt Christian sympathy to fellow members Janice Feenstra, Michelle Buitter, Beth Feenstra, Sarah Feenstra, and families in the loss of their mother and grandmother,

MRS. JEANNETTE DE HEER.

May the Lord's rich mercy and grace sustain them in their sorrow, and may they be comforted in the words of our Lord Jesus Christ in John 14:1-3: "Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also."

Rev. Arie denHartog, President
Jeanne Karsemeyer, Secretary

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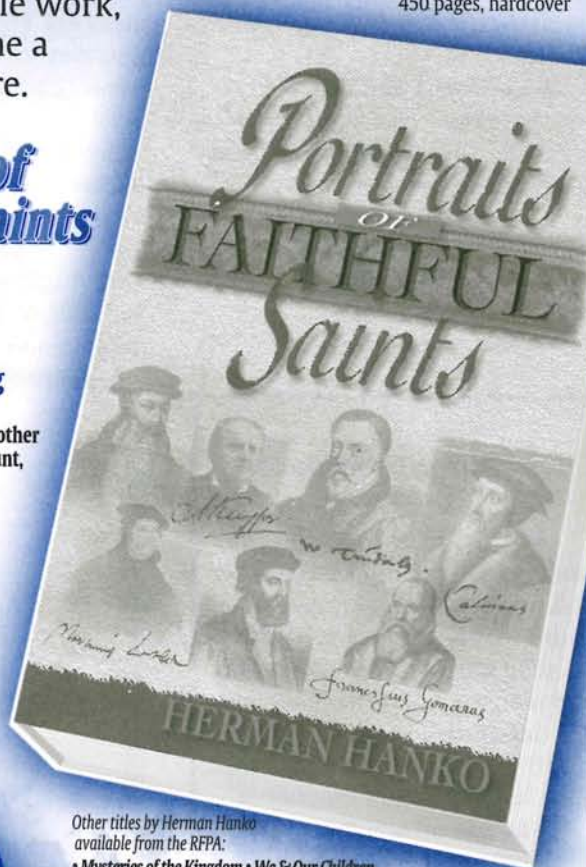
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RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The members of the Grace PRC Adult Bible Society express their Christian sympathy to Mr. and Mrs. Gerald VanDenTop and Mrs. June VanDenTop, and to their families, in the death of Clara and June's father,

MAYNARD VEENSTRA.

May they find comfort in God's Word, "Behold, I shew you a mystery: We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed" (I Corinthians 15:51, 52).

Rev. Mitchell Dick, Pres.
Theresa Dykstra, Sec'y.

BULLETIN CLERK CHANGE

Please make a note that the new bulletin clerk for Georgetown PRC, effective in November, is:

Mrs. Barb Schut
8615 Cedar Lake Dr.
Jenison, MI 49428
(616) 457-3904
e-mail: barbls2@juno.com

TEACHERS NEEDED

Covenant Christian High School is looking for a person qualified to teach in and possibly coordinate a program of special education at the secondary level. Interested persons, whether currently certified or looking to complete certification within two years, are asked to contact Rick Noorman at (616) 453-5048 or Ed Ophoff at (616) 247-8382.

Eastside Christian School announces the honorable retirement of Miss Ruth Dykstra. Because of her intended retirement in June 2000, Eastside Christian School will accept immediately applications from persons who are confessing members of the Protestant Reformed Churches for the teaching position in the primary grades 1-3 for the year 2000-2001. Send a letter of application and a résumé to Eastside Christian School, attention: Agatha Lubbers or James Holstege, 2800 Michigan St. N.E., Grand Rapids, MI 49506. If you have any questions call Agatha Lubbers, (616) 942-2939 or (616) 458-2057 or James Holstege, (616) 285-9096.

TAPES AVAILABLE

Tapes of Southwest's Summer Seminar, "The Biblical Way Through the Millennial Maze," may be ordered from:

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Reformed Church
Evangelism Committee
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Grandville, MI 49418

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