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Volume 82 ◆ Number 5

Pure and Undeified Religion

If any man among you seem to be religious, and bridled not his tongue, but deceiveth his own heart, this man's religion is vain.

Pure religion and undeified before God and the Father is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world.

James 1:26-27

There are those in the church who seem to be religious, but whose religion is vain. Sometimes they demonstrate that fact by not bridling their tongue. At other times they show it by neglecting the fatherless and the widows. Still again this becomes evident as they defile themselves with the filth of this world.

How sad to have a religion that is vain. How sad only to appear to be religious.

Each must be careful that his religion is pure and undeified.

James has just explained to the

saints of his day that they must not just be hearers of the Word but also doers. Now James gives a few examples of what doers of the Word do. They bridle their tongue. They visit the fatherless and widows. They keep themselves unspotted from the world. Those who accomplish these things in the grace of Jesus Christ also have a religion that is pure and undeified.



There are a number of different religions in the world. There are the Christian religion, the Jewish religion, the Muslim religion, the Hindu religion, the Buddhist religion, and various other pagan religions. Each of these religions has its own god or gods, worship practices, and set of beliefs. We adhere to the Christian religion that acknowledges one God (Jehovah), one Mediator (Jesus Christ), and the Bible as the sole rule for what we are to believe and how we are to live.

The basic meaning of the word "religion" found in this passage is that of fear and trembling. In all religions other than the Christian religion this fear and trembling is

that of dread terror. Mankind stands before a vengeful god that he must somehow appease, lest his god break forth to consume him. How strange that when sinful man makes his own god, he makes a god like that. In the Christian religion, however, this fear and trembling is different. It is one of loving adoration. Yes, there is a trembling over the realization of one's sin and the horror of sin. But this trembling is primarily a trembling over the greatness of God's love to save a lost sinner in the blood of Jesus Christ. This is a fear and trembling, therefore, of loving adoration, which leads on to devoting oneself to the service of God.

The word "religion" found in this passage is used in Scripture to describe especially the outward forms of religion. It emphasizes the acts of worship in the hearing of the Word, the seeking of the sacraments, bowing the knee in prayer, singing the songs of Zion, and meditating on the Word of God. The word suggests that these forms of worship are acts of praise and gratitude that rise from an inner trembling and adoration before God.

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A contrast is made between religion that is pure and undefiled and a religion that is vain.

The word “vain” means that which is devoid of truth, force, or result. From this we understand two things about a religion that is vain. First, it is a religion void of truth or reality. It is false. It may appear outwardly to be true adoration and service of the living God, but in reality it is not. It is only an imitation, a fraud. It is only a show religion. It consists only of words and actions, and it lacks the true essence of religion. For that reason, and secondly, it is a religion that does not bring God’s blessing. A religion that is only a show religion does not have God’s approval. Neither, therefore, does it have God’s blessing.

In contrast, there is religion that is pure and undefiled.

“Pure” and “undefiled” mean essentially the same thing. That which is pure is undefiled. In turn, that which is defiled with anything is not pure. A religion that is pure and undefiled before God and the Father is a religion that in the very judgment of God is not tainted with anything that would render it false or useless. It is a religion that is true. It is a religion that has the very essence of what religion is all about — true adoration and service of the living God. It is, therefore, also a religion that carries away God’s blessing.

Now there are those in the church whose religion is vain. They may seem to be religious. They may go through all the motions of religion. They may attend church, confess Jesus Christ as their Savior, and educate their children in the Scriptures. They may even serve in a special office in the church. But in actual fact their religion is vain.

James indicates that they often deceive themselves into thinking that theirs is a pure and undefiled religion. They should know better. But they have tricked themselves into thinking that their religion is true and genuine.

Let us be on guard that we not deceive ourselves.



Three things are mentioned that differentiate pure and undefiled religion from vain religion. 1) How we use our tongue. 2) How we care for the fatherless and widow. 3) What our relationship is to the world. This certainly is not an exhaustive list, so that this all there is to religion. The idea is rather that one who does the things mentioned here shows thereby that his religion is pure and undefiled. These are the inevitable *fruits* of true religion. For that reason they are also the *proof* of true religion.

First, one shows the nature of his religion by how he uses his tongue.

Chapter 3 of this epistle speaks of the great evil of the tongue. It is a little member of the body that can do much damage. With the tongue one can rail on another and horribly abuse him. With the tongue one can destroy a person’s name with gossip, backbiting, and slander. There was much of this in the church to which James wrote, as there is often in the church today.

James speaks of bridling the tongue. The horse that has a bit and bridle is under the control of the rider. The unbridled horse gallops out of control, wherever he wants. There are people whose tongues are like that too. Their tongues are as uncontrolled as a wild horse. With their tongue they gossip and slander. They are often very abusive. And they show thereby that their religion is vain. They may go to church. They may be defenders of the faith. They may even preach the gospel eloquently. But their religion is vain. Only those who bridle their tongue show that their religion is pure and undefiled.

Mention is made next of visiting the fatherless and widows in their

affliction. There were many orphans and widows in the early church. And they were in affliction in that they had no means to support themselves. The fatherless and widow represent a whole class of people that we often encounter — people in great need, requiring a great deal of help but having nothing with which to pay back. One shows whether his religion is true or false by whether he will visit these kinds of folks. To visit the needy in their affliction means to look in on them in order to help, to care for them. To do this effectively often requires a great deal of time, energy, and commitment. Many find themselves too busy with other things to bother with this. After all, they have their family, their work, their hobbies, their hunting and fishing. These have a religion that is vain.

Finally, James speaks of keeping oneself unspotted from the world.

The world here is the world of evil and abomination that lives in sin. This is the world of television,

One shows the nature of his religion by how he uses his tongue.

of the movies, of popular song. It is the world with its immoral lifestyle that tramples underfoot every commandment of God.

Very easily we are spotted with the filth of this world. Think of someone in a pure, white robe making his way through a muddy field. How easily his robe becomes spotted with mud. In like manner, we are required to make our way through this world with all its spiritual filth. Easily the filth of this world soils our garments. It does this every time we conform ourselves to this world. Our religion is vain, if we allow this kind of thing to happen. Our religion is pure and undefiled only when we keep ourselves unspotted from the world by living in spiritual separation from the world.



How is this to be explained?

Why are these three the test of pure and undefiled religion?

Were we to make our own list, we would probably include different things. We might consider whether a person attends the worship of the church regularly. So many who claim to be religious do not. And we might ask whether they attend a church that proclaims the truth of Scripture. Many churchgoers give little consideration to the purity of the gospel. And our list might include whether one is willing to be active in the church — serving on committees or even in an office. And what about his home life? Is he a good husband? Is she a faithful wife? Is one a conscientious parent?

All these things are important and are part of true religion. But they are not the test of whether one's religion is pure and undefiled. One can be and do all these things and still have a religion that is vain.

The sure test of whether one's religion is pure and undefiled is

determined by how one uses his tongue, how he cares for the needy, and the relationship he has with the world.

There is good reason for this.

First, religion that is pure and undefiled is primarily a matter of the heart. It comes from a heart filled with loving adoration and an overwhelming awe of Jehovah God for His salvation in Jesus Christ. This inner love and adoration must and will express itself in acts of worship and service. But there is among men a worship and service that is not an expression of this inner love, adoration, and awe of Jehovah. This is vain and abominable to God.

So we must add that it is only this inner love and adoration of true religion that will result in the three things James puts before us.


What we do with the world and its filth is the ultimate test of our loving devotion to God. How appealing the world is to our flesh. However, friendship with the world is enmity with God. One cannot be the friend of the world

and of God. This James emphasizes in chapter 4:4. Only a deep, loving devotion to Jehovah — the heart of true religion — will bring us to Christ to find the strength to live apart from this world and to keep ourselves unspotted from it. A religion that is only show religion will not bring us to this point.

In turn, our loving devotion to God is also tested by whether we will show love to the neighbor. And the true test of love to the neighbor is whether we will bridle our tongue for his welfare and visit him in his afflictions.

Let each examine himself as to whether his religion is pure and undefiled. So easily we deceive ourselves in this regard.

And let us maintain a religion that is pure and undefiled.

Only those who have tasted the salvation of God in Jesus Christ are able to do so. Let us by the power of grace and salvation devote ourselves to the true service of God with a religion that is pure and undefiled. 

Editorial

Rev. Kenneth Koole

On Site Reflections on Hyper-Calvinism and the Free-Offer (4)

In this article we intend to examine the free offer and the arguments of its promoters by taking into consideration various biblical passages and concepts as they are brought to bear on this controversy.

Of late the WMO (Well-Meant Offer) men have gone on record defending the notion that God not only loves the elect, but He also

hates them; and that He not only hates the “non-elect,” but He also loves them.

They argue that to deny this is simply hyper-Calvinism. We contend that to maintain such a thing is simply (and grievously) unbiblical, and demonstrates the extremes to which maintaining the free offer leads one.

The WMO men are compelled to argue this astonishing thing. They too are well aware of that ‘troubling’ passage “Jacob have I

loved; but Esau have I hated” (Rom. 9:13). If Scripture speaks of God from eternity having hated the Esaus of this life, how can the WMO yet speak of God having a love for them too? And if Scripture ties God’s love in with the elect, the Jacobs, (the love of a Sovereign God, which love invariably works salvation), surely one cannot then speak of God also loving the reprobate, can one? What is this but the ABC’s of logical thinking?

Previous article in this series: November 15, 2005, p. 76.

Behold, once again we show you a paradox, and escape the dilemma. Whom God loves, He also hates; and whom He hates, He also loves. And they have Scripture to back it up, they say.

So that it is clear that we are not misrepresenting the WMO men and their arguments, we offer you a couple of quotes lifted from another article listed on the web-site monergism.com, an article entitled "All house and no door: A Critique of the False Teaching of Hyper-Calvinism," written by the Dr. C. Matthew McMahon. Dr. McMahon is sweet on the free offer, and goes on record as finding those who oppose it extremely sour to his taste. (At least he does not find us lukewarm.)

McMahon offers a list of six things that, he declares, the free offer understands and maintains, and that, if they are denied, prove one to be a hyper-Calvinist. (And some of them do.) One of the things that the free offer affirms (the opposing of which, according to McMahon, makes one a hyper-Calvinist) is:

5. The Love of God to the Reprobate and the Hatred of God to the Elect — huh? (Yes, I understand what I wrote in this heading). No doubt, Hyper-Calvinists believe that God only hates the reprobate, and only loves the elect, *in any sense whatsoever*. Hyper-Calvinism completely denies that God loves men generally in any way and completely denies that God hates the elect in any way. It may seem at the outset that a general love to all men is not as radical as my inference that God hates the elect in some way. But I will qualify this....

Having presented his scriptural support for his contention that God has a general love for all His creatures, including the "non-elect" (which we will briefly touch on later), McMahon goes on to support his contention that God also hates the elect (in some way). We turn to this first, not

because the contention that Scripture teaches God loves even those whom He eternally hates is of little concern to us, but because if anything demonstrates to what grievous lengths and Scripture-bending the free offer forces one to go, it is the contention that God also hates those whom from all eternity He has loved in Christ, *the Elect One*.

