

THE STANDARD BEARER

**A Reformed
Semi-Monthly
Magazine**

...we must be reminded that our love of and loyalty to an institution of the church on earth may not transcend our love of and loyalty to God's Holy Word.... We, with the reformer Martin Luther, are captive to the infallible Word of God.

See "The Purpose of Sacred Scripture"
— page 368

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In this Issue ...

In the October 1 issue (the first of the volume year) Prof. Engelsma informed our readers that Rev. Kamps and Rev. Terpstra would cooperate with Rev. Woudenberg in writing for the rubric "Taking Heed to the Doctrine." The idea was that Rev. Woudenberg would continue his study of the biblical teaching on the call of the gospel, and that Revs. Kamps and Terpstra would alternate in their dealing, first with the doctrine of Scripture, and then with the traditional six loci of Reformed theology. Accordingly, Rev. Kamps has since then provided eight articles on Scripture, interspersed with two by Rev. Woudenberg, who, incidentally, has been in Tasmania for the past four months. And Rev. Terpstra, who has long ago written his first article, is patiently waiting his turn.

With his eight articles, Rev. Kamps finished what he wanted to say about the doctrine of Scripture. But it happens that on April 18 he delivered a lecture, in Southwest Protestant Reformed Church, on "The Purpose of Sacred Scripture." It seemed to us that his SB series could well be extended to include the printing of that lecture, in two installments. And Rev. Kamps graciously obliged by providing us with his manuscript. So, if things go according to plan, we should see the first of Rev. Terpstra's articles on the doctrine of God, the first locus of dogmatics, in the July 1 issue.

D.D.

Meditation

Rev. Jason Kortering

Pentecost Fully Come

"And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place.

And suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting.

And there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them.

And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance.

Acts 2:1-4

There was a roaring sound of wind, but not a leaf stirred.

Fire was on the heads of the apostles, but not a hair was singed.

They spoke in foreign languages which they had never learned.

Strange things took place in Jerusalem.

The Holy Spirit had come! This was the real Pentecost.

That is not to say that the church of the Old Testament did not have a Pentecost. They did. The Feast of Weeks, also called the Feast of the First-fruits, was the Pentecost of the old covenant. It was celebrated 50 days after the Passover, after a week of weeks had gone by, that is, 49 days. On the next day, the fiftieth day, the Jews celebrated this feast.

It is interesting to notice that in

Acts 2:5, we read that there were dwelling in Jerusalem, Jews, devout men out of every nation under heaven. According to the law of Moses, we read, "Three times in the year all thy males shall appear before the Lord God" (Exodus 23:17). These three times were connected with the Jewish calendar of Feasts: the Feast of Passover (also called Feast of Unleavened Bread), the Feast of First-fruits (also called Feast of Weeks), and the Feast of Tabernacles (also called Feast of Ingathering). The Feast of Passover was in the spring of the year, the Feast of First-fruits was 50 days later, during the early harvest, and the Feast of Tabernacles was just before winter, when the harvest was completed. It was in connection with the observance of the Feast of Weeks or First-fruits, called Pentecost in the New Testament times, that these devout Jews had come to Jerusalem, and while they were there the Holy Spirit was given to the church.

We read, when the day of Pentecost was fully come!

We can interpret this expression in two ways. We can say that it refers to the temporal order — that the Old Testament Feast of Pentecost had come and gone, and it was now the day following when the Holy Spirit was given the church. This interpretation is entirely possible and fits the order of events: the *day* had fully come. We could also give it a spiritual interpretation. The Pentecost of the old covenant had now reached its fullness in the new covenant, the fulfillment of its typical significance. These two ideas do not conflict, but complement each other, and can certainly apply to this passage.

Looking at it from the chronological perspective, it is wonderful how Jehovah God built into the schedule of the feasts the prominence of the number seven. The number seven is the result of adding four (representing man on the earth, the four directions of the compass) to three (representing the triune God); or by adding six (the work-week, or the number of man) to one (the only true God) which results in seven — God and man are in friendship, enjoying rest with each other. It is the number of covenant friendship with God. Hence the seventh day was the Sabbath rest. In all three of the great feasts, the celebration ended in the Sabbath rest. A feast of weeks separated the Passover from the First-fruits. The seventh month was filled with special feasts: Trumpets, Great Day of Atonement, and Tabernacles. The seventh year was the Sabbatical year.

There was more than the number seven in the old covenant. Circumcision was on the eighth day, not the seventh. First-fruits was on the fiftieth day after Passover, not just forty-nine. Besides, the Sabbatical year was followed by the Year of Jubilee, the fiftieth year. Even these numbers indicated that something was coming that was greater, which would lift them to a higher plane of spiritual reality and joy. Hence, the Passover was immediately followed by the crucifixion, the Sabbath was followed by the resurrection day of the Lord, the Feast of First-fruits was followed by the real Pentecost, the presence of the Holy Spirit.

