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Editorial

SPEECH; a Manifestation of the Heart

by Harry Langerak

Speech is one of the means we use to communicate our thoughts to one another. God has created man a creature who expresses his thoughts to others. The most important influencial means that man uses to convey thoughts is his speech. Through speech man conveys not only what he is thinking, but the impressions he feels regarding the subject about which he is talking. His tone of voice, his expressions, all blend to let the listener know exactly what the speaker is thinking.

Speech is very intricate and complex and I certainly do not intend to be exhaustive on the subject. What I would like to do is call your attention to some aspects of our speech which stand out.

The heart is the most important determiner of the content of our speech. This is because it is the center of man's thinking. It is the place from which the thoughts of man originate. The heart is also the spiritual center of man's life. It determines man's relation to God. The thoughts of the heart, therefore, will speak of man's relationship to his creator. They will show that he loves God or hates him. "But those things which proceed out of the mouth come forth from the heart; and they defile the man." (Matt. 15:18) The thoughts of the heart must be expressed. No man is an island. He must express the desires of his heart.

The tongue is the instrument Scripture mentions which gives utterance to the thoughts of the heart. In Scripture the tongue is said to be a very powerful tool in our speech. Its power is totally out of proportion to its size. In James 3:4 it is likened to the rudder of a ship. The rudder is very small in comparison to the large, heavy, cumbersome ship it is capable of giving direction to. The tongue also is small in size but, oh, how it can boast of great things.

The tongue and the heart work together to form the basic ingredients of our speech. The thoughts which originate in our heart are given expression through means of that powerful tool, the tongue. Our heart gives moral ethical content to our speech. It determines whether our speech is God centered or man centered. It determines whether we love God or hate him. What we say about God and how we say it definitely shows what our relationship to God is. It tells those listening whether we respect and honor God and hold him in holy awe or we hate God and are disrespectful. Let me use an example to demonstrate my point. We live in a world that is made up of many nations. Each nation has its own language, government, customs, leaders, etc. The easiest way for us to determine what country a person is from is by his language. A Frenchman will use French and a Dutchman, Dutch and so on. If we carry this one step farther, we can also determine how he likes his country and its leaders by how he talks about them. This same thing is true in the spiritual sense. Our speech will determine whether we are citizens of heaven or of this world. It will determine whether we love God or Satan. It will determine whether we are of the Church or the world and whether we love

the saint.

When we take the name of our God in vain, our speech tells the listener we have no respect for God. Instead of holding him in holy awe, we show disrespect. That is why it is so important for us to always speak with greatest respect to and about our God. We must never give the world or our fellow saint the impression that God means very little to us.

Our speech also shows how we look on our fellow saints. Positively, our speech can be used as a very powerful tool to build up the body of Christ. We can encourage the brother who is bowed down with worries and cares. The word of God in the mouth of the saint can be a source of comfort to those who sorrow. Our speech can be a source of instruction and admonition to our fellow saints who are weak and who are careless in their godly walk. The esteem we give our brother in Christ is also manifest by our speech. Do we greet him with a Christian greeting? Do we talk about him in our conversation as one we love? Is our love such that we wish him or her God's blessing? It can be no other way.

Negatively, our speech can be a very fearsome instrument because of the destruction it can render the fellow saint. We can destroy him by our slander, backbiting and gossip. We can lead him astray by assuring him that sin is not sin, but that everybody is doing it. We lead astray by our filthy communication. In our conversation, we can be disrespectful and disobedient to those who are placed over us by God. If these things characterize our speech we do well to heed the admonition of James 1:26: "If any man among you seem to be religious, and bridleth not his tongue, but deceiveth his own heart, this man's religion is vain."

We must realize, Young People, our speech is a very important part of our behavior. It tells in a very intimate way what are the thoughts of our heart. Very importantly throughout Scripture the dangers of the tongue are given special attention as to its power and influence in our lives. "But the tongue can no man tame; it is an unruly evil, full of deadly poison." (James 3:8) "An hypocrite with his mouth destroyeth his neighbor: but through knowledge shall the just be delivered." (Proverbs 11:9)

The only answer to our unruly tongue is the grace of God. God alone is the one who can bridle our tongue. We must pray to him and seek his help to control that unruly member of our body. We must crucify the old man of sin and his speech and put on the new man and his sanctified speech. This is what the battle of faith is all about. We are conscious willing followers of Christ. This means that consciously and willingly our speech must manifest we are the children of the Most High God. Only in this way will we with the Church of Christ be built up.

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Poems and Short Statements
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Feature

College Life Away From Home

by Edward C. Ophoff Jr.
Ferris State College

***Ed is a member of our First Church**

I was asked by a member of the Beacon Lights staff to prepare an article about college campus lifestyle. I agreed and this short expose is the result.

My first impression of college was one of alone-ness. I knew no one in any of my classes even remotely. In fact, only one other person from my denomination attended this college of 9,200. The classes begin as soon as the instructor arrives, eliminating prayer which has always been a part of school for me. It's shocking how people desregard God. Swearing and cussing by both students and teachers alike is common practice. But these things have been experienced by every Christian attending a college. The difference between attending classes at a local college and going away to college lies mainly in dormitory life, which is enjoyable, but can be depressing at times.

Your 14' by 13' room becomes your study, your bedroom, really, your home. At first it's rather like vacation. You meet many different people, and experience a totally different lifestyle. There are few restrictions placed on you. No curfews, no one to tell you what to do, or ask you where you have been. Even the few rules are hardly enforceable. So it seems like you are "on your own."

Or are you? Because you have left the watchful eyes of parents and friends, have you left God at home too? Impossible. You find out soon how much you need your God. Prayer becomes a much more personal thing, and you really appreciate God's friendship. You aren't alone after all. This makes it easier to decline the invitations to all-night beer parties or to "smoke a joint" at noon.

If you really are a Christian, it will show. Your college friends wonder why you go home every weekend and attend church. And why do you always pray over your dinner?

But I don't want to seem too negative. College life can be a richly rewarding experience, and is a fantastic opportunity to witness. Setting aside all argument for and against college, let me say to anyone seriously contemplating college, that, if you decide to go, know exactly what you believe and hold to it.

A Post Convention Summary from a Non Young Person

by Jim Van Overloop

Sunday, August 3. New faces were in town. You could see them visiting the various Grand Rapids Protestant Reformed Churches. The air hinted with a ting of excitement. That Sunday evening many gathered to First Church for the pre-convention singspiration. Folding chairs were brought out to seat the capacity crowd. Soon the auditorium was filled with voices, chords of the pipe organ, and the triumphant blare of trumpets. This tremendous effort to praise

our covenant faithful God consumated in the song "Great is Thy Faithfulness". The auditorium rang! Many an eye was filled with tears. Lumps choked throats. What a blessing to just look around and see and hear of God's covenant faithfulness. People of our more isolated churches were thrilled beyond words by what they experienced. A great beginning to a convention week!

I'm thankful to have been able to attend the speeches. May I suggest for future conventions that the speeches be at such a time that the older people can hear them also. The speeches this year were well attended. They have been printed and follow this article. Read them and receive the blessing in them.

About 1900 people attended the field day. It was something to see, the park was filled. A bond of unity seemed to be present. It was an emotional experience, especially for those who remember 1924 and 1953.

God certainly was good to us to let us celebrate properly, young and old alike, the 50th Anniversary of the Protestant Reformed Churches. In days ahead let us thank God for the many blessings he bestows on us. Let us put on our Christian apparel. Let us strive to walk as a pilgrim and a stranger in our everyday walk. Then everyday problems seem small when put in proper perspective by a spiritually right mind. So, "seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Set your affections on things above, not on things on the earth." Col. 3:1,2

Give God all the glory forever and ever!

God's Covenant Faithfulness- It's Idea

by Prof. H. C. Hoeksema

Beloved Protestant Reformed Young People and Beloved Protestant Reformed Brethren and Sisters gathered with us tonight:

First of all, I want to say that I have always counted it a privilege to be able to address one of our Protestant Reformed Young People's Conventions; and especially is that the case in this Fiftieth Anniversary Year of our Protestant Reformed Churches, and when, as much as possible, all our people may be gathered with us to celebrate this occasion. I count that a privilege indeed. In the second place, I think a word of congratulations is in order to our Young People's Federation for planning their convention around the theme of our denominational celebration. I think congratulations are in order for two reasons. In the first place, this shows, to my mind, a healthy denominational consciousness and loyalty. And, secondly, I think it gives the lie to the idea that there is any serious generation gap among us. We are together at this occasion, old and young--and, may I say, middle-aged. And I think it is a glorious occasion that we may all be together in this fashion to commemorate this anniversary.

The theme is appropriate, I believe, not only because it surely touches on a key aspect of the Reformed faith as we have always held it and still do maintain it today; but more than that, it is appro-

priate because it expresses something fundamental concerning our very existence, our very life, as a Protestant Reformed people. And it certainly expresses what must be the theme of all our celebration: we must end in the Lord our God and in His faithfulness, and never in self or in any man.