In this connection, McMahon writes, "God also hates the elect in Adam," and then he quotes Ephesians 2:1-3, highlighting the words, "*and were by nature children of wrath, even as others*," a phrase that refers to the regenerated, renewed elect. McMahon explains it this way:

If [God] hates or loves, it is an eternal hatred or love for sin or good work in Christ. He continually, in Adam, hates our rebellion. Yet, He eternally loves us in Jesus Christ. That is why we are not consumed as Jacob's sons. Hyper-Calvinism teaches that the elect are not hated in Adam, but only loved in Christ. I suppose then, Paul was wrong in saying we were children of wrath *like the others*. Is wrath a form of love? I think not, unless Hyper-Calvinism would like to admit that God loves all! No, wrath, like others, is real wrath intended for damnation. If it were not for Christ we would not escape this. The reprobate are only hated in Adam, though generally loved by God as seen in His indiscriminate love for all men and the whole world as he upholds it. The elect are exceedingly grateful (though not as they should be) for the deliverance they have in Christ. If God did not, nor does hate their sin, then why are they grateful, and what did Christ die on the cross for?

Three things in analyzing the above quote.

First, we note that the Doctor speaks of God "in Adam, hat[ing] our rebellion," and then of God hating the sins of the elect. But what does that prove? That, therefore, God hates the elect them-

selves? Surely it is possible to hate one's sins and foolish rebellion without hating the person. Parents do it with their children all the time, especially if a child in cruelty has hurt someone else — hating the deed, not the child. So with God. Yes, even His elect children yet living in unbelief, whom God "foreknows" in love, such as Saul of Tarsus, hating his pride and cruelty, but not Saul himself, whom in everlasting love God intended to adopt and save. It was exactly because God so loved Saul (seeing him in Christ) that He would separate him from the sins that He so hated. God would not have this young fool destroyed. He was a vessel of mercy, loved in Christ.

But second, what about God's wrath — of the elect being under wrath even as others? The simple fact is that "wrath" and "hatred" are two different concepts, and it is possible to be filled with wrath towards someone, and to deal with one in just wrath, without hating that person at all. Wrath towards one whom one yet loves. A judge in a small community may have to sentence his own daughter to a lengthy prison term because she drove while drunk and killed a family coming the other way. That is just wrath. And then that judge visits that daughter in prison with tears week after week. An elder votes to excommunicate his own son, who as a young man is living in fornication and wasting his living. Anger, wrath, and what? Hatred? No, rather praying to God to have mercy, and to make the son a prodigal who comes home in time.

Shall we mention David, who had Uriah murdered? There came upon David a divine wrath for all to see. God was grieved, as any father would be; but did God hate him? If God hates you, He never brings you back, no, not from the fall of Adam itself.

All of us, Cains and Abels, in Adam in common were children of

wrath, forfeiting life and under the sentence of death. The difference is that some are vessels of wrath *fitted to destruction* (Rom. 9:22), hated by God; but the others, though under God's just wrath, are vessels of mercy, to be fitted to honor.

McMahon asks, in rhetorical fashion, "Is wrath a form of love?" But that is not the question. The question is, is wrath *always an expression of hate*? That is what McMahon is contending. And to that the answer is "No," as is plain even from human life. There are times when, indeed, it proceeds from hatred, when one's intention is to see another destroyed (and perhaps forever — read Malachi 1:1-4), but it can also be visited on one whom one loves, justice demanding it and one's own righteous character, though the object of the wrath is one whom you love, is precious to you, but is to be cut off from that love's expression, until the wrong doing is properly addressed and dealt with.

Consider Christ crucified, the object of God's wrath for those three dreadful hours, cut off from every expression of love. Did God then hate His Son? If McMahon is correct, He must still hate His Son in some sense even now. Be careful what you say here, lest you speak with a rashness completely out of place.

One of the passages McMahon quotes to support the contention that the God who eternally hates a person also loves them, and whom He loves in Christ eternally He also hates, is Psalm 5:5: "The foolish shall not stand with thee; thou hatest all workers of iniquity."

The WMO men argue that since the elect can also be guilty of iniquity, therefore they too are hated by God. Really? One must then ask what God meant when He through His Spirit has wicked Balaam say concerning His true Israel, "He hath not beheld iniquity in Israel"? (It is this, of course, that explains God's longsuffering love

for a sinful, damn-worthy people).

While it is true that the elect can live wickedly for a time in unbelief, and even have to be converted from amongst the wicked, this is not the perspective of this Psalm and others that use similar language. The Psalms have a practice of drawing up absolute contrasts between the righteous and the wicked, those who are God's own in Christ the righteous one, and those who are not and never will be. Do not forget that the Psalm goes on to plead with God concerning these wicked, "Destroy thou them, O God; let them fall by their own counsel; cast them out...." Remember, in the Psalms, Christ speaks. And we are to believe that Christ speaks this way concerning His sheep, including those "other sheep" given Him, yet lost in darkness? Hating them as the wicked, praying for their utter destruction? Nonsense. Because if He did, it is a prayer not answered. How fortunate for us!

Psalm 11 uses the same language. It speaks of "the wicked and him that loveth violence," whom God's soul hateth (v. 5). It then goes on to say, "Upon the wicked he shall rain snares, fire and brimstone..., this shall be the portion of their cup" (v. 6). This is what the Spirit of Christ in the psalmist wills for the elect? For those whom He sees as righteous in Christ according to His "foreknowing" love? Not so. But this is what happens when as a professing Calvinist and interpreter of Scripture you lose sight of the truth of God's being the God of a predestinating will and people, which truth is revealed to us for the sake of reading Scripture aright — as Paul found to be true when he wrote the Book of Romans, for instance — whether one knows who the elect are or not. We do not have to. God does, in Christ. And that is enough to know to interpret such passages.

This does not mean that such a psalm has little to say to the child of God. It is exactly God's hatred

of wickedness, and then of His perpetual hatred of those impenitently committed to wickedness, that gives one the strong incentive to depart from the wicked and their ways.

There is one other matter that we must address yet before we conclude this article, and that is the strange and completely unwarranted way in which the WMO men go about proving that there are different degrees of love by which God loves different men, and then use this to justify the free offer and its declaration that God has a saving love for every sinner, loving them with a saving desire.

It is a rather interesting logical jump, and really a wonderful sleight of hand. McMahon does it, and so does Phil Johnson in his article supporting the free offer (referred to in a previous article).

Both criticize those who claim that God "only hates the reprobate" and those who "completely deny[y] that God loves men generally in any way..." (cf. above quotes). They charge that such is the mark of a hyper-Calvinist. Both insist that none can deny that Scripture teaches that God loves all men in some general way. And to support this general love of God towards everyone, they quote the same texts that are used in support of common grace. For example, "The Lord is good to all, his tender mercies are over all his works," and "...for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust" (Ps. 145:9 & Matt. 5:45). Texts that prove, it is said, a general benevolence and favor (a lovingkindness) of God to everyone in general, reprobate as well as elect.

We are not interested in the theory of common grace at this point. In fact, for the sake of argument, let us play the fool, and say, we grant it. You have convinced us. Scripture teaches that God has a general favor and lovingkindness toward all, as shown in His good-

ness even towards the reprobate. Now what?

We want simply to remind everyone of what the WMO men are doing. They are doing all this not simply to establish that God loves different men to different degrees, *but as biblical proof for the preaching of the free offer.* But the free offer does not have to do with some general love shown in the good things of this life; rather, it is the declaring of a saving love, a divine love that desires everyone's salvation in Christ. Our question is, what right does one have to take this so-called general love and use it to turn the gospel into a free offer, which offer now declares that God has the greatest of all loves for everyone, a love that would save?

This is the jump that the WMO men make. Suddenly this general lovingkindness that God might have even for the Esaus and Herods of the race blossoms into, and becomes irrefutable evidence for, the notion that He must also love them with a love that would save them in Christ. What gives? As if once you have 'proved' common grace, and are convinced certain texts speak of a general, non-saving benevolence of God towards all, you have the right to bring Christ into the picture with His cross and declare, "God yearns for the salvation of every sinner. Let every man addressed by the gos-

pel know that Christ died for him!"

This is why we stated above that we find McMahon's contention that God also loves the reprobate whom He hates astonishing! Because, say what he will, though McMahon badgers those who deny the free offer for not being willing to concede that God loves the reprobate in any way at all (with a different, lesser kind of love), the fact is that McMahon, in the end, is not talking about God having merely a more general, non-saving sort of love for the reprobate.

What he and other WMO men are talking about is God loving the reprobate with the same sort of love, a 'desire-to-save' sort of love, one that has to do with Christ, one that finds its evidence and power in the cross.

This is what the free offer is all about.

As should be evident, the WMO men realize that, once you have conceded this general lovingkindness of God towards all, you have placed your foot irretrievably on a road that leads to accepting the free offer as well. Concede the one, and you have for all in-

tents and purposes adopted the other. The one rather subtly transforms itself into the other. If nothing else, such should give every Reformed man pause before simply adopting the contemporary view of common grace and its lesser love.

There is reason why we disavow it at every turn.

That God is good to all, no one denies. He was good to Esau, giving him greater health and strength than Jacob himself, and a better personality besides. But is this

proof that God therefore loved him, and desired with deepest yearnings his salvation? Esau, whom God hated? Think about it.

There is more, of course, that can be said on the issue of the free offer. There are questions put to us by WMO men that they would like answered — for instance, are we not commanded to love all those with whom we have contact? Why would God require this of us ... if He does not do the same? Matthew 5:44, 45 is inevitably raised. Worth considering. But explanations of various biblical passages can wait until a later date.



Suddenly this general lovingkindness that God might have even for the Esaus and Herods of the race blossoms into, and becomes irrefutable evidence for, the notion that He must also love them with a love that would save them in Christ.

Taking Heed to Doctrine

Rev. Steven Key

The Preaching As a Means of Grace (2)

The Power of Preaching

To understand the preaching as a means of grace, we must clearly understand the power of preaching.

Preaching as a power is rarely understood today.

There are more than a few in

our day who are much disillusioned with preaching! There are various reasons for such dissatisfaction, some good reasons, many not so good reasons. There are some children of God who long for the warmth and vigor of lively preaching and who feel their faith languishing because they are not hear-

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ing such preaching. In their churches there is hardly preaching to be heard anymore. The gospel is not preached, or it is not clearly and purely preached. The reasons for this may be many, and we need not consider those reasons in this connection. But quite naturally, under such circumstances the child of God is going to suffer. And if that child of God remains in such a land of famine for a lengthy period of time, say, while his children are growing up, he is going to lose his family to the death of spiritual starvation!

Not only is the power of preaching denied by those ministers who fail to proclaim the Word of the living God according to the calling of their office, it is also denied in many ways by those whose calling it is to bring themselves under the pure preaching of the Word as often as possible.