On God's calendar, "fully come" brought the old Pentecost into the new, the reality.

Rev. Kortering is pastor of the Protestant Reformed Church of Grandville, Michigan.

The same can be said for the meaning itself. God had a fuller spiritual blessing for His church than that which was given them in the Old Testament Feast of First-fruits. Just as we read that Jesus was born in the fullness of time (Gal. 4:4), so the fullness of the Old Testament Feast was given now, with the presence of the Holy Spirit. The Feast of First-fruits was in the middle of the three great feasts. It was preceded by Passover and followed by Tabernacles. Passover spoke to the people of their deliverance through the covering of blood. The covenant with God was grounded in the coming work of the Messiah, Jesus. His work on the cross would be effective. The Feast of First-fruits (Pentecost) testified that God was gathering unto Himself His people. Just as the early barley harvest, symbolized by the sheaves of grain waved before the presence of the Lord, assured Israel that the harvest which began was the Lord's and belonged to Him, so Israel as the people of God was His wonder-work and belonged to Him. This was followed by the Feast of Tabernacles or Ingathering, which was at the conclusion of the harvest and consisted of loaves of bread brought before the Lord. This symbolized the hope of Israel; the entire world would be brought unto Jehovah as a people saved by the blood of the Messiah, under which the people were protected from the angel of death and reserved for Jehovah's pleasure. The crucial connection between these two feasts was Pentecost. How could the Lamb effectively redeem His people, as promised to Abraham, to be the Father of many nations? How could Israel be the firstborn among the nations, which ultimately would lead to the gathering of the people of God from all the world?

The day of Pentecost was fully come.

The reality had come, the Holy Spirit of the exalted Christ was now given to His church on earth.

His presence guarantees the fulfillment of the Feast of Tabernacles (Ingathering) as well, the great Jubi-

lee in the Coming of Jesus upon the clouds of heaven to take unto Himself His exalted and perfected church to dwell with Him forever.

Look at those signs and believe.

About 120 disciples are gathered in an upper room. A tremendous noise is sounded throughout all Jerusalem, the sound of a mighty, rushing wind which concentrates upon that upper room. As this noise arouses the curiosity of the people and they begin to follow the sound to the source, they behold before them 120 excited people. Some are in the room, some in all likelihood are out in the streets. Some men, others women, they all have this little fire glow on their heads. As if that is not enough, they are speaking in languages which many cannot understand, for they are not of that country, while anyone from any country under heaven can come to this place and hear them speak of the wonderful works of God.

What a testimony of FIRST-FRUIT! Real first-fruits.

Three thousand are added to the church that very day.

The Lord added daily to the church such as should be saved!

Hallelujah!

The explanation of this wonderful event must be found in the Person of the Holy Spirit.

This is HIS day.

He is the third Person of the Holy Trinity, not by inferiority or rank; but in His Personal distinctive He proceeds from the Father and the Son. Within the Godhead itself, the Father reaches to the Son in the Holy Spirit, and the Son reaches to the Father in the Holy Spirit so that His Holy Breath fuses the Trinity into a covenant of friendship which defies our fondest imagination.

He is the Spirit of Jesus Christ. When Jesus completed His work of atonement as the Messiah, when the Passover Lamb shed His blood on the beams of the cross, God received that work and rewarded His Faithful Son. He assured Him already at the cross that His suffering and death were acceptable in His sight. He confirmed all this with His resurrection and as-

cension into heaven. When Jesus appeared before the tribunal of God's justice in heaven, He functioned as our advocate and entered the legal plea that God would give to Him the Holy Spirit through whom He would complete the gathering of His church. The first-fruits were already with Him. He desired the Feast of Tabernacles to be complete as well. The Father gave to the exalted Jesus the Holy Spirit. Yes, He was in the Old Testament church through type and sign just as Jesus was. When Pentecost was fully come, Jesus furnished His beloved church with the fullness, through whom the entire church would surely be brought into the joy of the covenant.

The Holy Spirit of Jesus is able to do this.

Three thousand souls were added in one day.

The sound of the wind tells us of His power to change. Nothing can stand before Him when He works mysteriously in the hearts of His people. The tongues of fire indicate to us that His work of change is to purify the soul and burn away the dross of sin and death. The foreign languages tell us that He does this in an intelligent way, by the communication of words, through the written Word, faithfully expounded by servants whom He calls to speak. The disciples could understand what had happened (the cross and the crown) for the first time, and they were able intelligently to communicate it to others as the same Holy Spirit applied it to the hearts of "such as should be saved."

With His presence, we have the guarantee that the work of salvation is in good Hands.

All the attendants at the Feast of Tabernacles will be there.

Heaven will be complete. Glory to the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit!