With that in mind, I will try to expound to you tonight THE IDEA OF GOD'S COVENANT FAITHFULNESS, and will do so under three heads:

I. A High Distinction

II. A Sovereign Faithfulness

III. A Divine Revelation

A High Distinction

It is necessary, first of all that we pay attention to the idea of faithfulness as such. We must ask and answer the question: what is implied in that notion of **faithfulness**? Faithfulness implies, in the first place, that there exists an established relation between two or more persons, or some kind of alliance or agreement. I am not speaking now, you understand, about the covenant. But faithfulness in general implies and presupposes an existing relationship of some kind. In connection with tonight's subject that existing relationship is the covenant relation, the bond of friendship between God and His people in Christ Jesus. You cannot properly speak of faithfulness without such a relationship. In everyday life you can speak of faithfulness, for example, between friend and friend, or of faithfulness between husband and wife. But you cannot properly speak of faithfulness between those who are enemies or between those who sustain no relationship whatsoever to one another. In the second place, there is suggested in this idea of faithfulness, especially in connection with tonight's subject, the idea that somehow that relationship is put to the test. It is put under stress. It is strained. Faithfulness implies the existence of something which strains a relationship. Either that relation is strained by a long period of time, a long period of absence, or by some adverse circumstances of some kind which make it difficult and even impossible for that relationship to continue, and to be maintained, and to function, to survive. In the third place, faithfulness implies that in spite of these adverse circumstances, which put a strain on the relationship, nevertheless that relation between those persons does indeed endure and is indeed made to function. In that sense, for example, you can speak of a friend. A friend in times of prosperity, also according to the book of Proverbs, is nothing special. But a friend who is a friend and who remains a friend in adversity and in difficult circumstances, when that relation of friendship is put to the test, is a faithful friend. Then the faithfulness of a friend comes to manifestation.

Hence, there is the aspect in this subject of "The Idea of God's Covenant Faithfulness," first of all, of the covenant relationship itself. Let me briefly call attention to that covenant relation. That is necessary, and I think it is very important. I am afraid sometimes that we tend to become accustomed to that very glorious idea of God's covenant, that we probably tend to let it become commonplace, so that it becomes a matter of course for us, perhaps, to speak of that covenant relation of friendship between God and His people in Christ without really ever contemplating the amazing wonder of it. And it is wonderful! I would like to call attention to that idea in terms of the Convention text in Deuteronomy 7. The covenant is not literally mentioned there; nevertheless there is a very beautiful description of the covenant relation in that passage.

Let me call your attention, in the first place, to the fact that that passage speaks of God's covenant people as one people,

one spiritual nation, a holy nation, a special people. God, you see, does not simply save a number of individuals and take them up into the stream of His own covenant life. He does not simply save a multitude, a mass of people. But He saves one people, a nation, one whole, with one King, one spiritual life-principle, one character, one law, one language, one heavenly country. He saves the generation of spiritual Israel from among all nations, the new humanity in Christ. That, first of all.

At the same time we must remember that God's people are not characterized by mere monotony. They are not all the same. They are not exact replicas of one another. But there is diversity among them. There are many citizens in that one spiritual nation, gathered from the beginning to the end of the world and from among all nations. And each of those citizens occupies his own place and serves his own purpose in the whole of that nation, according to his own peculiar characteristics and talents and status. And yet that takes place so that all are fundamentally alike. And with that fundamental likeness of the people of God each serves in his own way in his own place to bring out the one idea of that covenant people of Jehovah.

In the third place, we must keep in mind tonight the organic viewpoint. What is said in the Convention theme text, and what is addressed to the people of God certainly cannot be applied to every individual in Israel of old, nor to every individual in the church here in the midst of the world in the New Testament day. Nor can it be applied, let me add, to every one of us as Protestant Reformed people. Not all are Israel that are of Israel. But God's election and reprobation cut right across the generations of His covenant as they exist in history. Outwardly, indeed, all belong. Outwardly all share in the same benefits. Outwardly all claim the same name, and are called by the same name. But some to their salvation, and some to their damnation. Nevertheless while here in the midst of the world and in the course of history many branches may be cut out of that tree of God's covenant, the tree itself is saved. And God's covenant people here in the world are viewed as a whole, as an organism, and addressed as such, from the viewpoint of the elect seed that is always present in their midst. That is important to remember. For it means that only as you and I are actually redeemed and delivered, only as you and I are actually a holy people unto the Lord our God, can we and may we lay hold personally on the high distinction that is described in this passage.

Notice that there are several terms in the Convention text which serve to emphasize that God's covenant people are indeed a most excellent people. They are highly distinguished!

For one thing, they are called a **special people**. That is a term in Scripture which really carries the connotation of being a purchased possession, and in that sense a very **dear** possession, and in that sense a peculiar people. What a tremendous thing that is, beloved! We are God's special people, God's very own. All things are God's. He is the Sovereign of heaven and earth. But from among all things, from among all the nations of the world, from among all men and in distinction from all the others, there is one people that is His very own, His inheritance, precious in the sight of the Lord, the apple of His eye--His as no one else is His. In that sense they are a special people. How often this idea is emphasized in Scripture. God's people are His bride, His wife, His friends. Or, as is emphasized in Rev. 21, where the final realization of God's covenant is described, "They shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God."

In the second place, they are the people upon whom is the divine stamp of

approval. They are His chosen people. And as that expression is used here in Scripture, it points to the fact not only that God chose His people from before the foundation of the world. It points not only to the fact that God selected them from before the foundation of the world, in distinction from others. But it points also to this fact, that God realized that choice in time, that in history He actually singles out His people. And the expression that is used here in Scripture emphasizes especially that He set His heart and mind upon His people, that He approved them, that the divine seal is upon them, and He says to them: "You only have I known among all the families of the earth."

In the third place, we are the objects of His love. And the expression that is used here for God's love emphasizes the idea of fastening or binding together. It implies, therefore, that we are the people in whom God has delight. And as such we are the people whom God unites with Himself in the bond of fellowship, the bond of intimate communion and friendship.

Finally, God's people are called here a people which is holy unto Jehovah. I cannot take the time tonight to expound that idea of holiness in detail. But let me emphasize that holiness with respect to God means that He, as the absolute Good, is Self-centered. And with respect to us, His covenant people, it means that we are God-centered. We exist for His glory and for the manifestation of His virtues and praises. And as such we are consecrated to Him with heart and mind and soul and strength.

That, briefly and in concrete fashion, is the idea of God's covenant with us.

What a glorious estate is ours! Beloved, I mean not only that this is a wonderful doctrine. You know, it has been characteristic of us as Protestant Reformed Churches to emphasize that idea of God's covenant. And that is well. That is our heritage. But let us understand clearly that this doctrine of God's covenant with His people in Christ Jesus is the description of the actual, living relationship between God and us. Ye are a special people unto the Lord our God. Ye are a chosen nation. Ye are the object of His love. Ye are a holy people unto Jehovah our God. And Scripture never ceases to emphasize that idea. It never hesitates to remind us of that glorious estate that is ours. It does not speak merely in terms of what we **must** be, but in terms of what we **are**. And it does so not to make us proud, but to make us humble and thankful. It does so not to make us carnally secure, but so that we may also know and fulfill our calling. It does so to remind us and reassure us of this glorious act, because that excellency is so often denied by the world, and because it is so often hidden, covered up, by our own sin. That covenant is the heritage of us as the people of God, of us as a Protestant Reformed people. We represent the cause of God's covenant in the midst of the world!

A Sovereign Faithfulness

It is in this connection that we must understand the idea of God's covenant faithfulness. I noted earlier with you that faithfulness implies the presence of some kind of adverse circumstances which make it difficult, and even impossible, for a certain bond or relationship to be maintained and to function. And it implies that in spite of those adverse circumstances that relation **is** maintained and endures, cannot be destroyed, and functions. And that is true of this covenant relation.

That is true, beloved, first of all, as far as our origin as God's covenant people is concerned. We were once God's covenant friends by creation, in Adam, in the state of righteousness in Paradise. We were created that way in Adam. We were made in the image and likeness of God. We were created capable of living in covenant relationship, covenant friendship

with the living God. Not only that: we were created living in God's fellowship in Adam. That was our original estate. God was our God, our Friend-Sovereign; and we were created His friend-servants, living in His fellowship, serving Him, knowing Him, and enjoying His friendship, His fellowship, His lovingkindness that is better than life.

But we fell. We were unfaithful. We were not true to that covenant position. We turned our backs on our Friend-Sovereign. We chose instead to be the friends of the prince of darkness. And when we did, we came into the house of the bondage of sin and death, the house of slaves. Do you understand what that means? Those are those adverse circumstances of which I was speaking a moment ago. And those adverse circumstances were so adverse that as far as we were concerned, friendship with the living God became forever impossible! As far as we were concerned, that was the end, the end forever of that covenant relation of friendship between God and us. We became dead in trespasses and sins. We lost the right and we lost the ability to be God's friends. We lost the right and the ability to enjoy His fellowship and favor. We lost the right and the ability ever to be the objects of His love again.