Sometimes it is because of the failure of the pulpit that the people in the pew begin to reject the whole idea of preaching. Largely because of the failure of preachers to be faithful to their preaching obligations, there are many who have left Reformed churches to find their niche in the outward warmth and vigor of tongue-speaking, so-called Spirit-filled churches.

Others cry for something new. And when the cries become loud enough, change is brought to the church. Preaching is minimized, in order to replace it with liturgical practices. Singing and even dance are found to be more meaningful to the soul than preaching. There are a multitude of churches who now quite regularly will substitute the entertainment of choral presentations or dramatic presentations or even group discussions for the ministry of the Word.

While the Protestant Reformed Churches maintain their emphasis upon the preaching of the Word in the worship services twice each Sunday, we have to face the question: Do we understand and have we known personally the power of preaching?

God Himself has instituted the preaching of the Word as the power unto salvation to all who believe. We find that clearly expressed in Romans 1:16: "For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek."

That is a matter of emphasis in the words of Romans 10:14. In the middle part of that verse, the apostle asks (according to our KJV translation): "and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard?"

There is a little error in translation here. That error, by the way, is carried on in most other translations too. We are thankful, of course, that there are not many errors in our King James translation. More importantly, the principle of translation upon which this version is based is absolutely correct — the principle that recognizes the truth that the Scriptures are word for word inspired by the Holy Spirit. But here there is an error, an easy mistake for a translator to make, an error of only two letters, but an error that makes a world of difference as to the meaning of the text. The word that does not belong in the translation is the little word "of." In the original the text reads this way: "and how shall they believe in him *whom* they have not heard?"

The difference you will immediately understand. You can hear *of* someone, without any personal contact with that person. But when you hear *him*, that is quite different. Then you say, as a certain hymn has it, "I heard the voice of Jesus say, Come unto me and rest."

The power of preaching is not to be found in the man who brings the Word, in one who speaks about Christ. Anyone can do that. Anyone who knows the Bible even a little can speak about Christ. That is not a preacher. If that were preaching, there would be no power whatsoever. The words of a man may have a certain influ-

ence upon the thinking of people, but it has no power. A preacher is a man through whom it pleases Christ to speak by His Spirit!

The power of preaching as a means of grace is seen in the fact that Christ is pleased to speak by what Paul calls in I Corinthians 1 "the foolishness of preaching."

That is why, when you have heard preaching as a means of grace to you, it was not just a matter of enjoying the sermon. It isn't any more pious to hear a nice sermon, than it is to be entertained by going to a ball game. But when you have really come under the preaching of the Word, and have heard it with a heart willing to receive its personal application, then you say, "I heard the voice of Jesus say, Come unto me and rest."

Christ is *the* Officebearer in the church. His is the work, committed to Him by the Father, to gather His own. That work never becomes ours. To gather Christ's flock is not the work of man. It is absolutely the work of the exalted Christ through the Spirit.

So Jesus said in John 12:32: "And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me."

Christ speaks to you, Christ draws you to Himself, by the preaching of the Word. By His Holy Spirit He causes His voice to be heard through a weak and sinful man, called and ordained to preach the Word. That is preaching.

When you think of it, it is amazing that Christ would even talk to us! Should somebody treat you and me as we treat Christ, we would certainly turn away and avoid such a person. But Christ continues to come to us, to fellowship with us, and to speak to us by His Spirit. He speaks to us powerfully, bringing salvation to us who have been caught in the bondage of sin and snared in the trap of death.

The Implications

That truth brings with it several implications, both as to the

contents of the preaching and as to our own attitude toward it.

The apostle says in II Corinthians 5:20, "Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God." When a minister of the gospel stands as Christ's ambassador and is used by Him in such a way that God Himself beseeches you, it follows that such preaching must be strictly the Word of Christ.

The preacher has no message of his own. Christ's messengers come not with their own words. And those who come with their own philosophies are not of Christ. When a man speaks his own words, you must not receive him.

The pulpit is no place for opinions.

The pulpit is no podium for political clamoring.

Nor is the pulpit a place for beggars.

The preacher who stands in Christ's stead does not merely bring a message. He does not come with a message and say, "Will you please accept what I say?" He doesn't say, "To show that you accept what I say, I ask you to come forward, that I or other counselors may pray over you." The preacher who is called by Christ to bring to you and to me the good tidings of salvation is one who must bring his message with the authority of Christ!

A minister of the gospel must stand before you, saying, "Thus saith the Lord."

And the Word of Christ, the powerful Word proclaimed by the preaching of the gospel, is the Word of glad tidings of good things. In Romans 10 the apostle speaks of those glad tidings being the word of faith, the word that is yours, that you take to yourself by faith.

What is that Word, which is powerful unto your salvation? It is this: You are justified by the righteousness of Jesus Christ. The gos-

pel of peace is that Christ has blotted out your sins. And the glad tidings for you and for me is that God has given us all the blessings of salvation.

Those glad tidings of good things apply to us in every aspect of our life. They apply to us in times of joy, but also in times of sorrow. That God is good is as true in times of affliction as it is in times of health. Those glad tidings are applicable in the midst of social turmoil and war, as well as in times of earthly peace. They apply to us at all times and everywhere. And they bear as well on the life that we live.

Christ says to us, through the preaching, "Thus saith the Lord. Here is the way you shall live, to my glory, and in thankfulness to me. Hear my Word."

And so the truth that Christ speaks personally through faithful preaching ought also to have an influence upon your own attitude toward the preaching. When you love Christ, when you see Him as your Savior, then you also long to be with Him and to hear His voice. That is true not only because we like the particular minister that He has given us. When Christ speaks through the preaching, then we ought to be present also when other ministers of His come to bring His Word. For we need to hear Him in whom alone is salvation and by whose Word comes faith.

Then we will also demand faithful preaching from those who occupy our pulpits.

Different ministers will bear different gifts, and will bring the gospel as Christ's ambassadors in different ways and with different emotions, applying it with different nuances. But we must have faithful preaching, faithful and diligent exposition of the Scriptures.

We don't come for entertainment. We don't come to be moved superficially by song or great ora-

We come to hear the voice of Jesus. And we do so as often as we possibly can. For that is our life. That is our need.

To neglect such fellowship with Christ is incomprehensible. Out of our misery we need to be delivered. In our sorrow we need to be comforted. From our sin we need to be delivered. And Christ alone is powerful enough to do so. Christ speaks to you and to me. That is the power of preaching. And no preaching has power unless Christ at that same moment takes hold of your heart and says, "I speak to you."

The Fruit

Then that preaching of the Word that is powerful unto salvation bears precious fruit in the church and in our lives as God's people.

The fruit of that preaching is faith.

But the preaching that is faithful to the Scriptures, the preaching through which Christ speaks, does not bring faith to all who hear. There is also negative fruit to the preaching of the Word.

When we speak of preaching as a means of grace, we understand

that grace is not for all. All who come under the preaching of the Word do not receive the grace of God in that preaching. Some receive condemnation.

So Paul speaks of that preaching when he writes in II Corinthians 2:15-17: "For we are unto God a sweet savor of Christ, in them that are saved, and in them that perish: To the one we are the savor of death unto death; and to the other the savor of life unto life. And who is sufficient for these things? For we are not as many, which corrupt the word of God: but as of sincerity, but as of God, in the sight of God speak we in Christ."

*...no preaching
has power
unless Christ
at that same moment
takes hold of your heart
and says,
"I speak to you."*

So we have seen the preaching work. Occasionally that preaching, which is to the salvation of us who believe, works hardness of heart in them that perish. To our sorrow, there have been those who have departed, not to go elsewhere, but to leave the church of the living God because their consciences would not allow them to sit under the pure preaching of the Word. When Christ spoke, it was to their condemnation. And rather than turn from their sins, they turned from Christ. We still pray for their conversion.

But we are blessed who look to Christ with longing to be satisfied by the preaching of His Word.

We have known the powerful application of the gospel to our hearts by the Holy Spirit. By means of preaching, that Spirit of the exalted Christ has worked and strengthened faith. We are regular partakers of this means of grace, never failing to sit at the meal table of the Lord's ministry, unless it is impossible to be present. There has been growth, spiritual growth, readily observed in us who have received the Lord's Word with gladness. To God alone belongs the glory.


Continue prayerfully to receive the Word. And having received it, don't immediately return to the

things of the world. But meditate upon it as a means of grace and speak to one another about it, edifying one another unto salvation.

Until Jesus returns, let us guard this means of grace.

Even over against all the attacks upon the preaching of the Word, let us continue to carry thankful attitudes for it.

So God will give us repentance and faith and the consciousness of His fellowship and love.

By faithful preaching we have been founded in the truth, established in the faith, and sanctified by the Holy Spirit. By faithful preaching, Christ is leading us to heaven. 

Understanding the Times

Mr. Cal Kalsbeek

Islam (4)

Western Responses to Islam: The Secular Response

And of the children of Issachar, which were men that had understanding of the times, to know what Israel ought to do: the heads of them were two hundred; and all their brethren were at their commandment.

I Chronicles 12:32

Dramatic changes have taken place in our world in the few years since 9/11/01. Islam has been the focus of the West's attention, but all are not agreed concerning the nature of the Islamic threat—if indeed there is a threat—to the West; consequently,

Western responses to Islam have been varied as well.

In previous articles we have examined, albeit sketchily, the history and beliefs of Islam so that we might better understand the clash that is taking place between Islam and the West. Just as important to Issachar, however, or maybe even more so, is the need to examine the various responses of the Western world to Islam, to evaluate the reasons behind these responses, and to consider the impact they may have on present-day Israel.

Mainstream Media's Response to Islam

The Western mainstream media's response to Islam and jihad terrorism appears to be one "intended to build bridges to Muslims, to dialogue, to accommodate, to show once again that we are de-

cent folks who don't hate anybody."¹ That this is so is supported by reporting that depicts Islam as promoting religious pluralism and diversity, and that Islam is supportive of all the "People of the Book" (Muslims, Jews, and Christians). As we have seen, abundant evidence to the contrary is readily available both in the Qu'ran and the practice in Islamic countries, but that is either ignored or explained in such a way as to make it inconsequential.