□

An "Election Theology" of Covenant (4)

Canadian Reformed ("Liberated") theologian J. DeJong criticized the covenant doctrine of the Protestant Reformed Churches in his letter in the March 15, 1991 issue of the *Standard Bearer*. Dr. DeJong found fault with the Protestant Reformed teaching on several counts:

- 1) It maintains presupposed regeneration.
- 2) It makes election the controlling ground of the covenant.
- 3) It distinguishes between membership in the covenant and a belonging only to the sphere of the covenant.

I need say little here about the "Liberated" charge that the view of the PRC constitutes presupposed regeneration. The "Liberated" choose to ignore the emphatic denial by the PRC that they hold this error. Nor do they pay any attention to the careful demonstration by PR writers that the doctrine of the PRC differs from that of presupposed regeneration. The reader is referred to chapters 3 and 4 of Herman Hoeksema's *Believers and Their Seed* (Grand Rapids: RFP, 1971) and to my own editorial in the January 15, 1991 issue of the *SB*.

The statement in my series on the covenant that elicits from Dr. DeJong the question, "What is this but presumptive regeneration?," does not refer to regeneration, much less to regeneration as the basis of baptism. Rather, it asserts that the approach of godly parents in the rearing of their children must be determined by election: "Election determines the approach." If DeJong wants to analyze this teaching, he must not call it "presupposed regeneration," but rather "believed election."

At the crucial point in the debate, the "Liberated" always loudly shout, "presupposed regeneration." This then is the end of the discussion. With this, the PRC are vanquished. By a loud shout, the "Liberated" covenant view has triumphed. This may satisfy the "Liberated," but it does not satisfy those who insist that truth be established, not by loud shouts, but by Scripture and the Reformed confessions.

The "Liberated" charge that the covenant conception of the PRC amounts to presupposed regeneration masks the fact that the "Liberated" hold all their infants and little children for unregenerated. The "Liberated" are as firmly committed to "presupposed unregeneration" as are the Netherlands Reformed and the Baptists. For the fulfillment of the covenant promise, namely, regeneration and sanctification by the Spirit, is conditioned by the child's faith. Regeneration, according to the "Liberated," is *mediate*, i.e., by means of the preaching of the gospel. Regeneration is the covenant child's own activity. It is something that he must do. And, of course, the infant child cannot hear the preaching; cannot fulfill the condition; and cannot be active in giving himself the birth from above. All children of godly parents, therefore, are unregenerated, and must be viewed as unregenerated, until they prove otherwise (and become otherwise!) by fulfilling the condition of faith. (Cf. G. Van Dooren, ... *and we escaped*, Burlington, Ontario, 1986, pp. 130-134; also, J. Kamphuis, *An Everlasting Covenant*, Launceston, Australia, 1985, pp. 74-89.)

The entire weight of the Reformed tradition is dead against this notion of the "Liberated." John Calvin teaches the regeneration in infancy of the elect children of believing parents in the *Institutes*, 4.16.17-32 (the quotations that follow are taken from the translation of Ford Lewis Battles). He is contending with the anabaptists who argue against infant baptism on the ground that "regeneration . . . cannot take place in earliest infancy." The anabaptists "conclude that children are to be considered solely as children of Adam until they reach an appropriate age for the second birth."

"But," responds Calvin, "God's truth everywhere opposes all these arguments." Jesus' command, "Suffer little children . . . to come unto me" (Matt. 19:14), shows that Jesus makes the little children partakers of Himself, "to quicken them." To the objection that little children cannot be regenerated since they do not yet have any knowledge, Calvin replies:

God's work, though beyond our understanding, is still not annulled. Now it is perfectly clear that those infants who are to be saved (as some are surely saved from that early age) are previously regenerated by the Lord. For if they bear with them an inborn corruption from their mother's womb, they must be cleansed of it before they can be admitted into God's Kingdom, for nothing polluted or defiled may enter there (Rev. 21:27).

In support of the regeneration of infants, Calvin appeals to the promise of the angel to Zacharias that John the Baptist "shall be filled with the Holy Ghost, even from his mother's womb" (Luke 1:15). "God provided a proof

(of infant regeneration—DJE) in John the Baptist, whom he sanctified in his mother's womb (Luke 1:15)—something he could do in others."

When the opponents of infant regeneration raise the argument from I Peter 1:23 that "Scripture recognizes no regeneration except from incorruptible seed, that is, from God's Word," Calvin responds:

In this they wrongly interpret Peter's statement, which has reference only to believers who had been taught by the preaching of the gospel. We indeed admit that to such persons the Word of the Lord is the only seed of spiritual regeneration; but we deny the inference from this that infants cannot be regenerated by God's power, which is as easy and ready to him as it is incomprehensible and wonderful to us.