But He redeemed us and delivered us by His mighty hand and by His stretched out arm. He brought us out of the house of the bondage of sin and death. He changed us from being not the objects of His mercy to being the objects of His mercy. He changed us from being not His people to being the people of the living God. And remember: even from a natural point of view, even apart from the whole question of our lostness,--even from a natural point of view there was nothing attractive about us. That is what the Word of God emphasizes in Deuteronomy 7 to the children of Israel, too. It wasn't that they were such a wonderful people even naturally. It wasn't that they were such a numerous people naturally. They were the fewest. They were the littlest. And literally Scripture emphasizes they were the "scrapings"--that which is left on the plate after you eat and which you throw away into the waste barrel. Such a people God redeemed and delivered! Not the greatest, not the noble, not the mighty, not the wise, not the prudent! But the poor, the ignoble, the weak, the despised, yea, and things that are not, to put to nought things that are.

Why?

God is faithful, beloved! He is true! He had every reason to forsake us, every reason to turn His back on us forever. But He maintained His covenant. He took us anew for His covenant friends in Christ Jesus. And He even raised that friendship to the higher and heavenly level of the resurrection-life of our Lord Jesus Christ, and made us like--not unto the image of the first Adam--but like unto the image of His Son.

Still more. He maintains and realizes that bond of friendship and causes it to fuction although, even after we have been restored as His people, restored to His friendship, we still give Him every reason to turn His back on us, still give Him every reason to break off that covenant. I am referring now to the fact that as long as we are in this present earthly life, we sin against Him. We sin against Him a thousand times daily. And those sins are sins against grace, you understand. They are much more heinous. We violate His covenant. As far as we are concerned, we make that covenant incapable of functioning. We break it every time we sin. Any single one of our sins as the imperfect people of God would be sufficient in itself to bar us from His fellowship forever. But God is faithful. He never forsakes us though we make ourselves worthy of being forsaken a thousand times over. He never leaves us. He always forgives. He always takes us back. And He heals, He cleanses, He sanctifies, and He preserves to the

very end. There is one expression in our beautiful Baptism Form that expresses that idea. It is a heart-warming and comforting expression to any child of God. At the end of the doctrinal section of that form you read: "And if we sometimes through weakness fall into sin, we must not therefore despair of God's mercy, nor continue in sin, since baptism is a seal and undoubted testimony that we have an eternal covenant of grace with God." That is God's covenant faithfulness!

And it is sovereign! That is the beauty of it.

If you ask the question why God is faithful, the reason cannot be in you and me. We are unfaithful. The reason can only be in God Himself, beloved. God's covenant faithfulness--that is the theme!

His faithfulness is **sovereign.** It is not dependent on anything in you and me. That is a good thing, too. If ever it depended on anything in you and me, that would be the end, the sure end.

He is faithful, in the first place, because He loved us. That is why--simply because He loved us. And that means, you understand, that He loved us in His electing love, from all eternity, according to His counsel, for reasons which He took out of Himself. He loved us from all eternity in Christ Jesus as our elect Head. In the second place, He is faithful because of the oath which He sware. That is a beautiful idea. God swore an oath. And because He could swear by no greater, He swore by Himself, by His own eternally, unchangeably, divine, true being. And that He swore an oath means, first of all, that He spoke a word within Himself. From all eternity, God said "Surely, blessing I will bless them, and multiplying I will multiply them." And His own eternally and unchangeably true Being is the witness of that oath. That is the oath that He spake unto our fathers and that He always speaks unto His people according to the Holy Scriptures. It is the sure word of promise!

That is the idea of God's faithfulness. According to that love and according to that oath He always beholds us. God, you understand, sees us not as we are in ourselves. He views us not as we are apart from Christ. He always views us as He purposes to make us in Christ Jesus. He always beholds us as we shall be some day, without spot or wrinkle among the assembly of the elect in life eternal. And always in Christ Jesus, therefore, He loves us--from eternity to eternity, in unchangeable love and faithfulness.

A Divine Revelation

Then you can understand Christ, you see. Christ does not come to change the hatred of God into love. Then you would never have an answer to the question, "Whence is Christ? How could Christ come?" But He, the crucified and risen Lord, Who is become the quickening Spirit--He is the revelation of God's sovereign love and faithfulness. Christ means that rather than forsake us, God--mystery of mysteries--forsook His only begotten Son in the bottom of hell, in order that we might be saved. Christ is the channel of God's unfailing mercies.

Then, too, you can understand the very possibility of God's faithfulness to us in the light of His faithfulness to Himself. For we must never forget that God's faithfulness means in the deepest sense of the word that He is true to Himself as the Triune God of infinite perfections. Faithful God is to His own holiness and righteousness. But then the question arises: in the light of His holiness and righteousness, how can He be faithful to us? If He loves us, if He is faithful to us, poor, wretched, lost sinners in ourselves, aliens from His house by nature, can that not only be at the expense of His own holiness and righteousness?

No, beloved; look to the cross! There, at the cross, is the revelation of a sovereign love and of a sovereign faithfulness, but of a love and a

faithfulness in the way of God's righteousness and justice. For there God's own unchanging love and faithfulness provided satisfaction of His righteousness and justice. There mercy and truth--or if you will, faithfulness--are met together: righteousness and peace have kissed each other.

What is the conclusion?

This: we have nothing to boast--not as individuals, and not as churches.

And it is this: ours is a wonderful and sure heritage. It is not the heritage merely of some dead doctrine, but of living and comforting and real truth. And the end of it all must be: all glory to our faithful covenant God! "He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord!"

God's Covenant Faithfulness- The Historical Realization

by Rev. David Engelsma

Protestant Reformed young people and members of the Protestant Reformed Churches - God's covenant people in the world:

We are Reformed!

On the basis of the infallibly inspired Scriptures and in harmony with our precious Reformed confessions, we preach, believe, and confess the glorious sovereignty of God in the salvation of sinners by His grace alone. Salvation is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God Who shows mercy to whom He will show mercy.

On the basis of the same Word and in harmony with the same creeds, we confess the sovereignty of our God over all. He is God! He is the **great** God! His counsel stands, and He does all His good pleasure. Of Him and through Him and unto Him are all things. He governs with almighty power the destruction of the wicked; the rise and fall of nations; the development of the Kingdom of the Antichrist; the fall of a sparrow from the roof-top; and the circumstances of the life of every one of us.

50 years ago, the Protestant Reformed Chruches were born because men and women of God were determined to be Reformed; today, these churches can say what they said then: We are Reformed!

This confession is true - there is room for no doubt, either on our part or on the part of those around us. Listen to the confession of our people; attend to the instruction given young men in our seminary; above all, hear the preaching of the gospel in our pulpits and in the catechism rooms.

Yes, and let our life be a witness to the truth of the confession, "We are Reformed." Where God's sovereignty is known, there a people is consecrated to God so that they live all their life unto Him. This is holiness of life. We seek God in the education of our children in good Christian schools; in our marriages by honoring His marriage ordinance; in our work by submitting to our masters; in our everyday life on earth by striving to be separate from the ungodly world.

When we stand in the judgment, before God the Judge of all men, even those who put us out of their communion will testify of us: "it cannot be denied that they are Reformed in respect to the fundamental truths..."

This is no boast!

If it were, if it would ever become a boast, we would be guilty of that which we hate with all our hearts - and which God

detests with all His heart: boasting in man, rather than in the Lord.

No, "We are Reformed" is our joyful, thankful, utterly humble confession that God has done great things for us, whereof we are glad. "We are Reformed," and "All that we are we owe to Thee." We rejoice at being Reformed. To be Reformed is to be blessed above all people on earth, is to have such treasures as defy numbering and evaluating. Let us be glad today and sing with all our hearts before the Lord. Our joy is thankful joy. God has done this thing, not we ourselves. He has done it of grace, not because of our merit.

When we celebrate being Reformed for 50 years, we celebrate God's covenant faithfulness. That we are Reformed, not only in name(which means nothing today), but also in reality, is due to God's covenant faithfulness. He made a covenant with our fathers, and He has kept that covenant. This we remember, and this we declare today.

* * *

God's covenant is with Jesus Christ, the eternal Son of God in the flesh, and God is faithful to Jesus Christ. Between the Triune God and Jesus Christ there is the bond of friendship in love. God is the God of Jesus, and Jesus is the Friend-Servant of God. To Jesus were all the promises made; to Him is all of salvation given, so that in Him are redemption, life eternal, and glory. This is the teaching of Psalm 89: "I have made a covenant **with my chosen**" (vs.3). This Elect One is the great Son of David, Jesus the Christ.

God is faithful to Jesus, keeping the covenant made with Him. From eternity to eternity, He is Jesus' Friend; He fulfills all the promises made to Jesus; He blesses and glorifies Jesus with all the riches and glories of the Godhead. Such is the teaching of Psalm 89: "my faithfulness shall be with him" (vs. 24); "my covenant shall stand fast with him" (vs. 28); "I will not suffer my faithfulness to fail" (vs. 34); "my covenant will I not break" (vs. 34); "I will not lie unto David" (vs. 35).