Marvin Olasky, of *World* magazine, conducted a little test of journalistic evenhandedness. The test concerned an incident first reported well over 3,000 years ago. Chapter 22 of Genesis tells of Abraham almost sacrificing his son Isaac. Muslims, however, believe that the Bible is wrong, and when they celebrated recently the Eid-al-

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Adha holiday that commemorates the event, they told reporters that Abraham nearly killed his oldest son, Ishmael. That provided an interesting test of journalistic evenhandedness. Newspapers had a choice of (A) reporting the Muslim version of the sacrifice and pointing out that the Jewish and Christian version long preceded it, (B) reporting the Muslim version and also noting the Jewish and Christian version, (C) reporting the Muslim version as a version, but not necessarily as fact, and not mentioning the alternative, or (D) reporting the Muslim version of the event as objective fact.² Olasky's Lexis-Nexis search of the news stories that were printed ended with this as his bottom line: "60 percent of the newspapers offered the Muslim version as if it were objective fact. Only one in five newspapers noted the existence of a biblical story that is older than and different from the Islamic story."³

While the Olasky test of evenhandedness may not be conclusive, it is revealing. In the context of other reporting that is generally sympathetic to the Islamic position, one cannot help but sense a media that is willing to bend over backwards to placate, if not overtly support, the position of Islam. This is collaborated by the case of General William Boykin, who in a speech to an evangelical Christian audience said that radical Islam threatens to destroy America "because we're a Christian nation," and that Muslims worship an "idol" rather than "a real God."⁴ Boykin's remarks resulted in a firestorm of protest from the mainstream media and an order of reprimand from the Pentagon. At the same time there are no calls from the mainstream media to silence Islamic hate speech against the West, though such expression abounds.

The Ward Churchill case immediately comes to mind. Mr. Churchill, chairman of the University of Colorado Ethnic Studies De-

partment, wrote an essay titled, "Some People Push Back: On the Justice of Roosting Chickens." In his essay Churchill defended the actions of those behind the 9/11 attacks on the grounds that they were simply engaged in retaliation for what the U.S. had done in Iraq in the 1991 war and the economic sanctions that followed. In the process of making his case, Churchill claimed the people in the Pentagon were "military targets," and he wrote that the people in the World Trade Center were not innocent victims but "little Eichmanns." (The inference here was that just as Eichmann executed Hitler's plan to exterminate the Jews, the people working in the World Trade Center were carrying out the devastating economic policies of the United States against the people of Iraq.) Churchill stated further: "When you kill 500,000 children in order to impose your will on other countries, then you shouldn't be surprised when somebody responds in kind."⁵

Of interest here is the media response, or rather lack thereof, to Churchill's statements. In defense of Churchill were the usual comments of "the free exchange of ideas" and "freedom of speech." That being the case, however, one cannot help but wonder why the media treated Boykin's statements in such a dramatically different manner. Why the double standard?

Columnist Cal Thomas aptly illustrates the problem with this anecdote:

There are two dogs; one is vicious and the other friendly. The vicious dog regularly attacks the friendly dog. The owner of the friendly dog decides to muzzle his dog, hoping this will demonstrate to the vicious dog that the friendly dog means no harm. The vicious dog sees his opportunity and kills the muzzled friendly dog.⁶

Western Educational Establishment Responses

The Western mainstream media is not the only organization to

give Islam a pass on critical examination of its teachings. Gilbert Sewall, author of a new report by the American Textbook Council, an independent national research organization that acts as a watchdog on educational issues (www.historytextbooks.org), claims, as reported by syndicated columnist Suzanne Fields:

These textbooks cut, shave and reduce content to pass the litmus test of advocacy groups organized specifically to search for offenses.

In California, for example, an Islamic council has oversight to the degree that it exerts a censor-like force as editors gloss over facts crucial to understanding the Muslim culture: jihad, holy law, slavery and the abuse of women. When discussed at all, these matters are discussed at such a distance from reality that all meaning is lost.⁷

Even worse than glossing over the facts concerning the beliefs and practices of Islam in school textbooks is the three-week course in California public schools that teaches unsuspecting students how to follow Islam. The course...

...requires students to choose a Muslim name, read from the Koran, pray to Allah, and simulate worship activities related to the Five Pillars of Islam. In order to receive a good grade, students are required to give assent to such statements as, "The Koran is God's

1. Robert Spencer, "Media Help Global Jihad," *Human Events* March 14, 2005: 13.

2. Marvin Olasky, "Siding with Islam," *World* March 8, 2003: 64.

3. Olasky 64.

4. Cal Thomas, "Who's the extremist?" *World*, November 1, 2003: 9.

5. John C. Ensslin, "CU prof's essay sparks dispute," *Rocky Mountain News*, January 27, 2005.

6. Thomas 9.

7. Suzanne Fields, "Textbook terror in a visual age," *Washington Times*, April 19, 2004: 29.

third revelation that was revealed to the Prophet Mohammed," and the Koran is God's word as revealed to Prophet Mohammed through the Archangel Gabriel.⁸

Amazingly, when these activities were challenged by some Christian parents, the federal judge ruled "that there is no violation of the Constitution when it comes to teaching the Islamic faith in the simulation mode that they're in, because it is 'entertaining and effective.'"⁹ Apparently it is of no consequence that similar teaching of the Christian faith in public schools regularly illicit cries from the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) for censorship on the ground of "separation of church and state."

Furthermore the ACLU reveals its true colors with respect to Christianity in its defense of practices that favor Islam in the schools. Their longstanding opposition to the display of Christian symbols or the Ten Commandments on public property is common knowledge, yet they were quick to defend the University of North Carolina when the college *required* that all incoming freshmen read Michael Sell's book *Approaching the Qur'an: The Early Revelations*, a book, by the way, that "sanitizes Islam by omitting the Koran's passages that command violent behavior or jihad."¹⁰

Western Judicial Responses

The case of a Canadian Christian makes clear that this double standard is applied not only in the United States. While handing out leaflets protesting documented Muslim persecutions in different parts of the Islamic world, he "was accused by Muslims of 'inciting hatred' and taken to a Canadian court. He was found guilty of breaking Canada's hate speech laws and sentenced to 240 hours of community service and six months of probation time in jail."¹¹

Then there is the case of Paki-

stani pastor Daniel Scot. Seventeen years ago Pastor Scot was charged with blasphemy because he said he did not believe Muhammed was a prophet, so he fled to Australia. If he stayed in Pakistan, Scot faced life in prison or death for his crime. However, Scot was to find out that Australia's new religious vilification laws weren't much better. While speaking at a seminar in Australia, Scot pointed out, based on passages from the Qu'ran, that Islam promotes violence and killing, and that it treats women badly. These remarks led Islamic activists in Australia to bring charges of religious vilification against Scot, and Scot was subsequently found guilty. Interestingly, in the process of defending himself, Scot began reading verses from the Qu'ran that supported his contention that Islam did indeed promote violence and treat women badly, but he was stopped by a lawyer for the Islamic Council of Victoria on the ground that reading these verses would itself be religious vilification. In response to this case Robert Spencer provides this insightful commentary:

With religious vilification laws now coming to Britain, Scot's question rings out and must be answered. If it is inciting hatred for Muslims simply when non-Muslims explore what Islam and the Koran actually teach, then there will be a chill on reasonable public discussion of Islam—a public discussion that is crucial to hold in this age of global jihad terrorism. Such laws actually make Muslims a protected class, beyond criticism, precisely at the moment when the Western republics need to examine the implications of having admitted into their countries people with greater allegiance to Islamic law than to the pluralist societies in which they have settled.¹²

It remains to be seen exactly how the recent London subway suicide attacks carried out and promoted by radical Islamists will af-

fect Britain's policies toward its Muslim citizens.

But Why These Responses?

How is Issachar to understand this apparent double standard of Western secularism when it comes to evaluating the beliefs and practices of Islam compared to those of the West?

David Horowitz, former founder of the "New Left" of the 1960s and author of the book *Unholy Alliance: Radical Islam and the American Left*, finds the answer in a political Left that views America in the same way that radical Islam does. In the view of both Islam and the "New Left," America is the "Great Satan!" Horowitz claims that the American Left once made common cause with Communists, but now has joined forces with radical Islam. He believes that what we are currently seeing is supporters of the "New Left" using their positions of influence in the media, politics, and the universities to promote the idea that America itself is to blame for the attacks of Islam against it. He explains this alliance as follows:

...The radical Islamist believes that by conquering nations and instituting sharia, he can redeem the world for Allah. The socialist's faith is in using state power and violent means to eliminate private property and thereby usher in the millennium.

Belief in this transformation is the reason the secular radical does not take the religious pathology of radical Islam seriously. The secular radical believes that religion itself is merely an expression of real-world misery, for which capitalist property is ultimately responsible.... In other words, religious belief is a response to the suffering caused by private property, and a mask that obscures its practical causes. The revolution that removes the cause of this suffering will also remove the religious beliefs it inspires. Thus, the liberation of mankind from pri-

vate property—the defeat of America and Western capitalism—will liberate Islamic fanatics from the need to be Islamic and fanatic.¹³

Horowitz's explanation bears consideration by those seeking to understand the times. Throughout history unholy alliances have been formed in opposition to what was perceived as a common enemy. Scripture bears this out as the various powers of the time united against our Lord. Luke by

inspiration expresses it this way: "And the same day Pilate and Herod were made friends together: for before they were at enmity between themselves (Luke 23:12)." Could it be that something of a similar nature is happening today? The common enemy today, however, is Christianity, or that which is perceived by the ungodly of the world and Islam as Christianity.

... to be continued. 

8. "Teaching Islam in school OK'd by court," *AFA Journal*, March, 2004: 10.

9. "Teaching Islam in school OK'd by court," *AFA Journal*, March, 2004: 10.

10. Alvin J. Schmidt, *The Great Divide*, Regina Orthodox Press Inc. Boston, Massachusetts, 2004: 240-241.

11. Schmidt 247.

12. Robert Spencer, "Religious Vilification," *Human Events*, January 24, 2005: 18.


13. David Horowitz, *Unholy Alliance: Radical Islam and the American Left*, Regnery Publishing, Inc. Washington D.C., 2004:129-130.

When Thou Sittest in Thine House

Abraham Kuyper

Curiously Wrought

The Expectation

 Our fathers loved to hark back to their own personal creation.

They came to this naturally by their going back to their fall in Adam; something of which the superficial Christendom that now prevails simply knows nothing.

What, they ask us, did Adam's fall to me? "In sooth, I have enough to do with my own sins, than that I should trouble myself about the sin of a man who has already been dead many thousands of years. Not the fall of Adam, but my *own fall* keeps my soul from rest. And the prayer that thrills my heart is by no means how Adam was saved, but how I can be saved, and my sinful heart be delivered from guilt and sin."

The superficiality of this merely seemingly serious language is evident.

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He who speaks thus presents himself as one who had suddenly been placed here on the earth, with no single tie to relate him to his former generation. All such Christians speak as individuals who stand alone by themselves, and understand nothing of the tie that binds them to our entire human race.

And, of course, then you are bound to come to a false conclusion.

For, you are *born*. Born from a father and a mother. From that father and mother you have been born *in sin*. Your moral life in part is still dominated by their moral life.

As it is now with you, it was before with them.

They too stood vitally related to *their* father and mother. And so it ever goes on. Back from generation to generation. Ages and tens of ages together. And when finally you ask: "Did this never cease?" the answer runs: "Yes, once and with one man it did cease, and that man was Adam," simply because Adam had no father and no mother, and with him alone there

was no mention of having been conceived and born in sin. Of course, from this Christ is excluded.

When one class of Christians speak of their personal guilt only, and another class of their *guilt in Adam*, the latter is no play of words, but profound and serious truth.