Calvin suggests that infants "receive now some part of that grace which in a little while they shall enjoy to the full," apart from the medium of preaching. "Infants are baptized into future repentance and faith, and even though these have not yet been formed in them, the seed of both lies hidden within them by the secret working of the Spirit."

"The age of infancy," says Calvin, "is not utterly averse to sanctification," as the anabaptists (and "Liberated") suppose. For Christ "was sanctified from earliest infancy in order that he might sanctify in himself his elect from every age without distinction." He does this by "impart(ing) that holiness to us," including the elect infants. In support of his contention that God provides to infants the "immediate remedy" of the beginning of "newness of spiritual life," Calvin appeals to I Corinthians 7:14: "... else were your children unclean; but now are they holy." This holiness of the children of believers, for Calvin, is not a mere formal, outward setting apart of the children as members of the instituted church, but a real, living, inner, spiritual holiness, by the indwelling of the Spirit in their hearts. "As Paul testifies, although those who are born of believers may by nature be lost, they are holy by supernatural grace."

Calvin understands the promise of the covenant to the infants of believers, and the baptism of those infants founded on this promise, to mean a work of grace in the hearts of the infants in their infancy. This work of grace, for Calvin, is regeneration. It is not true, therefore, that the doctrine of an immediate regeneration of infants in the covenant is the invention of later Reformed "scholastics" such as Maccovius, as is the contention of the "Liberated" theologian C. Vonk (cf. his *Is de tegenwoordige strijd over de wedergeboorte der kinderkens wel noodig?*, i.e., *Is the Present Struggle about the Regeneration of the Little Children indeed Necessary?*). The doctrine was taught by Calvin.

Both the Canons of Dordt (in I/17) and the Westminster Confession (in 10.3) teach the regeneration of the elect children of believing parents who die in their infancy. Granted, the subject in both instances is the special case of children who die in infancy. But these creedal statements make plain, at the very least, that there is nothing intrinsically un-Reformed and heretical about the teaching of an immediate regeneration of elect children of the covenant in their infancy. Nor is it by any means unreasonable to appeal to these creedal declarations concerning infant regeneration in partial support of the teaching that, as a rule, God regenerates the elect children of godly parents in the womb, in infancy, or in earliest childhood.

... the covenant theory
that maintains
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conflicts with the Reformed
tradition.

This is not to be taken as admission that our covenant view is, in fact, that of presupposed regeneration. But it is solid proof that the covenant theory that maintains "presupposed unregeneration" conflicts with the Reformed tradition.

If it were a choice (which is not

the case!) between Abraham Kuyper's doctrine of presupposed regeneration and the covenant doctrine of the "Liberated," the doctrine of presupposed regeneration is much to be preferred. For presupposed regeneration clearly and unequivocally ascribes the regeneration of the child to the sovereign grace of God alone, the infant being as passive in his rebirth as he is in his physical birth, rather than to condition regeneration on the faith of the child and thus to make regeneration the act of the child himself. Presupposed regeneration at least makes the covenant promise and baptism refer to a saving work of God in the baptized infants, as infants, that unites them to Christ, washes away their sins, and gives them the indwelling Spirit of their covenant Head. The "Liberated" conception, in contrast, leaves all the children spiritually dead, excluded from living and saving union with Christ, and merely "legally" adopted as children of God (which adoption can be lost), until such time as they grow up and fulfill the condition of believing.

And presupposed regeneration is not at a loss to explain the experience of countless thousands of covenant children, namely, that they believe on Christ, repent of their sins, and love God in Jesus Christ from their youngest childhood. This is a reality in their lives, as soon as they hear the Word, because they were already born again. But how can a child believe on Christ as He is presented in the Word, if that child has not been born again—if, indeed, that child's regeneration depends upon the child's believing?

There is, however, an alternative. The alternative is the covenant doctrine developed by the Holy Spirit within the Reformed tradition in the PRC. This is the doctrine of the covenant maligned as an "election theology of covenant." This criticism of the covenant view of the PRC by the "Liberated" I will consider in the next, and final, installment of the present series on the covenant of grace. □

— DJE

Letters

■ The Extent of the Atonement

I enjoy Prof. Hanko's articles on the outstanding figures in the history of the Christian church.

I have a question concerning the February 15 issue:

It is striking that Götteschalk, in his defense of his views, not only boldly and courageously defended double predestination (election and reprobation), but also insisted that Christ died on the cross of Calvary only for the elect (p. 235).

Wouldn't this statement be challenged by the last half of John 2:2 in his first general epistle?

Barney Sikma
New York, NY

Response:

Thank you for your kind comments on the articles on outstanding figures in the history of the church.

It is important to understand that Götteschalk did indeed teach what has become known as particular redemption or limited atonement, and that he taught this both because it was taught in Augustine's writings and because it is the doctrine of Scripture.