At the same time, God's covenant is with a **people**, the people who have been given to Christ in the eternal decree of election to be His Body, the Church, and God is faithful to this Church. God dwells with this people, so that they know Him in love, and this is life eternal. God is faithful to this people in the covenant - He keeps covenant with her. He is faithful down through history. Throughout the ages of her earthly struggles and sorrows, God is with her as her God. He is faithful when time is no more. The covenant is everlasting. Because of this, there **is** a Church in the world from the beginning to the end of time. Because of this, the Church enjoys salvation. God is faithful to the Church with the same faithfulness that He shows to Christ. The Church is in Christ; the Church is Christ's Body. God cannot be unfaithful to the Church without being unfaithful to His own Son, and this is impossible. We celebrate firm, sure faithfulness.

Concerning two things, we must be clear. First, the covenant faithfulness of God concerns the **Church**. There is today a widespread, appalling disregard for the Church. This is evident among the youth, but also among the grown-ups. It is apparent in the neglect of worship services and catechism; in the slighting of the officebearers and discipline; and in outright, destructive criticism of the Church as instituted. Another form of disregard for the Church is the lack of concern for what is happening in the churches to which the people belong: the adoption of false doctrines; the lack of discipline; the corruption of the services of worship; the ungodliness of synods and assemblies. The attitude of many is: I personally keep my garments clean and will not involve myself in the struggles of the church. Who cares? Who cares about

the Church? But how can the saints be unconcerned about the Church to whom God is faithful in the covenant?

It belongs to the Protestant Reformed tradition to be zealous for, to love the Church. It was not enough for Hoeksema, Ophoff, and the others only to hold the truth personally, perhaps also to write some articles and books about it, but they desired the **Church** to abide in the truth. They desired this passionately, so passionately that they were willing to suffer grievous loss themselves. Men have misunderstood our love for the Protestant Reformed Churches and our zeal on their behalf. They have viewed it as carnal pride in ourselves. In reality, it is love for the Church of Christ, God's covenant people. That we love these churches much does not mean that we love the catholic Church of Christ little, but the heat of our love for them is the temperature of our love for the catholic Church, of which they are manifestations.

Secondly, God's faithfulness to the Church is realized by God's keeping the Church in the truth of the gospel. It is a mistake - one of the most serious that anyone can make - to suppose that the people of God can have the covenant apart from the truth. In the truth, God is present with His Church as Friend; in the truth, we have the blessings of the covenant, forgiveness and eternal life. The historical realization of God's covenant faithfulness is the history of the Holy Spirit's leading the Church into the knowledge of the truth.

We can trace this faithfulness.

God was faithful to Israel, Christ's people in the Old Testament. For more than a thousand years, He dwelt with that nation, revealed Himself to her, gave her innumerable blessings, and showed her His salvation. No promise did He fail to fulfill. He brought her out of Egypt into Canaan; He gave her a great king and made her a great nation; He preserved her in the tribe of Judah; He restored her from Babylon. Nor did He become unfaithful at the time of Christ even though He rejected the earthly nation and cut it off. For He kept covenant with Jesus and Christ, Who always was, personally, the reality of Israel. Besides, He saved the elect remnant of Israel, the thousands who believed after Pentecost, and thus Israel enjoyed the fulfilled covenant. But at that time, the covenant broadens out to all nations, and the New Testament Church becomes the covenant people.

God has been faithful to this Church. This must not be missing from our celebration of our anniversary as a denomination of churches. Our anniversary is part of His faithfulness to the Church down through the ages. It is the continuation of His faithfulness to the Church for over 1990 years.

God was with the Church during the 200 years or more that the Roman Empire persecuted her, and, therefore, the blood and the fire did not consume her, but she grew. He kept her in the truth, though heresies sprouted like weeds and though the number of orthodox preachers and elders was small, and, therefore, the Church confessed the Godhead of Jesus; the total depravity of man; and the authority of the canonical Scriptures. After hundreds of years of dreadful deformation, He reformed her in the days of Luther and Calvin.

God has been faithful to the Church in recent times, and this accounts for our existence. He planted and kept the Reformed Church in the Netherlands, in the face of the oppression of Spain and the Roman Catholic Church and in spite of the Arminian heresy. In the 1800's, He purified that Church by calling the remnant out and reviving them by the truth. In 1924, He separated the Protestant Reformed Churches from an apostatizing church. 50 years later, it has become abundantly plain that, although they meant it for evil, the Lord meant it for good: to preserve the Reformed faith

and life. In 1953, He preserved among us the precious truth of the gospel of free, sovereign grace, i.e., that the covenant depends, not at all on men, but only on Christ Jesus, without which we could not enjoy the covenant of God.

The history of the Church is a history of God's faithfulness.

It is filled with the unfaithfulness of the people - ours too! You cannot read it without weeping: complaining, doubting, forsaking God for the idols, Baal, money, pleasure, glory. No other evidence is needed to prove beyond all doubt that the covenant faithfulness of God cannot depend on the people and their faithfulness, but must depend on Christ and, in Him, on God's free grace.

Over all the history of the Church, including our own history, stand the marvellous words of God in Psalm 89:30ff: "If his children forsake my law...then will I visit their transgression with the rod...nevertheless...will I not...suffer my faithfulness to fail. My covenant will I not break..."

The covenant faithfulness of God is a **wonder!**

It is impossible for the covenant to be maintained, utterly impossible, but God, the covenant God, does the impossible. This shines through in all the historical realization of the covenant. By a wonder, Abraham and Sarah had the son who becomes the nation of Israel. By a wonder, Israel escapes slavery and genocide in Egypt. By a wonder, they pass through Jordon to enter and possess Canaan. By a wonder, Judah comes back from Babylon to dwell again in the land of promise. Yes, and by a wonder, there were always in Israel 7000 who did not bow the knee to Baal.

By a wonder, the Church survived the fire and the water of the Roman persecution; the lies of the false teachers; and the deep darkness of the middle ages. By a wonder, the Church was reformed. By a wonder, the Reformed faith was maintained in the Netherlands - read for yourself the histories of the terrible oppression of our fathers by Spain and Rome and of the struggle against Arminius.

> Now Israel may say, and that in truth,
> If that the Lord had not our right maintained,
> If that the Lord had not with us remained,
> When cruel men against us rose to strive,
> We surely had been swallowed up alive.

By a wonder, the Protestant Reformed Churches proclaim the truth of sovereign grace.

Centrally, the wonder by which the covenant faithfulness of God is realized is the wonder of Christ Jesus. It is the wonder of the incarnation of Christ. It is the wonder of Christ's death. In all of history, there is only **one** apparent unfaithfulness of God. Never has God been unfaithful to His Church. She thinks so sometimes. There are such terrible struggles and troubles in the congregation that she supposes that God has forsaken her. The individual Believer sometimes feels abandoned also. Then, he sings the sad lament of Psalter 210:

> I asked in fear and bitterness,
> Will God forsake me in distress?
> Shall I His promise faithless find?
> Has God forgotten to be kind?
> Has He in anger hopelessly
> Removed His love and grace from me?

But we are mistaken when we think that God has been unfaithful, and later we see that we were mistaken. We see that God was faithful, that through our bitter afflictions He was drawing us ever closer to Himself in the bands of covenant love. Then, we sing: "These doubts and fears that troubled me were born of my infirmity." For one small moment in history God was apparently unfaithful **to Christ Himself.** Psalm 89 speaks of this in verses 38ff. It has been teaching God's covenant with David's Seed and His faithfulness in that covenant. Abruptly, verse 38 breaks in: "But thou hast cast off and abhorred, thou hast been wroth with

thine anointed." Verse 39 adds: "Thou hast made void the covenant of thy servant..." The Psalm here refers to the cross. On the cross, Christ was cast off and abhorred by God. His covenant with God was made void. The experience of it shook the covenant Christ to the depths of His being: "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me? The covenant is Thy nearness, communion with Thee - why hast Thou forsaken Me?" This is the unfathomable wonder of God's faithfulness to Christ's people, a sinful people for whom the righteousness of God demands that the covenant be grounded in righteousness, the righteousness of the blood and death of the Son of God in the flesh. Then follow the wonder of the resurrection and the wonder of Pentecost.

The wonder of covenant faithfulness is the wonder of **grace**. The people are guilty. God establishes and maintains the covenant with them in free favor and by almighty power.

This takes place in the way of a struggle. This is another outstanding characteristic of the historical realization of God's covenant faithfulness: struggle, warfare. There is no struggle for God. On the contrary, when all of the hosts of hell are fighting against Him, God says to them, as He said to Pharoah: "Even for this same purpose have I raised thee up, that I might show my power in thee, and that my name might be declared throughout all the earth." But there is always a struggle for the covenant people. This was plainly laid down at the very dawn of the development of the covenant in Genesis 3:15: two seeds would be engaged in mortal combat throughout history. This struggle was evident in Israel's history. It was Egypt against Israel; the nations against Israel; then, Israel against Judah; and even within Judah, carnal Judah against the remnant of grace. The same thing appears in the history of the New Testament Church: Rome against the Church; Arius and Pelegius against the Church; Roman Catholicism against the Church.