One acts as though he had no past back of his birth, while the other knows that he was already included in the loins of Adam.



This going back to Adam leads of itself to taking one step further, and thoughtfully to enter into the wondrous work of our own *creation*.

At that other standpoint one does not ask after this, and deems that our whole Christian religion consists in the confession of the Savior and in seeking fellowship with the Holy Ghost.

So the second and third person of the holy Trinity comes to His honor, but the first person is passed by, and the glorious confession "I believe in God the Fa-

ther Almighty, Creator of heaven and earth" is, at the recital of the Twelve Articles of the Faith, said after others, but one does not enter into it with lively concern and so renders it non-active.

Not that in general the work of creation is denied. Sometimes even with enthusiasm the glory of God in the realm of nature is set forth. But the personal life of faith keeps no count with it. And when one speaks of his Christian religion, it is as though that first of the Twelve Articles of Faith does not belong to it.

And with respect to this, the attitude of the "men of God" in the Old and New Covenant was altogether different.

When John begins his Gospel, he begins with the majestic narrative how and by whom all things were *created*. With Matthew, we learn how Jesus spake of revealing secrets, which had been hidden from before *the foundation of the world*. In Revelation, the Lamb appears, as ordained from *before the creation*. And Paul, every time, not only puts the creation in the foreground and points to the mystery which had been hidden through all ages but is now revealed, but also takes special pains to lay bare the root of your personal salvation in and beneath the depth of creation by directing you to an *elective* grace, which preceded all creation.

And when you come to the Old Testament, this going back to the creation here bears even a still more severely *personal* character.

Does not David go back to the days of his own infancy when he sings: "Thou didst make me hope, when I was upon my mother's breasts." Does he not celebrate in song what lay *back* of that child life at mother's breast: "I was cast upon thee from the womb" (Ps. 22:9, 10)? Does he not go back further still in Psalm 139, and does he not enter still more deeply into his own conception and birth and creation when he says: "Thou hast covered me in my mother's womb.

I will praise thee; for I am fearfully and wonderfully made. Marvelous are thy works. And that my soul knoweth right well. My substance was not hid from thee, when I was made in secret, and curiously wrought. Thine eyes did see my substance, yet being imperfect, and in thy book all my members were written, which in continuance were fashioned, when as yet there was none of them"?

Succinctly and strongly expressed, without a trace of that prudishness wherewith among some people all talk about human birth is cut off as less delicate.

And what you also observe is that by that going back to *the* creation and to his *personal* creation, David as of itself comes up to foreordination.

Faith in *election* and faith in the *creation* hang inexorably together, and by nothing so much as by letting go one's hold on the creation is the faith in God's election undetermined.



From whence am I? How did I originate? Where lie the first origins of my life, before I was yet brought into this world?

Such looking at the riddle of your own life, of your existence, comes early or late to every one who knows the urge to withdraw himself from the distractions of life into quiet meditation.

He who takes his existence seriously cannot escape from the overwhelming power of these our whole existence dominating questions.

And is it not strange that one finds people who, when it comes to an inheritance, or merely to be able to boast of high descent, with all accuracy examine their family registers of three and four centuries back to lay bare the fountain of their noble blood, but who never come to it, more yet than after these human origins, which so often occasion pride and vanity, to ask after the origin of *their soul*, and af-

ter their descent from the hand of their *Creator*?

The tie that binds us to God must run along two lines: the one vertical, the other horizontal. That is to say, from our soul the one line goes up on high, to seek our God in His glory. But the other goes along the level of the ages, from us out to the generations that have been before us, and arrives where lies God's work of creation, and where full of majesty that divine work of creation comes forth from his foreordination.

Once you were not. Then you came to be. You also are a creature of God, thus created by your God. From His hand you have come forth. The fountain of human life, from which as a drop you have come forth into the full stream, operates only by His divine power and by the disposition of His holy will.

And therefore what David said, you must confess regarding yourself.

Not only that the Lord "has seen your substance being yet imperfect," but also that in your mother's womb, with his own hand, He has "curiously wrought you."

Yea, more still, that before He thus formed you, also your stature, your character, your mark stood written in His book, before at His high command all these things went forth, before you as child were born, and on this earth originated as man.



Whether the royal harpist sang this song of his birth before his God on his birthday cannot be known. But it may well be said that no psalm can more deeply interest you on your own birthday. And that no day invites us more naturally than our birthday to this going back to our origin as man.

Surely, thinking back upon your past is profitable, and the going through once more in your

imagination the years which you have lived can make your praise of the mercifulnesses of your God very abundant and your estimate of yourself very humble.

Such a going through of our own life's history on such a day is in place.

But you do well not to confine it to this chapter of history.

This history of your own life is a page of God's providence, but that providence over you is explicable only from your *creation* and from what lies *back* of your creation.

Let every child of God therefore on such a day of commemoration enter also into that depth, un-

til, by way of his own creation and of his own foreordination, he comes to that divine good-pleasure in which his life took origin.


And if you object and say that on such a day of commemoration there is too much diversion and too much goes on that renders even a few moments for serious thought almost impossible, then let me ask whether a birthday is rightly spent without a quiet restful outpouring of your soul before the Eternal.

Among the Lord's people the *birthday* must bear another character than among the people of the world.

In the world that day is spent with family members and friends,

and knows no other enrichment of life than the festal board and presents.

But he who may know himself as a child of that Father who is in heaven can on that day also not get along without that God of all mercies.

And though it is very possible that that day itself was almost altogether filled with festive activities, and in the tension of festal joy every chance for quiet thought was cut off, there is a *preceding* day and a day *that follows*, and within the course of these three days the going back to one's origin from God should be known by every one of God's children. 

Search the Scriptures

Rev. Ronald Hanko

The Prophecy of Malachi

Covenant Faithfulness and Unfaithfulness (3)

The First Disputation: Chapter 1:2-5 (cont.)

2. *I have loved you, saith the LORD, Yet ye say, Wherein hast thou loved us? Was not Esau Jacob's brother? Saith the LORD: yet I loved Jacob,*

3. *And I hated Esau, and laid his mountains and his heritage waste for the dragons of the wilderness.*

4. *Whereas Edom saith, We are impoverished, but we will return and build the desolate places: thus saith the LORD of hosts, They shall build, but I will throw down; and they shall call them, The border of wickedness,*

and, The people against whom the LORD hath indignation forever.

As we have seen in the previous article, it is the eternal character of God's love that is being emphasized in these verses. For God to say to Judah that He had loved them in *time* past would be no reassurance to them. It is only because He loved them from *eternity* that His love is proved unchangeable and abiding in spite of what outward circumstances might make them think.

God shows the eternal and unconditional character of His love for Jacob and Israel when He speaks of His hatred for Esau. The point here is the same as in Romans 9, that God's love for Jacob and hatred for Esau had nothing

to do with what they were or would be, but was entirely according to the good pleasure of His own will (cf. Eph. 1:5). He did not love Jacob because Jacob was holier than Esau or had any primacy as far as descent or family was concerned, but He loved Jacob simply because He was pleased to do so.

Thus the reminder here in Malachi that Esau was Jacob's brother. In every earthly and outward respect they were equal, and therefore God's love for Jacob can only have been free and gracious and unconditional. Paul makes this same point in Romans 9:6-13. In order to prove that the difference between the true seed of Abraham and those who are only fleshly descendants of Abraham is all grace, Paul first brings up the example of Isaac

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and Ishmael who were both physical descendants of Abraham, but of whom only Isaac was counted as the seed of Abraham by God.

Since, however, it would be possible to object that there was a real outward difference between Isaac and Ishmael in that they were half-brothers who had different mothers, Paul adds the example of Jacob and Esau, who were not only full brothers, but twins, and whose place in relation to God's covenant and love was revealed before they were born. That example proves, Paul says, that salvation, the calling of some and not others, is according to God's own purpose in election.

That free and eternal love of God for Jacob appears all the more wonderful when contrasted with God's free and eternal hatred of Esau. In speaking of that hatred, God speaks of what is sometimes called reprobation, the opposite of election and the eternal decree of God concerning the damnation of some. When God says "I hated Esau," He is saying that from eternity He hated and rejected Esau, just as from eternity He loved and chose Jacob.

There is much opposition to this doctrine, and almost every commentator rejects the idea of eternal reprobation here. Laetsch speaks of the "horrible doctrine of an eternal decree of reprobation" and says that God's hatred for Esau means only that He loved Esau less than Jacob.¹ Pusey says that God could not have hated Esau before he sinned and that Jacob's election and Esau's rejection have to do only with temporal things.² Others here and in Romans 9:10-13 speak of a national election and reprobation, insisting that God is only loving and choosing Israel as a nation and hating and rejecting Edom as a nation.

All these efforts to avoid the doctrine of reprobation, the most hated doctrine in Scripture, must fail. They must fail because the rest of Scripture teaches the doctrine (I

Pet. 2:8; Jude 4). But they must also fail because they do not do justice to what Malachi says here.

If Malachi is speaking only of nations, then why does he not use the names of the nations, rather than the names of the two brothers themselves? It cannot be denied, of course, that God is speaking through Malachi of His dealings with the two nations. That is clear from verses 4 and 5, but those two nations include not only many other individuals, but the two brothers as well. One cannot choose a nation or reject a nation without choosing and rejecting certain individuals. Not only that, but God's dealings with the two nations are specifically traced back to His attitude toward Jacob and toward Esau: "Was not Esau Jacob's brother? saith the LORD: yet I loved Jacob, and I hated Esau."

To speak of a lesser love of God for Esau and for Edom is nothing but sophistry. While it is true that the word "hate" is sometimes used in Scripture to mean "love less" (Luke 14:26), it cannot mean that here. For one thing, God not only reveals His attitude toward Esau, but He also reveals what the result of that attitude would be. He would lay Esau waste, and thwart every effort of Esau and Edom to prosper (v. 4). Indeed, as a result of God's hatred for Edom, Edom would be called "The people against whom the LORD hath indignation forever" (v. 4). That is strange love, even if it is a lesser love than God's love for Jacob.

What is more, if God is saying that He loves Esau less than Jacob, then there is no comfort in God's love for Jacob, especially when Jacob sees how that lesser love for Esau is revealed — in laying Esau's mountains and heritage waste and overthrowing his every effort to rebuild and reestablish himself. Israel would have reason then to say, "That's exactly what we were getting at. That's the kind of love God shows. That's the kind of love He showed for us." Israel's words,

"Wherein hast thou loved us?" would become not a wicked complaint, but the truth!

That this love and hatred involves more than temporal and earthly prosperity is also clear. It involved more than that in the original case of Jacob and Esau. Already then it involved the promise of Christ, a place in God's covenant, and all the spiritual blessings and privileges that Israel enjoyed in the Old Testament (Rom. 9:4, 5). Romans 9 shows that the calling and salvation of some and not others was at stake. Being or not being a child of God (v. 8), being counted for the seed (v. 8), and being graciously called (v. 11) were and are at issue, all of which are traced back to and rooted in God's love and hatred. The very name, Jehovah, used here in verse 2, shows that God's covenant love and covenant relationship to His people are at stake in God's love for some and hatred of others.