This truth is also part of the heritage of all Reformed churches. It is specifically taught, e.g., in the Canons of Dordt (II, 8): "For this was the sovereign counsel, and most gracious will and purpose of God the Father, that the quickening and saving efficacy of the most precious death of his Son should extend to all the elect, for bestowing upon them alone the gift of justifying faith ...; that is, it was the will of God, that Christ by the blood of the cross ... should effectually redeem out of every people, tribe, nation, and language, all those, *and those only* (italics is mine), who were from eternity chosen to salvation, and given to him by the Father"

This was also the teaching of Calvin. In one of the rare passages in which he specifically refers to par-

ticular redemption, he is commenting on the very text to which you refer. He says: "Here a question may be raised, how have the sins of the whole world been expiated? I pass by the dotages of the fanatics, who under this pretence extend salvation to all the reprobate, and therefore to Satan himself. Such a monstrous thing deserves no refutation. They who seek to avoid this absurdity, have said that Christ suffered sufficiently for the whole world, but efficiently only for the elect. This solution has commonly prevailed in the schools. Though then I allow that what has been said is true, yet I deny that it is suitable to this passage; for the design of John was no other than to make this benefit common to the whole Church. Then under the word *all* or *whole*, he does not include the reprobate, but designates those who should believe as well as those who were then scattered through various parts of the world. For then is really made evident, as it is meet, the grace of Christ, when it is declared to be the only true salvation of the world." With this interpretation of Calvin I agree.

And this is indeed the teaching of Scripture: "I lay down my life for my sheep" (John 10:15b).

-- H. Hanko

■ The PR Churches in Good Company

Dr. J. DeJong in his letter to the editor published in the *Standard Bearer* (March 15, 1991) accuses the Protestant Reformed Churches and Professor David Engelsma of "perpetuating an 'election theology' which refuses to entertain the Scriptural teaching of faith as the way or condition of salvation and the notion of God's wrath against covenant breakers." While I do not acknowledge that the churches of which I am a member refuse to acknowledge Scripture or

the wrath of God against covenant breakers, I consider the main thrust of this accusation as high praise for our churches. Indeed we stand steadfast in the tradition of our fathers at the Synod of Dordt who likewise refused to acknowledge faith as a condition of salvation.

There were five errors concerning a conditional view of election, salvation, and covenant that were rejected at the Synod of Dordt: I, Rejection of Errors/3, 4, 5; II, Rejection of Errors/3; and V, Rejection of Errors/1. Under the first head of doctrine in the rejection of the third error, we read

The Synod rejects the errors of those who teach: That the good pleasure and purpose of God, of which Scripture makes mention in the doctrine of election, does not consist in this, that God chose certain persons rather than others, but in this that he chose ... *the act of faith* which from its very nature is undeserving, as well as its incomplete obedience, as a *condition of salvation*.

The "Liberated" Churches may object that they are not claiming faith as a condition of salvation to be the same thing as a condition of election, but is not the force of this rejection in the Canons, that it contradicts Scripture to call faith a condition to salvation? Does not the "Liberated" view decisively conflict with II Timothy 1:9?

The fourth error under the first head of doctrine repudiates that in election there are conditions that are demanded, and calls this doctrine Pelagian. And the fifth error under this head of doctrine rejects the teaching,

that faith, the obedience of faith, holiness, godliness, and perseverance are not fruits of the unchangeable election unto glory, *but are conditions*.

Faith is not a condition of salvation; it is a fruit of election. This is the plain language of Scripture and the Confes-

sions. We in the Protestant Reformed Churches should be thankful that our churches have been faithful to the fathers of Dordt in maintaining sovereign election over against conditional salvation.

Against the "Liberated" claim that there are conditions tied to the atonement, the great synod rejected:

those who teach: That Christ by his satisfaction merited neither salvation itself for anyone, nor faith, whereby this satisfaction is effectually appropriated; but that he merited for the Father only the authority or the perfect will to deal again with man, and to prescribe new conditions, as he might desire For these adjudge contemptuously of the death of Christ, do in no wise acknowledge the most important fruit or benefit thereby gained, and bring again out of hell the Pelagian error (Canons, II, Rejection of Errors/3).

Again we see that our Reformed fathers maintain that faith is not a condition of salvation, but rather through the atonement it is a fruit, a result, which Christ effectually obtained for His elect.

Lastly, let us examine the first error rejected under the fifth head of doctrine.

The Synod rejects the errors of those: Who teach: That the perseverance of the true believers is not a fruit of election, or a gift of God, gained by

the death of Christ, but a condition of the new covenant.... For the Holy Scripture testifies that this follows out of election, and is given the elect in virtue of the death, the resurrection, and the intercession of Christ.