Struggle has characterized the history of our churches. We have struggles with apostatizing churches; we have struggles with those who for a time were with us, but were not of us; and always we have had to struggle with the world, the world around us and the world in our own natures. We have had to fight, and we must continue to fight. We are criticized for this, but unjustly, This is a problem, at times, to the young people, but unnecessarily. The history of the covenant is the history of warfare.

To refuse to fight is to show that one does not love the truth and that one does not love the covenant. It is a pitiful thing, a disgusting thing, to see today the absolute unwillingness of the churches to fight the great fight of faith on behalf of the truth of the gospel of God, and on behalf of the covenant. Had these churches been the Church at the time of the Arian denial of Jesus' Godhead and the time of the magnificent defense of the truth by the heroic Athanasius, they would have done something like this. They would have appointed a study committee for five years and then recommitted the matter to it for several more years. Finally, they would have hailed Athanasius before Synod, and Synod would have given this judgment: "Athanasius, you are orthodox in all the fundamentals, but you have a tendency to onesidedness. Therefore, we depose you from your office, excommunicate you from the Church, and banish you to the wilderness." To Arius, the Synod would have said:"You, sir, are ambiguous. We hereby give you a permanent appointment to Alexandrian Seminary, where you can teach all our pastors that Jesus is not God." And the people, those who were interested enough to read the Acts of Synod, would have said: "We are dissatisfied, but we can live with Synod's decisions" (because otherwise they would have to go out into the

wilderness with Athanasius.)

God bless us with the grace to continue to fight! A warning is in order here. We must not fight, with ourselves or with others, over personal matters. We ought to repent of such evils. We must resolve, as individuals and as congregations, to avoid all such quarrelling. We must resolve, before God's face, to be peacemakers in this regard. But fight we must as regards the covenant. As the people of God, we are involved in the one, great battle of all time: the City of God and the City of this World. This battle concerns the truth, the gospel, the doctrine that we have in the Reformed faith.

As we fight, we are without fear. God is sovereign; Christ is Lord of lords. God is with us in Christ. He will keep covenant. So, in the hour of deepest darkness, when the gates of hell rise up against us, when our cause seems doomed, the covenant people sing confidently:

> When troubles round me swell,
> When fears and dangers throng,
> Securely I will dwell
> In His pavilion strong.

There is a personal aspect to God's covenant faithfulness. God's covenant is not individualistic - apart from the Church, but within the Church, it is personal. God shows His faithfulness to each believer personally. God's covenant is established with him - he is personally the friend of God. God is faithful to him also. In His faithfulness, God will not suffer you to be tried above that you are able (I Cor. 10:13). In His faithfulness, God will preserve you to the end. (I Cor. 1:8,9). In His faithfulness, God gives you eternal life with Himself. Not even death will break the covenant. Your victory over death itself is grounded in the faithfulness of God. Our resurrection and everlasting life are due to God's absolutely unbreakable faithfulness in the covenant. He will never let you go! This does not minimize the struggle of the believer, but it does make that struggle a victorious one. The believer is kept by the wonder of grace.

Included in this personal faithfulness of God is His gift of the covenant also to a believer's children. Such is the faithfulness of God that it extends the covenant to a man **in his generations.** This explains our delight in and emphasis on the children and youth. They are not merely the deference that everyone pays to youth, nowdays. But they are our recognition of the children's place in God's covenant. They are God's covenant friends. Still, there is a struggle. It holds true here too that the covenant is realized in the way of a struggle. Not all the children of believers are elect, covenant children of God. There are Esau's, and they show themselves Esau's by their contempt for the Word of God and by their despising of God's commandments. Probably, they manifest themselves at the Young People's Convention, when they have no interest in the speeches, the Bible study, or the spiritual fellowship and when they use it for satisfying their flesh. There is a struggle between them and the spiritual seed.

There are also young people who fall deeply into sin, but who, through the prayers of parents and the labors of pastor and elders, are restored. In all of the children, there is the constant, severe struggle of the old man and the new man.

That there is **one** young person, much more such a large group of young people, who loves the Reformed faith, who is consecrated to God in all his life, who has joy in such activities as those found in our Conventions, and who separates himself from the world, well - that is a **wonder,** a sheer impossibility which God nevertheless accomplishes.

How great is our blessedness! God is faithful to us and will be faithful in the future.

This is cause not for carelessness, but for gratitude and for reliance. The man

who concludes from faithfulness that he may now sin freely has not really heard the message. The man who hears it, really hears it, in the depths of his sin-stricken heart, will be thankful. He will say, "Because God is faithful, we must be faithful, and we will be faithful - at all cost." And he will rely on God, in good times and bad, for all his needs, with all his burdens. God is faithful - depend on Him!

Above all, let us remember our blessedness. We have the full, pure Reformed faith. We have the preaching of the gospel of grace. We have the covenant. In the covenant, we have God Himself in His Christ. What Moses said of Israel applies to us: "what nation is there so great, who hath God so nigh unto them, as the Lord our God is in all things that we call upon Him for?" (Deut. 4:7)

Our hearts are full. Great is our covenant God, and great is His faithfulness.

God's Covenant Faithfulness- It's Future Manifestation

by Prof. H. Hanko

Insofar as I have been able to participate in the activities of this year's young people's convention, I want to express my gratitude to all those who have made this convention and fiftieth anniversary celebration possible. The programs and singspirations which have been held have been spiritually exhilarating. And the Field Day yesterday was a very moving experience for all of us who have shared in it. If the fruit of yesterday was--as I am sure it was--a greater sense of unity among all the people of our denomination, it was worth all the time and effort which went into it. I have no idea who are all the people who behind the scenes did all the planning for all these activities. But I wish publicly to express my thanks to all the young people and to all the others who have made this convention one which will never be forgotten by all those who have had a part in it.

We have heard in memorable speeches what God's covenant faithfulness means for us as Protestant Reformed Churches: what it has meant for us in the past, and what it means for us now. The question still remains: What does God's covenant faithfulness mean for the future? What has God promised for the future? What has He promised for the future as far as our own individual lives are concerned? What has He promised for the future as families? as congregations? as a denomination? What may we expect in the future as members of God's covenant?

We cannot, of course, see into the future. Only God knows what shall befall us. He has determined it all in His counsel, but He has not revealed it to us in any of its details. Yet, in general, He has spoken of the future in His Word. And only on the basis of His Word can we determine what that future manifestation of His covenant faithfulness will be.

I. Its Present Blessedness.

We must know first of all how much the doctrine of the covenant has meant to us.

It is, quite obviously, true that the doctrine of the covenant is uniquely Reformed. This doctrine more than any other distinguishes Reformed thinking and

Reformed theology from that which is Calvinistic. Historically, although it is possible to be Calvinistic without being necessarily Reformed, it is not possible to be Reformed without being Calvinistic. And that which specifically characterizes Reformed thought is the truth of the covenant.

But in another sense, the doctrine of the covenant is uniquely Protestant Reformed. This is true for two reasons. In the first place, there is almost no place in the world today where you can find the truth concerning God's eternal covenant of grace taught. For this you must be in Protestant Reformed circles. And in the second place, although the doctrine of the covenant has a long and illustrious history, nevertheless, these precious truths were especially developed by Revs. Hoeksema and Ophoff. To them more than to any other must be ascribed the credit for giving to us this rich and blessed heritage. In fact, it is not too much to say that the particular place God gave to these two men in the history of the Church of Christ was a place in which they developed this great truth of God's Word.

Nevertheless, while this truth is uniquely our heritage, it has never been among us mere cold and abstract doctrine. It is certainly doctrine, and we must never lose sight of this. But this doctrine has become part of the living confession of our people. And it has produced, by God's grace, in our lives a rich harvest of practical blessedness which is so wonderful that we ought every day to give thanks for it. God has made known to us the truth of His covenant and has given us many covenant blessings through this truth. And we ought to recount them for a moment, for they have significance on our discussion of the the future.

Before we do this however, we must remind ourselves that we have these blessings only with a great deal of imperfection. Our purpose in recounting them is not to enable us to give ourselves a collective pat on the back. We have nothing in which to boast. And, indeed, if we do boast in these things, we shall surely lose everything we have. We recount what God has done for us. For then we shall learn to be thankful. We shall learn what our calling is for the future, and we shall learn how important this doctrine of the covenant is for us.

Many of these blessings have become so commonplace that we do not always remember even that they are directly due to truth of the covenant which we hold dear.

Our churches in our local congregations remain strong. The historic Christian faith is maintained, confessed and faithfully preached in all our churches. Our people faithfully come together twice on the Lord's Day joyfully and thankfully to worship Jehovah our God. And all this is due in no small measure to the fact that we understand that the very essence of worship is covenant fellowship with our faithful covenant God through our Lord Jesus Christ.

Closely connected with this, is our antithetical walk in the world. This faithfulness to the antithesis is also closely related to the covenant, for, as Paul explains it in II Corinthians 6, fellowship with God and fellowship with the world are mutually exclusive. Christ has no fellowship with Belial. We stand unalterably opposed to union and lodge membership, to worldly entertainment in all its forms, to cooperation with unbelievers in all kinds of worldly endeavors.