Especially in speaking of the results of God's hatred for Esau, it is easy to miss the fact that all of this has spiritual overtones and eternal consequences. It is certainly the case that this Word of God was fulfilled in the destruction of Edom as a nation. At about the time of Malachi, the territory of the Edomites to the south and east of the Dead Sea was conquered and taken over by the Nabateans, and the existence of Edom as an independent nation ended.

We must remember, however, that the temporal blessings and judgments of the Old Testament are always pictures of spiritual things. Temporal things in themselves do not necessarily represent the blessing or the disfavor of God. If that were so, then the wicked would often have more of God's blessing than His own people, and His own people would have no comfort in their trials and troubles. Nevertheless, we can clearly see the destructive power of God's wrath in the judgments He sends on the earth and be warned by

them, whether we are believers or unbelievers, whether we are touched by them or only see them at a distance.

Here, then, the laying waste of Edom prefigures the destruction of this present world under the judgment of God and the destruction with it of all the hopes and works of the ungodly. What they have in this world will be laid waste by God, all that they build will be overthrown, and they will be left forever impoverished.


This is reflected in the names that Edom receives as a result of God's judgments. The first name, "Border of wickedness," identifies Edom as the wicked world. Edom receives this name from those who witness its judgments, but those who give them this name do so because they see that Edom lies beyond the grace and mercy of God. It is a land outside the boundaries and borders of His love and saving purpose. "Border of wickedness" has the same idea, therefore, as "the world" when that name is used in Scripture to refer to the un-

repentant and unbelieving world of the ungodly, the world that perishes, and for which Jesus does not even pray (Jn. 17:9).

The name "People against whom the LORD hath indignation for ever" describes God's unchangeable and everlasting wrath against Esau and Edom, the opposite of His unchangeable and everlasting love for His people. That wrath, as is always the case, is shown in all His dealings with them, even when He sends earthly prosperity and peace. Even then He is angry with them (Ps. 73:18-20).

Both that wrath and its revelation in Edom's ruin are the outworking of God's eternal hatred and decree of reprobation. That in no wise absolves Edom of its guilt or makes God the author of sin, but it does show that all things proceed from God's eternal decree and that He is indeed sovereign in all His works and ways.

This revelation of God's eternal purpose in reprobation is all for the purpose of displaying the character of His love for His people. In this respect election and repro-

bation are not equal, but reprobation serves election. Those who understood this then and understand it now will be comforted, not frightened. That this eternal and unchangeable love of God for some, revealed against the frightening backdrop of his eternal hatred for others, is questioned and doubted should not surprise us. It is as characteristic of a faithless church now as then to question and doubt the character of God Himself and to begin to tell lies about Him that are designed to excuse and cover her unfaithfulness and wickedness. Nevertheless, the emphasis is and must be on the eternal, and therefore unconditional and unchangeable, love of God for His people through all circumstances and in all times. That is the gospel! 

1. Theo. Laetsch, *Bible Commentary on the Minor Prophets*, St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1970, p. 512.

2. E. B. Pusey, *The Minor Prophets, A Commentary*, Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1977, vol. III, p. 465.

All Thy Works Shall Praise Thee

Joel Minderhoud

Jehovah — "Excellent in Power"

The Italian navigator has landed in the new world." So went the coded message communicating that Italian-American physicist Enrico Fermi had, on that second day of December, 1942, set off the first self-sustaining nuclear chain reaction, in a squash court of Stagg Field at the University of Chicago. This impor-

tant discovery quickly led to the assembling of a half a million people and two billion dollars in resources in New Mexico, known as the Manhattan Project. The goal of this project was to press the power of the self-sustaining nuclear chain reaction into the formation of a massively destructive nuclear bomb.

Many discoveries in the early part of the twentieth century, especially the studies of the inner aspects of the atom, contributed to the knowledge that there is a tremendous amount of energy binding the tiniest particles of matter

together. Studies, like the one in the squash court of Stagg Field, revealed that internal energy in the atom could be released in the form of heat. Collectively, the energy stored in the inner parts of the atom can be referred to as nuclear energy. The world has since then stood in awe at the power in the atom as it has been displayed in nuclear bombs, and then later, in the modern nuclear power plants. We too stand in awe of this power. But we stand in awe, not in extolling the accomplishments of mankind apart from God, but because

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we can see a tiny glimpse of the majestic power of God. God is omnipotent — all powerful. Jehovah is excellent in power. We know this because the Word tells us so. But we know this too because we can observe His power in the creation around us. When we consider Jehovah's power, we bow in humility before Him. We recognize we are but nothing compared to and apart from God. Let us be reminded of that again, and do so by a brief examination of the power of God as it is displayed within the nucleus of an atom.

The Nucleus

The atom is an extremely tiny part of the creation. Consider the "o" on this page of type. If one were to line up a long row of uranium atoms from one side of the "o" to the other side, one would need to place a staggering 6.5 million uranium atoms next to each other. And understand too, that the nucleus of the uranium atom is much smaller than the atom itself. Generally speaking, it is 10,000 times smaller. And it is this miniscule part of creation that is responsible for the tremendous amount of energy released in the nuclear bomb or in the nuclear power plants. This is nuclear power, and it is generated by breaking a tiny nucleus into even smaller pieces.

The nucleus of an atom consists of particles called protons and neutrons. The protons have a positive electrical charge and would naturally repel each other (the electrostatic force) except for a unique force — the "strong nuclear force," which man is only beginning to understand — that powerfully holds protons together only when they are in very close proximity to each other. The farther apart the protons, the less the nuclear force, and the protons repel each other all the more, resulting in an "unstable" nucleus. The larger the nucleus, the more unstable it will be, due to the larger number of protons and

neutrons within the nucleus. This is the case because the protons are not held together as efficiently by the "strong nuclear force" when they are pushed farther apart because of the presence of so many neutrons. For example, an iron atom may contain 26 protons and 29 neutrons — a relatively small number of each, thus a "stable" nucleus. On the other hand, uranium atoms may contain 92 protons and 143 neutrons — so many particles that the electrostatic force between same-charged protons is greater than the attractive "strong nuclear force" — creating an unstable nucleus. The greater the number of protons or neutrons, the more unstable the atom.

In the providence of God, an unstable nucleus "naturally" becomes stable by the process of radioactive decay. Radioactive elements — those whose nuclei are unstable — may become stable by emitting some form of radiation. Radiation can be in the form of highly energetic particles of matter (alpha or beta particles, for example) or high frequency forms of electromagnetic radiation (light), such as x-rays or gamma rays. For example, radon gas (naturally found in the soil — often detected in one's basement) is a naturally radioactive element that may become more stable by emitting an alpha particle, a group of two protons and two neutrons, and change into a more stable element. There are a number of naturally occurring radioactive elements in the creation that become more stable by emitting some form of radiation. Examples of radioactive elements would include uranium, radon, and forms of potassium, cobalt, and carbon.

An unstable nucleus can also become stable by a method called artificial transmutation. In this case an unstable nucleus is bombarded by a fast moving neutron, which makes the nucleus all the more unstable, resulting in the splitting of the nucleus into two smaller, more

stable nuclei. The splitting of the nucleus is accompanied by a release of radiation, loose stray neutrons, and *tremendous energy*. In the wisdom of God and under His governing hand, only a few radioactive elements readily undergo this process, called fission. Thus, we need not fear that a particular lump of radioactive material is going to undergo fission spontaneously, releasing energy equivalent to tons of TNT. This does not happen without artificial means.

Nuclear Power

Nuclear bombs and nuclear power plants derive their power from these unstable nuclei by using the method of artificial transmutation. Consider a lump of uranium atoms. Imagine that this lump is composed primarily of the uranium atoms that contain 92 protons and 143 neutrons (uranium-235) — the type of uranium that can more easily undergo fission. If this lump were to be subjected to an explosion that contained fast moving neutrons, a neutron would hit a uranium atom and initiate fission. As the uranium atom splits into two smaller, more stable nuclei, it releases many more neutrons, which in turn hit other uranium nuclei, initiating more fission reactions. If the correct amount of uranium atoms are present, a "sustained nuclear chain reaction" can be obtained — a chain reaction similar to the one obtained in the famous squash court of the University of Chicago in 1942. Providing conditions where the unstable nuclei continue to split in a continuous chain reaction is the key to nuclear power.

In the process of becoming stable, some of the mass of the nucleus is destroyed and converted into energy. One hundred years ago Albert Einstein, directed by the hand of God, uncovered the reality that the mass of a substance can be changed into tremendous amounts of energy, governed by the relationship expressed in the

formula $E=mc^2$. "If an atom were the size of a room, its nucleus would be no larger than a grain of sand. Yet this tiny speck of matter is held together by forces so powerful that when an unstable nucleus like that of uranium 235 is split ... the energy unleashed from a few pounds of that metal is equivalent to the explosion of thousands of tons of TNT."¹ When a single atom of uranium splits, energy is released. The amount of energy appears to be inconsequential.² Even the amount of energy released when the 6.5 million uranium atoms that are lined up in the letter "o" are all split within a very short time of each other doesn't produce enough heat to be easily measured.³ However, a nuclear-powered submarine operating on one pound of pure uranium-235 carries enough atoms of uranium to produce as much heat as is generated by almost three million gallons of gasoline.⁴ What a mind-boggling amount of energy released by a relatively small amount of material! Nuclear bombs and nuclear power plants capitalize on the transformation of tiny amounts of mass into energy during fission by obtaining an enormous number of these unstable atoms in one lump of critical mass. A few pounds of pure unstable uranium contain enough atoms to provide the destructive power of a nuclear bomb.

A description of the nuclear blast tested in the New Mexico desert by scientist George Kistiakowsky brings to life the amazing power present in a few pounds of unstable nuclei. Describing the explosion he witnessed in the pre-dawn hour of July 16, 1945, he wrote:

All of a sudden the entire desert for miles and miles, and the mountains, about ten miles away, were lighted with an intensity the like of which one had never seen before. I was partially blinded.... When my sight returned, the whole atmosphere was showering

with a violet light.... At that time we didn't know what was happening.... And then a long time afterward, about a minute or so, the blast wave finally traveled the six or seven miles and hit me ... throwing me to the ground.⁵

That power was displayed a number of times in test explosions and in the two bombs dropped on Japan in early August 1945. Today this same power is harnessed in a "controlled" nuclear chain reaction in nuclear power plants. Rather than allowing all the neutrons that are produced when a uranium atom splits to collide with the other neighboring uranium atoms in the lump, only a few neutrons are permitted to collide. This limits the amount of energy released at any one time — keeping the reaction under control. Today there are 440 commercial nuclear power reactors in 31 different countries in the world, producing approximately 16% of the world's electricity. Some countries obtain $\frac{3}{4}$ of their power from nuclear power, while the United States receives only about one fifth of its energy from nuclear sources.⁶ The development and use of nuclear power has grown in the past sixty years and shows promise of continued growth.