Notice here two things. First, the reason that the Synod gives for rejecting perseverance of the saints as a condition of the covenant is that Scripture testifies that perseverance is a fruit of election and obtained through Christ's sacrificial death. Secondly, notice that faith is also a fruit of election and obtained only through Christ's sacrificial death. The proof of this is the Scripture appealed to in this article, Romans 8:32-35, and Canons, I/9. This reasoning of our Reformed fathers equally disqualifies faith as a condition of the covenant.

Thus we see that the Synod of Dordt specifically rejects conditions of election, of salvation, and of the covenant and maintains that "election is the fountain of every saving good; from which proceed faith, holiness, and the other gifts of salvation, and finally eternal life itself, as its fruits and effects..." (I/9).

Finally, I find it ironic in light of the above treatment of conditions by the Synod of Dordt that Dr. DeJong accuses Prof. Engelsma of ignoring passages that contain "conditional language" and "reading his view into

the confessions." It seems to me, and I will let the reader of the confession as guided by the Spirit be the judge, that the only use of conditional language (almost exactly the same language used by the Liberated Churches) in the Canons is descriptions of errors that are rejected. How in the light of these passages one can maintain that Canons II/5 and Canons I/3, 4 suggest that salvation is conditional, I do not know. Certainly, if the Reformed fathers are consistent these passages simply mean that "those who embrace Jesus as Savior" (Canons, I/4) and those who "believe in Christ crucified" (Canons, II/5) are the elect, and therefore as true believers they "may and do obtain assurance according to the measure of their faith" (Canons, V/9).

Let those of us who are members of Protestant Reformed Churches thank our heavenly Father that He has provided us with a church and a heritage that maintains the truth of sovereign election as the sole fount of our faith and salvation and denies any notion of conditional election. Let those in the Canadian Reformed Churches examine their beliefs of the covenant anew listening intently to the Word of God and the expression of the Word of God in the confessions.

Steve Spencer
Ann Arbor, MI

Taking Heed to the Doctrine

Rev. Marvin Kamps

The Purpose of Sacred Scripture

This is the substance of a lecture given by Rev. Kamps in Southwest Church on April 18, 1991. It will appear in two installments, in this and the following issue of the *SB*.

Introduction

Jesus our Lord confronts you and me with a most penetrating question in Luke 18:8: "Nevertheless when the Son of man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth?" This question concerns our activity and the strength

of our faith in God and in His Word. Faith, as James teaches us, is a matter of doing the will of God. "Faith without works is dead." Jesus, therefore, in this passage is calling us to exercise our faith and to walk as His people in the world. Especially is this question

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Rev. Marvin Kamps

of the Lord directed to those who live in the day of apostasy and departure from God's Holy Word. For Jesus said, "When the Son of man cometh" He comes in the end time. In that day, when men shall be despisers of God's Word and of the truth in Christ Jesus, in the day when the church institute will compromise its faith in order to gain recognition and standing in the midst of the world of unbelievers, then, and especially then, must we stand for the cause of Christ. The apostle Paul in Ephesians 6:13 admonishes the believer to "take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand."

My speech this evening is to encourage, to give direction, and to call all of you to walk in faith, and therefore to stand for the cause of God in the world.

We live in evil days. Not merely evil days, is that, from the viewpoint of the development of sin in the world of wicked men. That sin and the manifestation of evil develops in the world ever more and more we all recognize. Ungodly men boldly defy God. They have no regard for God's Word, nor do they even make a pretense of honoring it. But the days are evil from the viewpoint also of the apostasy of the Reformed church community. Sabbath observance is more and more a thing of the past. The Reformed Creeds are forsaken and Arminianism exalted. Free-willism and a general atonement are preached commonly, though contrary to the Reformed Creeds. Few want to hear

of a sovereign election and reprobation. The Christian marriage and home are undermined by decisions of the church allowing its members to re-marry, though they are divorced from their God-given spouses to whom they promised to be faithful till death. Feminism has made its demands upon the church; and the Reformed church community in many places has granted these demands, even though God's Word explicitly forbids it. The church has approved the world's theaters as a place of entertainment for young and old members of the church. The daily walk of many members of the church differs little from that of the unbelieving world. And now in our mother church the theory of evolution is held up as *not contrary* to Scripture and supposedly a better presentation of origins than the historical Christian confession that God created the heavens and the earth in the manner that He Himself has declared in Genesis 1 and 2. These are not minor, but *gross* departures from God's Word and from the witness and testimony of the Reformed church of past times. The day is evil. The question of the Lord challenges us. Will you stand for truth and righteousness? Will Christ find you faithful?

Our approach to those who have been led of God to hear this speech is one of love. We love you as brothers and sisters in the Lord. We take you at your confession. We desire to help and strengthen you in the faith by bringing you God's Word. Our prayer is that you will judge us upon the basis of our confession and commitment to God's Word. We desire to reach out to those who love the Lord according to the Scriptures and call them to stand *with us* in the cause of truth. There is no greater privilege than to stand in the truth of the Lord and to suffer for righteousness' sake (Acts 5:41).