But it is perhaps in our homes and families that the blessings of God's covenant have become most manifest. The truths of God's covenant are reflected in our marriages. We are not troubled by the terrible problems of divorce and remarriage which wreck so many homes today and devastate the lives of thousands. The marriages of God's people within our churches reflect the covenant union of Christ and His elect Church.

Our family life is strong and rich, for also in our family life there is a reflection of the covenant fellowship of God's family where God is our Father, Christ is our Elder Brother, and all the saints are brothers and sisters in the one household of faith. The inroads of sin which destroy so many homes in our country are not apparent in our circles. Our families are bastions of godliness, fortresses in which to escape to safety the pressing temptations of life, places of joy and happiness, where the fear of the Lord is present. There is fellowship and communion, family devotions which are the envy of all from outside who enter our homes, a happiness which overcomes the trials and burdens of life.

And this is reflected in our young people and children. God has given to us deep covenant consciousness so that our parents are deeply committed to covenant instruction in the homes, in our schools and in our churches. We have received from God a Christian School system which is bearing rich fruit in our generations. We are relatively free from juvenile delinquency, crass and open immorality so prevalent today, and God has preserved us from the dreadful problems of a generation of young people run amuck.

Jehovah our God has used the truth of the covenant to bestow all these blessings upon us, and has given to us these evidences of His covenant faithfulness. Let us remember them as the blessings they are and cherish them.

II. Its Implied Calling.

The Scriptures are very emphatic about it that these blessings will continue to be our's only in the way of our faithfulness.

We must be clear about this. We must not understand this to mean that God's faithfulness is dependent upon our faithfulness as if our faithfulness is a condition to His covenant. The Scriptures are very clear that God is faithful even when His people are unfaithful. And our own history is a perpetual testimony of the fact that God has proved faithful even when we are least deserving of His benefits. God has sworn to be our God and the God of our children in their generations. We have this promise on which we can rely and to this promise alone we cling. Except the Lord build the house, they labor in vain that build it. And except the Lord guard the city, the watchmen watch in vain.

Our calling is important therefore, for two reasons. In the first place, if we know what God requires of us and know that these very requirements which He demands are given to us by His mercy and grace, then we will seek all that we need from Him alone as we pursue our covenant calling in the midst of the world.

And in the second place, the very gloriousness of our heritage will impel us to walk as God's covenant people in the midst of the world. The more impressed we are with what God has done for us, the more we will pursue our covenant calling with faithfulness and devotion.

We know from the Scriptures that this will become increasingly difficult as time goes on.

Faithfulness in the church will be increasingly difficult. There is no desire to be found in the church world for sound doctrine. The church world of today is careless about doctrine, openly embraces heresy, and scorns those who make sound doctrine the cornerstone of their life. Apostasy from the truth runs rampant in such a church world, and such apostasy will make its inroads into our churches as well. Liturgical experimentation which destroys true Scriptural worship is the order of the day, and the pressures will grow to change all these things in our churches as well. There will emerge a consensus among churches, enforced by a hostile world power, and climaxing in the rule of Antichrist which will force the church to go underground.

Affluence and open hostility threaten our antithetical walk. Faithfulness to the covenant will bring down on us overt persecution and suffering for Christ's sake. To walk as a covenant people will become increasingly difficult.

The home is under fierce attack in our day. The rise of immorality and the widespread approval of divorce and remarriage constitute threats to covenant marriages within our churches as well as elsewhere. To assume an attitude of carelessness over against these threats is to invite disaster. It takes a conscious and deliberate effort on the part of husbands and wives to protect our marriages from these evils. The breakdown of family life to the extent that some advance the notion that the day of the family is over is so common in our day that a closeknit and godly family is a rarity.

The same is true of our schools. Threats against our schools are real and frightening. I am told that there is sufficient legislation on the books in the state of Michigan to close our Christian Schools if these laws are enforced. Bills now pending before Congress enable the state to take away our children and limit by law the size of our families. And all these things threaten seriously our calling to be faithful to God's covenant.

The temptations to our young people are many and great. Open and crass immorality is so common and wide-spread that it is only a wonder of grace that holiness is preserved among our young people.

All these things are on the horizon. And they make urgent and pressing our calling to be faithful.

This faithfulness implies first of all and above all that we be a covenant conscious people. I am always struck by the profound covenant consciousness of the saints in the Old Testament. So often what they did by faith, they did because they were covenant conscious. And this was even in the face of persecution of every sort. They lived out of it in all their life, and made the covenant the very breath they breathed. And so it was with our fathers. I am told that it was very common among our forefathers to include in their prayers the earnest petition that God would not cut us off in our generations.

This covenant consciousness implies first of all that we know and understand the truths of the covenant as our own unique and Protestant Reformed heritage. We must become thoroughly acquainted with these precious truths and make them a living part of our confession. Secondly covenant consciousness implies that we know God's covenant dealings with His people in the past and present. We must be able to see writ large on the pages of history, God's faithfulness. We must know and understand how our faithful covenant God has preserved and maintained His covenant with His people through Christ. And we must learn to bow in humble adoration before Him Who has done so much for us. And thirdly, covenant consciousness implies that we have a thorough understanding of our covenant calling in every area of life, and that we apply ourselves diligently and consciously to maintain the heritage of this precious truth in the daily walk of all our people. This truth must sound clearly from our pulpits. It must be indelibly impressed upon the minds and hearts of our young people in the home and in the school and in the church. It must be spoken of often amongst ourselves that we may remind ourselves, as Israel did, of God's faithfulness. Malachi tells us of the faithful remnant who feared the Lord and who talked often with one another. And the Lord wrote their names in the book of His Remembrance. Faithfulness to all that we have received and a firm resolve to be faithful in the future no matter what that future may bring is our earnest calling as we return tomorrow to our homes and congregations.

III. Its Future Blessedness.

And so we have a future bright with promise. Not from a natural point of view. The future is dark and grim. The storm clouds gather on the horizon of history. But a bright future, for we have the promise of our God. We know this to be a fact. He will be faithful. And part of His faithfulness is that He has given all the future in the hands of our Christ to Whom we belong. Christ rules over all. Nothing is outside His control. And through this sovereign and universal control of Christ, God will direct all things to make His people blessed.

God will preserve His Church. The gates of hell cannot prevail against her. There will be the church--believers and their seed--until our Lord comes back. There will be that blessed fellowship between God and His people in Christ though it be in the caves of the mountains and the holes of the hills.

God will also preserve our homes and families. I know not how this will be. It seems impossible in the light of what will happen. But somehow our future families will continue to be islands of safety and spiritual peace in the midst of tumult and trouble. And He will care for our children and children's children no matter what the world may do.

God's faithfulness can never fail. It cannot fail because He is Jehovah Who never changes. He is gracious and merciful to us in our weakness and sin and He forgives when we turn to Him in repentance and sorrow. He maintains His promises, for Christ is the Head of the covenant and all things are in the hands of Christ.

This will happen to the very end.

But that faithfulness will have its future manifestation also in heaven. The Scriptures only give us a glimpse of the day when the tabernacle of God is with men. Then and then only will God's covenant be perfectly manifested. And though what we know now of God's gracious covenant thrills our souls, we know too that the half has not been told us.

But this we know. We know that the whole Church, Christ's Bride, God's covenant people, gathered in the line of continued generations, will be there. And that means also that we and our children will be there. We know that all the Church shall have fellowship with God through Christ Whom we shall see face to face. And this fellowship will be with all the saints from every age. We know that the Bride of Christ shall be glorified and the marriage of heaven consummated. We know that the family of God shall live in God's house of many mansions. We know that sin shall never again interfere to rob us of the riches of covenant fellowship. And we know then it shall be evident far more perfectly than it is now that God's covenant faithfulness is the deepest cause of all our salvation. Now we know this and confess it. But we do so with much sin and imperfection, and our ability to appreciate even this is sorely limited by the narrowness of our own vision. But then we shall understand perfectly that of Him and to Him and through Him are all things, and that to Him is the glory forever and ever.

Take this truth with you as you return to your families and congregations. And may God bless you.

POST CONVENTION REVIEW

by Gerry Schut

Gerry is a member of our Hudsonville Church

The 1975 Young People's Convention is now history. In the minds of many, it was the most fun-filled as well as spiritually-filled ever planned. "God's Covenant Faithfulness," the theme of the convention, is very appropriate in that God has graciously given us the time and place to meet as Covenant Young People and to commemorate the 50th Anniversary of our churches.

A pre-convention singspiration was held in First Church Sunday night (Aug. 3.) Many people from our western churches were in Grand Rapids which helped fill the church to capacity.

On Monday afternoon, registration took place at Calvin College. After supper, the convention picture was taken in the fieldhouse and the remainder of the night was enjoyed with swimming, volleyball, and basketball. Many were glad to hit the sack at curfew time, but a select number of boys, as well as girls, had plenty of energy left to fill the outside air with boisterous communications and keep the chaperones on their feet.