The Power of God

"Touching the Almighty, we cannot find him out: he is excellent in power" (Job 37:23). Sixty years ago man witnessed a most amazing and unique display of a portion of God's power. In those days, and much more so today, man glories in the accomplishments of mankind and in what is yet to come. Man has always sought to achieve greatness for himself and apart from God. But God says in Isaiah 42:8, "I am the LORD; that is my name: and my glory will I not give to another." God is the sovereign, omnipotent Creator and Ruler of all. "To whom then will ye liken me, or

shall I be equal? saith the Holy One" (Is. 40:25). Man himself is nothing but a tool in the hand of Almighty God. But God is great. He has all power.

We truly marvel at the amazing power of God. Certainly that power has been displayed in recent months in the so-called natural disasters of hurricanes, tsunamis, and earthquakes. But the nucleus of an atom is also an example of the power of God. It is a part of the creation we often overlook because we do not see physical evidence of that power in our day-to-day lives. However, the many nuclear weapons in the weapon storehouses of many nations ought to be a vivid reminder to us that the atom contains much power. And in these days the move towards alternative energy sources is growing — including a march toward nuclear power. Surely, whenever we hear or read of these things we ought to marvel at this unique energy source, but above all, may we bow in humility before Jehovah who has created each atom and gives it its

1. Wilson, Mitchell. *Energy*. Time Incorporated: New York, 1963, p. 149.

2. The inconsequential energy released when one uranium-235 atom splits is approximately 200 Mev (million electron volts) or 3×10^{-11} Joules or 3×10^{-14} BTU. For more calculations see: <http://www.science.uwaterloo.ca/~cchieh/cact/nuctek/fissionenergy.html>

3. The heat released from these 6.5 million uranium atoms would be 2×10^{-7} BTU.

4. One pound of pure uranium-235 would produce about 3.5×10^{10} BTU. Note: 1 gallon of gasoline produces 124,000 BTU of energy. For more details, see: (http://www.eia.doe.gov/kids/energyfacts/science/energy_calculator.html)

5. Giovannitti, Len and Fred Freed. *The Decision to Drop the Bomb*. Coward-McCann, Inc.: New York, 1965, pp. 196-7.


6. For more facts about countries with nuclear reactors, see: <http://www.uic.com.au/nip07.htm>

power — a mere glimpse of the unlimited power of God.

We are humbled by this even more when we consider the vastness of the creation. Consider the millions of atoms of uranium that string across the letter “o.” Never mind the trillions and trillions of atoms that make up each tiny creature on earth. And yes, Earth is inhabited by trillions of such tiny creatures. And forget not that Earth is but a speck of dust in the heavens among all the other planets, stars, and heavenly luminaries. Think of all the energy stored in the nuclei of all those atoms in the creation. What power! Our God created all of this. He did so by the word of His power. And each day, every atom in existence is directed and governed to move according to the sovereign, almighty, everywhere-present word of God’s power. This is true power and greatness. This is *our* God! And so we thank God for His creation, which leads us to contemplate His power (Belgic Confession, Art. 2). We must learn to use the creation

to that end — that we marvel at God’s works and praise Him as Almighty God.

It is no small thing that we begin our worship services with the confession that “Our help is in the name of the LORD, *who made heaven and earth*” (Ps. 124:8). These are words of unspeakable comfort to weak and weary souls burdened with sin and its suffering. Our help is in the Almighty Creator. There is none greater. As we contemplate the marvelous power of God in creation, our thoughts inevitably turn to the power of God in the wonder work of salvation. The work of our salvation is far more marvelous than all the power and beauty and intricacies of the atom’s nucleus. What can be more amazing than bringing to life something that is dead? We were dead in our sins and now are alive in Christ. We have been forgiven our sins because of the Word who became incarnate and dwelt among us and died for our sins and rose again. *This is power! This is greatness!*

Our God is not some weak beggar wringing his hands wondering how he is ever going to save those who keep defying him at every turn. Our God saves us and sanctifies us, beginning to end. He is the powerful God who redeemed us and delivered us from the power of sin and of death. He is Jehovah — who preserves us throughout all the trials of life. Fear not, for the Sovereign, Omnipotent One has redeemed us. “Fear not, thou worm Jacob, and ye men of Israel; I will help thee, saith the LORD, and thy redeemer, the Holy One of Israel” (Is. 41:14). He has called us by name. He has said, “Thou art mine” (Is. 43:1). We belong to Jehovah. We are safe in His Almighty arms (Deut. 33:27). He faithfully and powerfully works all things for our good, being both *willing* and *able*. What a wonder that we mere creatures may dwell in perfect fellowship forever with the Almighty God. Bow before His presence with humility and awe and give thanks! Bow before *Jehovah* who is *excellent in power!* 

Marking the Bulwarks of Zion

Prof. Herman Hanko

Charles Grandison Finney: Revivalist (2)

Introduction

While revivals were relatively common in the British Isles prior to about one hundred years ago,

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America can boast of only two major revivals. The first, called “The Great Awakening,” took place in New England during the ministry of Jonathan Edwards and by means of the preaching of George Whitefield. The second, called “The Second Great Awakening,” was sparked by Charles Grandison Finney and took place chiefly in Ohio, western New York, and western Pennsylvania.

Charles Finney lived in the

nineteenth century. His dates are 1792-1875. He is considered the father of modern evangelical revivalism, and his beliefs and methods still regulate much of revivalistic preaching in our day.

Finney was born and raised a Presbyterian, but never was comfortable within that strongly Calvinistic denomination. Although many of the years of his revivalistic work were performed as a minister in the Presbyterian Church, he

left that church during his labors in New York City and joined the Congregationalists. One of the interesting and significant features of his work was the fact that, though an avowed enemy of Calvinism, he labored within the Presbyterian Church without ever being expelled for his heresy.

In this article I intend to explore the reason for this seeming anomaly and describe Finney's doctrinal position and revivalistic views.

The State of the Presbyterian Church

The Presbyterian Church in the United States was the only strong representative in America of Calvinistic Presbyterianism. It was established in America prior to the Revolutionary War as early as 1611, and some Presbyterians were active in the struggle for independence from Great Britain. It was, on the whole, strongly Calvinistic, and was faithful to the Westminster Confessions after they were adopted in 1647. Princeton Seminary, founded in 1812, became the citadel of Calvinistic Presbyterianism under the leadership of Charles Hodge and Samuel Miller.

Presbyterianism, however, was seriously divided, beginning in the 1740s, when Gilbert Tennant began what became known as "New Side Presbyterianism." For many decades a struggle went on within Presbyterianism between New Side and Old Side Presbyterians. The Old Side men were strongly committed to the confessions of the church, taught and fought for a consistent Calvinism, and emphasized knowledge of the truth as essential for the Christian life. New Side Presbyterianism, on the other hand, was much more loosely committed to the creeds, tended to be far more ecumenical in its thinking, and wanted to put the emphasis in church life, not on the local congregations, but on evangelistic efforts. The division was so sharp and deep that it eventually brought

about a split within the denomination in 1837, a split that was healed in later years at great cost to the doctrinal integrity of American Presbyterianism.

Finney, in his evangelistic work, was influenced by many factors. Among the most important were the evangelistic labors of John Wesley, with his emphasis on post-conversion holiness, whom he read avidly, Jonathan Edwards and his reshaped Calvinism, and New School (which New Side people were sometimes called) Presbyterianism. In fact, Finney stayed in the Presbyterian Church as long as he did because he wanted to do battle with Old School members of the church.

New School Presbyterians readily embraced Finney and his evangelistic labors, but Old School men opposed him. These attacks came chiefly from Princeton, and some heresy trials were held involving followers of Finney; but in every case Finneyites were acquitted. Presbyterianism simply could not summon the spiritual strength to condemn Finney and Finneyism. It was a commentary on the denomination.

Finney's Theological Views

Soon after Finney's conversion he abandoned the doctrines of original sin and limited atonement. He considered them to be barriers to evangelistic work and unreasonable in any case. But once having committed himself to a Pelagian position, he could not stop there. In a debate with a Universalist, Finney adopted the Governmental Theory of the atonement of our Lord. This theory, first proposed by the Arminians in the Netherlands in the latter part of the sixteenth century, taught that Christ's death was not a vicarious or substitutionary death, nor a propitiatory death, but was simply an example of what God could have done to us if He had chosen to be strictly just. But now God forgoes His justice in the interests of His

mercy and tells sinners that, although He could do to them what He did to Christ, He will not punish them if they accept Christ as their Savior.

Such a view of the atonement, one that destroys the atonement altogether, is a necessary consequence of maintaining that Christ died for every man head for head, even though all are not saved. And it fits in perfectly with the Arminian position of free will, for it makes the decisive act of salvation man's free-will choice to accept Christ. Finney's Arminianism reflected itself in his preaching. Two of his favorite themes in his sermons were: "Sinners Bound to Change Their Own Hearts," and "How to Change Your Hearts."

We must not conclude from all this that Finney was vitally interested in doctrine. Finney was an ardent ecumenist — as all defenders of revivalism must be. In his ecumenical frenzy, Finney was doctrinally indifferent. He did not care about differences in doctrine between churches, and he had no interest in studying and developing doctrine — even though he was professor of theology in Oberlin College.

Finney's problem with backsliders (those who were converted in revivals but were unfaithful and returned to their former wicked ways) and some perfectionist literature, especially of John Wesley, led him to embrace the idea that a converted sinner could give perfect obedience to the law of God. This was in keeping with his denial of original sin. Finney, in keeping with Pelagianism throughout the ages, denied that sin was in the nature, insisting that it was limited to the actions of people. Hence, "entire sanctification" is a matter of the activity of a person, not his nature. Entire sanctification does not imply any change in the powers of a person, good to begin with. Only the right use of these powers is required and can be attained. This is a superficial view of sin,

which gives the lie to what every believer knows full well: that he is by nature prone to hate God and his neighbor. Finney admitted that a man could make mistakes, and not always feel at peace, even though he had attained perfection. Even New School Presbyterians balked at Finney's perfectionism.

Finney's Mysticism

Revivalism is inherently mystical. Finney claimed to have direct revelations from God and was guided in what he did and where he went by inner voices or feelings that revealed to him God's will. When he faced opposition, he resorted to closet prayer, and he wrote that he in prayer met God as Moses did on Sinai. "The Lord showed me as in a vision what I had to pass through. He drew so near to me ... that *my flesh literally trembled on my bones*. I shook from head to foot, like a man with an ague fit."

Robert Evans, the chief figure in the 1904-1905 Welsh revivals, also claimed to have occasional conversations with God over a period of three or four months. He described the first such conversation in a letter to a friend, in which he spoke of being awakened by God, visiting with God for three or four hours, and enjoying face-to-face conversation. This in spite of the fact that John says in his gospel that "No man hath seen God at any time."

Finney also spoke of a further baptism of the Spirit after conversion and thus paved the way for modern Pentecostalism.