*No church may claim
our love and loyalty
at the expense
of God's Word.*

Finally, we must criticize specifically and by name our mother church this evening. Some of you are undoubtedly members of her fellowship. You, of course, love and are in a measure loyal to her. This is to be expected *and* appreciated by us. We would not have it any other way. Those who have come to the knowledge of their salvation in Christ through her preaching and who have enjoyed the communion of the saints in her fellowship should give thanks to God for His blessings to them through her. Yet we must directly criticize the CRC's publicly stated positions on various issues. To hear that criticism may indeed hurt and be psychologically painful for you. The same would be true if I had to hear valid criticism of the PRC. But we must be reminded that our love of and loyalty to an institution of the church on earth may not transcend our love and loyalty to God's Holy Word. That would be sin. We are called to honor God's Word above all. No church may claim our love and loyalty at the expense of God's Word. We, with the reformer Martin Luther, are captive to the infallible Word of God. This Word alone we are to love, honor, and obey. Thus we criticize our mother church in a deep love of God's people in her midst. This is not the day to keep silent and be tolerant. Our mother church leads God's people to ruin.

What Is the Bible?

Briefly stated, the Bible is the written, divinely, and infallibly inspired record of Jehovah God's revelation in Christ Jesus. The Bible brings us God's revelation in Christ concerning His eternal and gracious love of the elect church in Jesus, our Savior and Lord. As such the Bible is to be distinguished from God's revelation in nature or so-called general revelation. This distinction is expressed in our Belgic Confession, Articles 2 and 3. The Bible makes known to us who God is. It declares to us God's attributes of holiness and righteousness and love and grace. The Bible not only declares who God is but also what He has done in time

and history to accomplish our salvation. The Old Testament declares the promise of the coming of Christ Jesus as our Messiah. The New Testament records the birth of the Son of God in our flesh by means of the virgin Mary. It records the Lord's perfect obedience even unto death for the salvation of those given Him of the Father from all eternity.

But it does more than that. It testifies of our creation in God's image and likeness, and of our willful disobedience and rebellion in Adam, and of our depravity and proneness to sin and disobedience. The Bible records God's commandments to His people and church. It holds before us the *way of life* (John 14:6). It calls us to count the cost of discipleship (Luke 14:25-33). The mighty Lord Jesus, through the means of Scripture, commands us to enter in at the straight gate and walk along the narrow pathway unto perfect salvation (Matt. 7:13).

*Does the Bible ...
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to reject?*

Yet the question remains, how are we to view this message of Scripture? Is it so, that this message is the same as a message of men: that one can take it or leave it? Does it come to us with authority and power or not? Is it beyond a shadow of doubt true and faithful in all that it declares? Does the Word damn those who will not heed it? Can one ignore, with impunity, the Bible? Does the Bible tell us what we must believe and confess and hold for truth, or does it merely offer for our consideration certain ideas and propositions which we are at liberty to reject?

Beloved in the Lord, what kind of a book is this by which we are judged daily and will all be judged finally in the day of Christ's return?

Let us be reminded of the at-

tributes of Scripture. We confess that one of these attributes is that the Bible is clear, or perspicuous. It does not hold forth its message with ambiguity. The Bible is not a book of confusion. Though there are, admittedly, difficult passages in God's Word, these are readily unfolded and explained by simpler passages of the Sacred text. Secondly, we confess that the Bible is absolutely necessary for the knowledge of faith in Christ and for the right and full knowledge of God. Without God's revelation we cannot know God. God must first speak in order that we may respond to Him in faith. The Bible is absolutely necessary to our salvation and joy in faith before the God of heaven and earth. Thirdly, we must confess the sufficiency of Sacred Scripture. This book, with its commandments and institutions, is all we need. We need no extra-biblical revelations. The Bible is sufficient for our salvation and life of faith.

There remain two attributes of Scripture that need to be dealt with even more emphatically tonight in order that you may be encouraged and led to do what we all by nature do not want to do. We must stand in an evil day. We must walk *by faith and in the faith*. In order to do that we must be ever conscious of, and committed to, these remaining attributes of Scripture. These are the infallibility of and the authority of the Bible. These attributes are all-important, in order that we may have the spiritual strength and inward peace to do what is right according to God's Word.

If one denies the infallibility of God's Word, then he feels *free* to set aside the commandments of the apostles by appealing to the fact of their limitations as authors of Scripture. This is done repeatedly. For example, the apostle Paul forbade women to serve as officebearers in the church institute (I Cor. 14:34, 35 and I Tim. 2:11-15). But this is set aside as not binding upon the church today. Here, it is alleged, the author of Scripture was merely reflecting the cultural perspective of his day. The Bible then is not infallible.