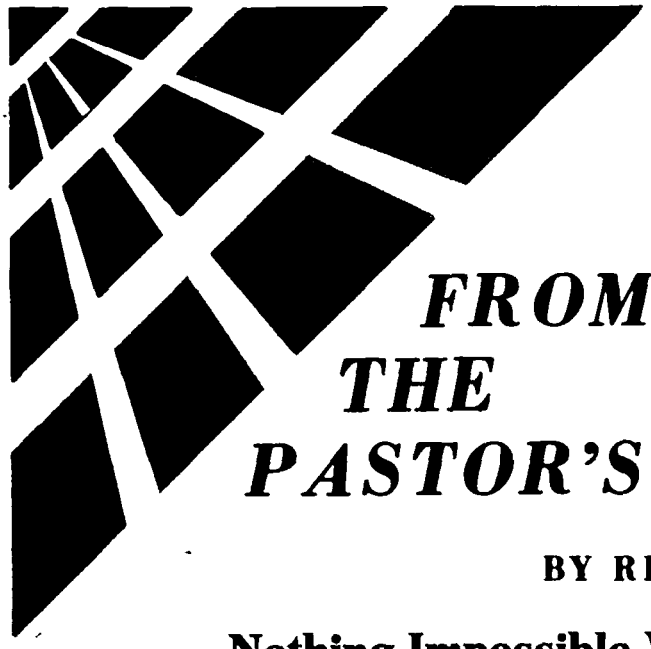
Tuesday morning, our spirits were dimmed by the sight of rain outside our dorms. After breakfast, lively discussion groups on "Personal Devotions and Proper Bible Study," and a business meeting, buses left for North Shore Park on Lake Michigan. Upon arrival, the sun was shining and a hearty dinner had been prepared for us. Soon the beach was filled with sunbathers and excited swimmers. Back on the campus, after supper, a mass meeting was planned. Prof. H. C. Hoeksema spoke on "God's Covenant Faithfulness-It's Idea." Gym activities filled the rest of the night.

Words fail me to describe all the events and activities that took place on Wednesday. All the conventioneers, after breakfast and discussion groups on "Dating Practices and Marriage," gathered with Protestant Reformed people from all parts of the United States at Douglas Walker Park in Byron Center, Michigan to commemorate the 50th Anniversary of our Protestant Reformed Churches. By God's will, people as far west as Redlands, California; as far east as Prospect Park, New Jersey; as far north as Edmonton, Canada; and as far south as Houston, Texas came to the park. Miscellaneous games were played in the afternoon. Rev. C. Hanko spoke on "Recollections of the Past." A delicious chicken supper was catered in from a nearby town. Rev. D. Engelsma then spoke on "God's Covenant Faithfulness-The Historical Realization." After singing a few songs, it was announced that over 1800 people had gathered, having hashed over memories with friends and relatives. Many knew they wouldn't see each other for a long time, but were happy and thankful to God for making this day a hugh success.

Thursday morning after breakfast, discussion groups were held on "Common Grace." A business meeting to elect new federation board members followed. After dinner, East and West met in the traditional softball game. The banquet, with its theme "Our Dutch Heritage," was also a big success. The menu included baked ham and roast beef. Following the banquet, in the Fine Arts Auditorium, Prof. H. Hanko spoke on "God's Covenant Faithfulness-Its Future Manifestation." Refreshments were served to everyone afterwards.

Friday morning, we ate our last meal on campus, and everybody packed up, ready to head home. Some said goodbye for only a few days while others knew they wouldn't see their friends until next year.

Finally, I, along with all the other conventioneers, would like to again express a word of thanks to Rev. Van Baren and Rev. Van Overloop, Mr. Ophoff, Mr. Schipper and their wives, to the Federation Board, the Steering Committee, the host societies, and above all to our Covenant God for letting this convention take place. The Lord willing, we'll see you next year in South Holland, Illinois.



FROM THE PASTOR'S STUDY

BY REV. G. LUBBERS

Nothing Impossible With God

"And being fully persuaded, that what he had promised, he was also able to perform..." Romans 4:21

There are times and times in the life of a man, of men and of the church of God in the world! When we get to heaven we will see all things in the light of the fulfilment of all of our hopes and fears. It is now constantly a matter of struggling to emerge and conquer in the strength of the Lord over Satan, world and our own flesh. But sometimes we must tarry and recount the deeds of the Lord, and we are "surprised what He has done."

This ought not really so to be!

The reason for this is that the Lord has done far above all that we can ask or think. He is able thus to do for us exceedingly so. This He did not only do for us as small, struggling Protestant Reformed Churches, but he has done so for the church of all ages. What God has promised He was able to perform too.

That was the faith of father, Abraham. We read that "against hope in hope he believed, that he might become the father of many nations." (Rom. 4:18) God had taken Abraham in the night of his doubts and misgivings under the stars, had pointed out their number and multitude (stars which he names by the greatness of His power) and had said "So shall thy seed be." (Rom. 4:18b; Gen. 15:4) And father Abraham (father of all believers) had believed and his "faith was counted for righteousness." He had seen Christ's day from afar and had rejoiced in the Christ, who said later, "before Abraham was, I am." (John 8:58)

Now someone may opine that Abraham did have times when he well nigh doubted. But the Bible says that this doubt is taken up in the struggling hope that would not die; it was "in hope against hope." He hoped for the humanly impossible. We get the impression that Sarah, although she called Abraham Lord, was not even a supporting influence for Abraham. Was it not she that instigated Abraham to take the bond-woman Hagar, to wife to have a son by her to fulfill the promise of the Lord? But even so this was "in hope against hope." He did not stagger so as to wholly fail and fall. He rose to that height of faith which clung to the Almighty God, with whom nothing is impossible. He was **impowered** by faith which works by love. He clung to the Lord for the hope of righteousness in a Son to come, the Seed in whom all nations would be blessed.

Yes, Abraham was fully persuaded! He was fully persuaded that each time the LORD added something more detailed to the promise that the LORD was able to make all these promises, yea, in Christ, and in Him, "Amen," to the glory of God the Father! And these are the foot-prints of Abraham which the true children follow. They follow these in the quiet moments of filial trust as well as in the stormy fears that would assail his tempest driven soul. The anchor-point of that faith was: God is willing and He is able - able to save to the uttermost!

I saw these sons who would press the foot-steps of Abraham. They were youthful sons and daughters and their parents at the convention Hall which this year was "Fine Arts Building" of Calvin College. More faithful children of Abraham could in this day not have met in these halls erected in memory of that great reformer Calvin, whose grave does not even have a marker-stone, we are told. Better theme could not have been chosen than "GOD'S COVENANT FAITHFULNESS," methinks. The speeches were all uplifting and appropriated doctrine, reproof, correction, admonition in righteousness that the man of God be thoroughly furnished unto good works. We saw the tribes of Israel coming from far and near. There was great rejoicing in Israel, three and four generations together. The old men dreamed dreams and young men saw visions. It was truly Pentacostal. The Spirit of grace and glory rested upon the church. It seemed that the "five thousand" were being fed from the abundant storehouses of God's earthly food and heavenly graces. Music and song filled the air with the praises of God. It was a great "fieldday" there in Douglas Park. The young people amongst us may see the One Hundredth Field-day celebration.

Vain speculation and dreams? Will not a faithful church serve the Lord "til generations end?" He is able to do what He has promised. He brought forth Isaac as it were from the dead. He has fulfilled the promise in Isaac's Seed in the wondrous birth of His Son, Jesus Christ. Was that not an impossible birth? A virgin conceived and bore a Son, and she called his Name IMMANUEL=God-with-us! He suffered and died and went on high, and he gathers the church. Sarah has many children: multitudes, multitudes! Out of every tongue and people and nation, black, white, red and yellow. It is a new

manhood, born from the dead. It is the elect church, gathered by the Son of God. Jerusalem above, Sarah, the mother of us all. God turned her laughter about. He made her a faith-mother saved in child-bearing, and remaining in faith, charity, holiness with sobriety. That is no vain speculation but is the promise of God fulfilled.

Truly, our history as Protestant Reformed Churches has been "in hope against hope." It has not been anything strange, however. When trials and difficulties are ours the word of the Lord is fulfilled "In the world ye shall have tribulation, but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world." (John 16:33)

We know that ours will be the same lot in the future, young people. We will need to pass through struggles, tears, and perhaps even persecutions. God may cast us in the crucible of suffering. We will then need to walk "in hope against hope." We will tread the weary road of Abraham and cling to the Rock of ages; we will need to walk where man can only walk with God! Those will not be really evil days. They will be days when we will experience the great and mighty grace of God, so that we are fully persuaded that He is able to keep that which we have entrusted unto that day. We will try the faith which we have confessed and of which we sang so lustily. He will try our faith if need be; our faith must be found to be more precious than silver or gold in the days of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Yes, yes, my youthful covenant friends, I am becoming more and more of the oldest generation in your midst. But hope springs eternal in the breast of Abraham's sons and daughters. When we become old we must still be "fat and green" to tell that the LORD is good, mighty and able to perform that which He has promised. He is faithful. Often we are not and have not been. It is of the LORD'S mercies that we have not been consumed. That is what He says of the "best of us," that none of us may boast save in the Lord our righteousness.