Finney's Social Gospel

Finney was deeply involved in social betterment. Early in his work in various parts of New York he adopted what can only be called an evangelistic and social-reform modified Calvinism. He established mission societies, frequently composed of women who supported him and helped him in his work. In fact, a woman mission

society was established in western New York State, which commissioned Finney to preach and supported him financially. Finney encouraged women to be busy in missions and to participate so fully in the work that they could preach.

Finney was also busy in temperance work and joined with the temperance movement in any effort to rid the country of the evils of drinking.

As the Civil War approached, Finney began an abolitionist crusade and involved himself deeply in the efforts to secure the freedom of slaves. So strongly did he preach abolition in his church in New York that during his absence while at the Mediterranean Sea to recuperate, his church was the scene of terrible riots between abolitionist and pro-slavery citizens of New York City.

Revivalism

Finney is noted above all for his revivals. His reputation as an outstanding teacher and preacher is staked on his success as a revivalist. Proponents of revivalism, in their support of his revivalistic teachings, are ready to overlook his doctrinal aberrations, his poor preparation for preaching, his opposition to Calvinism, and his disdain for the established church.

Totally apart from the question of the biblical condemnation of revivalism, a criticism that we intend to develop in the next article, Finney's views on revival were so contrary to Scripture that one wonders how anyone with a semblance of understanding of Scripture can possibly approve of Finney's work.


Finney published in 1835 his *Lectures on Revivals of Religion*. He boasted in his *Memoirs* that the book enjoyed wide sales. In a book on Charles Finney, Charles E. Hambrick-Stowe writes:

He [Finney] rejoiced in the *Memoirs* that the book did well in America (12,000 copies sold imme-

diately), went through numerous editions in England (several hundred thousand copies were in print by the mid-1840s), and quickly achieved worldwide distribution. The Welsh translation sparked a notable revival in Wales, and it was soon translated into French as well....

In his *Lectures on Revivals*, Charles Finney argued provocatively that just as "religion is the work of man" and "consists in obeying God," so a revival of religion is an essentially human activity. Contrary to the traditional Edwardsian view of them as a "surprising work of God" that could not be predicted or precipitated, Finney always believed that a revival was the "purely philosophical result of the right use of constituted means." In other words, if a preacher delivered the right gospel message, extemporaneously and with appropriate enthusiasm, and if the work was accompanied with faithful prayer, a revival could be expected. "A revival of religion is not a miracle," he wrote, in one of the most controversial sentences in American religious history; it is not "something above the powers of nature" but results from "the *right exercise* of the powers of nature." Old School and even moderate Presbyterian critics would have a field day with this, but Finney cared nothing for their opinion. In his view, he was simply updating the old doctrine of the "means of grace" with effective "new measures" and carrying on the spirit (if not the letter) of Jonathan Edwards's example as his lengthy quotations from Edwards suggest.

Finney was of the opinion that he alone was capable of bringing about revivals. He thought that he alone knew how to accomplish this, by which boasting he either left out the Holy Spirit altogether or considered himself a very special agent of the Holy Spirit.

In any case, it is evident that Finney's entire work was fatally flawed by his departures from the teachings of Holy Scripture. 

Evangelism Activities

Bulletins from various of our churches leading up to the last week in October were full of reminders to our denomination, missions, and sister churches to reserve an evening near the end of the month for a Reformation Day Lecture. By our count, and we apologize if we missed any, the end of October leading into early November saw no fewer than fourteen lectures scheduled. Space does not allow the "News" to include them all here, but be assured, given time and a couple more issues, the "News" will include each one.

First, then, from our sister churches in Singapore we learn that Rev. J. Kortering was asked by the churches there to spend a Sunday with a group in Penang, Malaysia. The Korterings planned to be there from October 15-25, during which time Rev. Kortering was to give two Reformation Day lectures, as well as preach on Sunday, October 23. Then the following week he was to give two Reformation Day lectures in Singapore on a different subject.

The Evangelism Committee of South Holland, IL PRC sponsored a lecture, October 21, at their church. Featured this year was Rev. W. Bruinsma, pastor of the Kalamazoo, MI PRC. Rev. Bruinsma spoke on the subject of marriage under the theme, "To Live As One."

That same evening, a few hundred miles to the north and east of South Holland, the congregation of our Wingham, Ontario PRC sponsored a Reformation Day Lecture, with Prof. R. Cammenga as the featured speaker. Prof. Cammenga spoke on the topic "The Heart of the Reformation: Justification by Faith Alone."

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

From the bulletin of the Pittsburgh Mission we read that this year the Reformation theme at the Mission was "The Battle Cry for Scripture Alone." Rev. A. denHartog, pastor of the Southwest PRC in Grandville, MI, the calling church for the mission, and Rev. J. Mahtani, former missionary to Pittsburgh and now pastor of Bethel PRC in Roselle, IL, were this year's speakers. Rev. denHartog gave a lecture on October 28 in the library of Trinity Christian School under the theme "Scripture Alone: The Great Issue Today." On Saturday a question and answer forum related to the theme was held at the mission office. Finally, on Sunday Rev. denHartog preached in the morning from II Timothy 3:14-17 on "The Profitableness of Holy Scripture," and Rev. Mahtani preached in the evening from Acts 17:11, "Searching the Scriptures Daily."

A special "Evangelism Night" was held following the evening service Sunday, October 23, at the Grace PRC in Standale, MI. On that evening Rev. M. Dick, pastor at Grace, preached a special sermon from Psalm 57:9 entitled "Our Praises Among All People," focusing on the privilege and calling as believers and church to hold forth the word of life as God's witness in this world. Immediately after the service the congregation was treated to a special Powerpoint presentation concerning some aspects of the work their Evangelism Committee is doing on the behalf of Grace, both on the campus of Grand Valley State University and in the community. This evening was also intended to whet the appetites of the congregation for a special "Evangelism Day" discussion to be led by Rev. Dick the following Friday, October 28, at the church. Members of Grace were encouraged to attend and reminded to invite friends, family, and neighbors that evening as well.

Congregation Activities

The Building Committee of the Byron Center, MI PRC invited their congregation to a work bee held October 29. Plans called for clearing the creek area by their church. Volunteers were advised to wear gloves and to bring their shovels, rakes, and other necessary tools. Maybe even a dry pair of shoes or pants for sons and daughters who might offer to "help."

The ladies of the Wingham, ON PRC started a monthly Bible study on Wednesday morning, November 2. The ladies chose to study the book "Far Above Rubies."

A Request Night program was held Sunday evening, October 30, at the First PRC in Grand Rapids, MI. The congregation at First was invited to stay and perhaps invite a friend for this time of praising God through word and song.

The ladies of the PR churches in Iowa and Minnesota were invited to the annual Fall Ladies League meeting on October 25. This year's meeting was held at the Hull, Iowa PRC, and Rev. R. Miersma spoke on "The Queen of the Reformation."

Saturday evening, October 29, members of the Trinity PRC in Hudsonville, MI were invited to the home of one of their members for what has become known as Trinity's Annual Fall Family Fling. The night included dinner, hayrides, bonfire, and fellowship.

Young People's Activities

The Young People of the Doon, Iowa PRC hosted a Reformation Singspiration at their church on Sunday evening, October 30.

The annual Young People's Christian Service Day was held Saturday, October 29, at the Grace PRC in Standale, MI. This is a day when the Grace young people make themselves available, at no charge, to help members of the congregation with any kind of house or yard

THE STANDARD BEARER

work that needed to be done.

Mission Activities


Rev. R. VanOverloop and his wife, Sue, visited the Protestant Reformed Fellowship of Fayetteville, NC, the weekend of October 28-30. Rev. VanOverloop led a Bible study on "The Covenant

and True Worship." He also made some pastoral and evangelistic calls and preached twice on the Lord's Day.

Minister Activities

Rev. W. Bruinsma received two calls since our last "News." First, he received the call to serve as our churches' missionary to the East-

ern United States, working primarily in Pittsburgh. He also received the call to serve as the next pastor of the Faith PRC in Jenison, MI.

Rev. A. Spriensma, our denomination's missionary to the Philippines, declined the call to serve as the next pastor of the Covenant PRC in Wyckoff, NJ. 

Announcements

NOTICE

Principles and Practices of Reformed Education seminar

Sponsored by the Federation of PR
Christian Schools

Led by Mr. Jon Huiskens

Classes will be held
alternating Wednesdays
January through May of 2006
For information or to register, contact
Mrs. Deb Kuiper (616) 531-6785.

2006 Winter Conference

Justification:

The Heart of the Gospel

Presented by the First Protestant
Reformed Church of Holland

January 13 —

Justification by Faith Alone

Rev. Ronald VanOverloop

January 20 —

Justification and Good Works

Prof. David Engelsma

January 27 —

Justification and the Believer

Rev. William Langerak

Sponsored by:

The Evangelism Committee
First PR Church of Holland, Michigan
3641 104th Avenue
Zeeland, Michigan 49464

All three speeches are on Friday evenings at 7:30 P.M.

Tapes of the conference will be available upon request.

RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The council and congregation of Grandville PRC express their Christian sympathy to fellow elder Art Mulder and his wife Luanne in the death of Art's brother,

WILLIAM MULDER.

May they find comfort in the words of Psalm 23:4: "Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me, thy rod and thy staff they comfort me."

Rev. Kenneth Koole, President
Jack Brands, Asst. Clerk

RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The Men's Society of Hope PRC, Walker, express their Christian sympathy to members Cal Kalsbeek and Dave Kamps and their families, in the death of their father, father-in-law, and grandfather, former society member

JOHN KALSBECK.

Psalm 128:6, "Yea, thou shalt see thy children's children, and peace upon Israel."

John Buiter, President
John Streyle, Secretary

RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The council and consistory, Mary Martha and Men's Societies, the Evangelism Committee, and Adult Fellowship of Hope PRC in Redlands express their sincere Christian sympathies to our fellow members, brothers and sisters in the Lord, and Donna Huiskens and her family in the sudden loss of their husband, father, and grandfather,

LARRY H. HUISKEN,

whom the Lord took to glory on August 28, 2005. May Donna and her family be comforted by the Word of God: "He that dwelleth in the secret place of the most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty. I will say of the Lord, he is my refuge and my fortress: my God; in him will I trust" (Psalm 91:1, 2).

Rev. VanderWal, President
Mike Gritters, Clerk

NOTICE!!

Classis East will meet in regular session on Wednesday, January 11, 2006, at the Hope PR Church, Grand Rapids, MI. Material for this session must be in the hands of the stated clerk by December 11, 2005.

Jon J. Huiskens, Stated Clerk

Reformed Witness Hour

Topics for February

Date	Topic	Text
December 4	"The Baby Jesus, Prince of Peace"	Isaiah 9:6
December 11	"The World Turned Upside Down"	Luke 1:51-53
December 18	"The Only Explanation for Jesus Coming to Earth"	John 3:1
December 25	"Why Jesus Came"	I Timothy 1:15