May the Lord keep you and me faithful in His covenant mercies which fail not. For His mercy endureth forever, as do His grace, love and longsuffering over his own elect who cry unto Him day and night. Walk in the light of His Word which shines more and more unto the perfect day and He will bring it to pass.

Contribution

Open Letter to Beacon Lights

Cari is a young person in our Houston Mission.

Dear Protestant Reformed Young People and Families,

What words can express the feelings we had when we attended your convention! I pray for guidance and wisdom needed to communicate to you all the wonderful blessings we received.

Being practically the only young people (in age of course) in our mission at Houston, we were awed that first day by the number of young people who checked in at Calvin College. Things quickly got under way and we were to anticipate the days ahead, full of fun activities and more important, spiritual nurishment. You cannot realize how wonderful it really was to just talk and visit with spiritually like-minded people!

The discussion groups for us on all three occasions were tremendously helpful. They further strengthened in my mind the covenant faithfulness that God has shown to the Protestant Reformed Churches in its young people. How blessed we all were to have discussion over such **profitable** and **worthy** topics too! I mean to say that these topics and the truthful outlook that the ministers, professors, and discussion leaders presented on them are not to be found elsewhere. I know this to be true because our families in Houston have been "elsewhere" until your churches have sent us missionaries and ministers to preach to us the true Word of God. What a wonderful and amazing treasure to which God has led our group!

The mass meetings were frankly overwhelming. Praise be to our Father in heaven who gave His people the power of song. The rolling wave of voices singing the praises of His Name was almost too much for the mind to hold.

The field day I am sure was impressing to all of Protestant Reformed people as well as to us. The hundreds of people who were able to come I know benefited greatly from it, realizing in one day all the bountiful things God had bestowed on us through His grace. This anniversary day was truly one to be remembered and cherished by all and its history passed on to the generations to come.

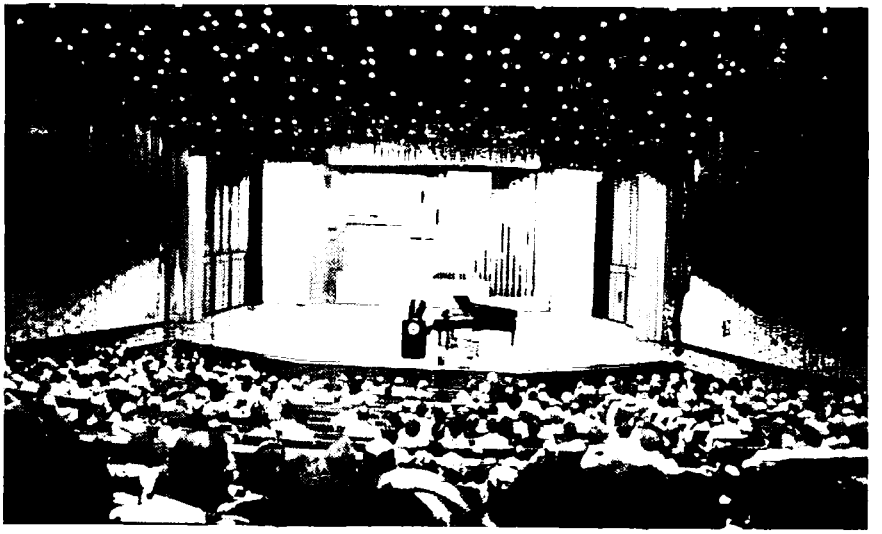
The speeches presented by the professors and ministers were so outstanding and expressed so well the amazing covenant of God realized in your churches.

My personal heart-felt thanks go to all of you who entertained us in your homes and who were so kind in "keeping track" of us. I only wish we had been able to stay longer in your midst and visited with more of you all.

The spiritual up-lifting we received I hope to communicate to the rest of our group in Houston. We look forward to our organizing soon d.v. and praise be to **God** who has make **all** of this possible.

What a wondrous, mysterious and blessed thing God's covenant faithfulness is!

Love in Christ
Cari Sugg



Mass Meeting - Fine Arts Auditorium

Field Day

Lively Meeting

Field Day - Seated to eat

Field Day - Girl's singing Dutch Psalms

Mr. & Mrs. Youth Coordinator

The Song Man - Mr. Ed Ophoff

Banquet Setting

NEWS From, For, and About Our Churches

by Karla Kalsbeek

FROM OUR FIRST CHURCH:

Public confession of faith of Mariel Petersen and Judy Voss took place June 1.

On June 6, the bands of Adams St. School presented a program in First Church.

Covenant Christian presented their final concert on June 1.

Mr. John M. Faber and Esther Vander Vennen were united in marriage on June 6.

Mr. Richard Flikkema and Miss Marcia Bylsma were united in marriage on June 20, in First Church.

FROM OUR HOPE CHURCH:

Mr. & Mrs. Mark Scholten were blessed with the birth of a daughter.

Miss Janis Huizinga and Mr. Daryle L. Kuiper were united in marriage on May 23, in Hope Church.

Wanda Dykstra made public confession of faith on June 1.

The annual church picnic was held June 25 at Douglas Walker Park.

Psalm 100-"Making a joyful noise unto the Lord"-was the theme for the singspiration at Hope Church June 22.

Public confession of faith of Vicky Klamer, Mike Kooienga and Don Van Dyke took place July 13.

The membership papers of Mrs. John Van Dyke (nee Judy Rodenhouse) have been received from the Christian Reformed Church.

From our Forbes Church we received the papers of Mr. Larry Bertsch.

Mr. & Mrs. John Schipper were blessed with the birth of a daughter, Angela Marie.

The public confession of Mrs. Robert (Renae) Kuiper, Carolyn & David Peterson took place August 17.

The membership papers of Mrs. Dann Hyboer (nee Marsha Westra) have been received from our Faith Church.

Mr. Jon Engelsma and Miss Floretta Hoekstra were united in marriage on August 1.

The membership papers of Mrs. Ron Hanko (nee Nancy Cammenga) were received from our Holland Church.

The membership papers of Mr. & Mrs. Jon Huisken and four baptized children have been sent to our Redlands Church.

FROM OUR SOUTH HOLLAND CHURCH:

Philip Van Baren and Nancy Toering were united in marriage on June 20.

The annual church picnic was held on the school grounds on July 14.

The membership papers of Mrs. Nancy Regnerus have been received from the Christian Reformed Church.

Lewis Bruinsma and Donna Van Uffelen were united in marriage on July 10 in our Redlands Church.

Mr. & Mrs. Ken De Jong were blessed with a daughter.

The membership papers of Mr. & Mrs. Paul Haak were received from our Randolph Church.

The membership papers of Mrs. Philip Van Baren have been received from the Christian Reformed Church.

FROM OUR FAITH CHURCH:

Mr. & Mrs. Andy Brummel were blessed with the birth of a daughter on June 13.

Mr. & Mrs. Carrie Kamps were blessed with a son, Matthew Allen born June 28.

Mr. and Mrs. Al Karsten were blessed with the birth of a daughter on August 4.

FROM OUR SOUTHWEST CHURCH:

On May 21 Hope Jr. High and Covenant Christian held a band concert in Hope School.

The Sr. Young People's Society sponsored a potluck supper on May 14 at Hope School.

Roger Brands and Judith Hoving were united in marriage on May 24 in Hope Church.

Mike De Vries and Dawn De Jong were united in marriage on June 5 in Hope Church.

FROM OUR SOUTHEAST CHURCH:

The public confession of faith of Rosanne Ophoff took place July 16.

FROM OUR RANDOLPH CHURCH:

Mr. & Mrs. Frank Soodsma were blessed with a son, Kyle Gerrit, on July 11.

Mr. & Mrs. Jack Regnerus were blessed with a son, Matthew Jay, on July 18.

The membership papers of Mr. & Mrs. Duane Alsum and son were received from our Loveland Church.

FROM OUR HOLLAND CHURCH:

Mr. & Mrs. Hildore were blessed with the birth of a daughter.

The membership papers of Mr. Harold Schipper and sons Tom and Dan have been transferred to our Hudsonville Church.

FROM OUR LOVELAND CHURCH:

The Ladies Circle sponsored a singspiration on May 11.

A farewell picnic for Duane & Marlene Alsum and family was held on Saturday, June 7. The Young People also had a farewell get-together Sunday, June 8.

Rick Campbell and Donna Walters were united in marriage on June 20.

FROM OUR REDLANDS CHURCH:

Barry and Mike Gritters made public confession of faith on June 20.

Mr. & Mrs. Dennis Van Uffelen were blessed with a baby boy, Scott Christian.

The Young People's Society sponspored a hamburg fry on July 1.

FROM OUR HULL CHURCH:

The congregation of the Doon Protestant Reformed Church held its dedication service on May 16.

A special anniversary singspiration was held in Hull Church on June 13.

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