Again, Scripture declares that God's institution of marriage is for life. It declares that one may not forsake his God-given spouse for another. Yet the church, in many places, permits what Jesus forbids. Jesus forbade adultery. The Lord instructed us that "whoso marrieth her which is put away doth commit adultery" (Matt. 5:32; 19:9). Few today listen to that instruction. What is the conclusion to be drawn: the Bible is fallible because it is *too idealistic* about marriage. The Bible is not *realistic* about life and therefore may be ignored at this point.

Besides, the Bible is wrong about creation and God's works during the six days of creation. The Bible is not trustworthy about these things. The Bible is wrong about a world-wide flood in Noah's day. The Bible gives only a fallible account. Wherever men of this world can show us a better way, this way is to be received, for God is still revealing Himself, it is erroneously claimed. Where men enlighten us about marriage and the home, or about the place of women in society and the church, or about the origins of our universe, here we must walk the way of twentieth-century learning, and feel justified when we claim the Bible to be in error.

Secondly, of necessity we must ever reckon with the authority of God's Word. When we know that the message of Scripture is God's Word, then, above all, we are to receive it as absolutely authoritative. Authoritative for all our life. Every aspect of Scripture comes to us bearing this awesome character of authority. From Genesis to Revelation we are met with the one all-authoritative Word. If one would compromise or deny that authority, let him cease to call the Bible God's Word. Today we find people everywhere paying lip service to the Bible as God's Word ... but not submitting to its authority. They will not obey the Word. This is self-deceit. If one rejects the authority of God's Word in whole or in part he is rejecting the proposition that the Bible is God's Word. That is why the apostle John warned that those who add or

subtract from the Word, their names shall be blotted out of the book of life (Rev. 22:18, 19).

How is it possible that this Word is infallible and authoritative? The answer is: because it was written by holy men of God's choosing and of God's preparation, who were inspired and empowered to pen His Word by the Holy Spirit. It is not man's word. The Bible is God's Word. Recently I read the following stirring words from the pen of a Reformed Episcopalian theologian:

Strong in that mighty word, we trample under foot all such sayings

as "the Bible contains the word of God," leaving man to decide by his human inspiration, what is and what is not God's Divine instruction. Our watch word, as it has been through the ages past in the church of God, is this: The Bible is the Word of God, so simply, so sheerly God's Word, that even when it records the errors and sophisms of men, to the lies of the devil, the record, in all its parts, is the Lord's record, to serve distinctly the Lord's purpose (*Episcopal Recorder*, December, 1990, p. 9 by the Rev. J. Howard Smith, D.D.).

In this connection I would like to say something of the power of the

Word. Men in our day take the Word very lightly. Departure from the Word is minimized. But remember this please: the Word is powerful. Powerful to bless the repentant believer and powerful to harden the impenitent. Think of Jeremiah 23:29, "Is not my Word like a fire? saith the Lord; and like a hammer that breaketh the rock in pieces?" The preaching of the Word is a "savor of life unto life" and a "savor of death unto death" (II Cor. 2:16, 17). Woe to him that trifles with the Word! □

... to be continued

In His Fear

Rev. Arie denHartog

Returning to the Lord

In our two previous articles we have considered something of the reality and nature of spiritual decline in the life of the child of God, and some of the common causes of such declension. Every sincere child of God will confess to periods of spiritual decline in his life. Though periods of spiritual decline are normal for the Christian they are something that he needs to be very concerned about. Spiritual decline takes place in varying degrees. Some backsliding is far more serious than others. But every child of God has within his sinful nature the danger of decline and of falling. The Scriptures warn us, "Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall" (I Cor. 10:12). There are examples in the Bible of some of the greatest saints of God who have grievously fallen and who even for a long time departed from the Lord. The classic examples are, of course, those of David in his sin with

Bathsheba and Peter in his denying the Lord. David was for almost a full year separated from the Lord and in a state of serious spiritual depression. The Christian must treat all decline in his life seriously. If this decline is not arrested it will grow worse and worse. The Christian cannot stand still in his life. He either progresses in sanctification, in the knowledge and love of God, or he declines, his heart grows cold, and he departs further and further from the Lord.

There is hope for the child of God who realizes that he is in a state of spiritual declension. That hope is the very heart of the gospel. Our hope is in the Lord and His perfect work of salvation. Our hope is in His faithfulness to His everlasting covenant of grace with His people. Our hope is in the unfailing mercies of God. "It is of the Lord's mercies that we are not consumed, because his compassions fail not. They are new every morning: great is thy faithfulness" (Lam. 3:22). Our hope is in God's perfect work in us. Through the wonderful work of regeneration by His Spirit, God has created in us a life that will never die.

It cannot die. It is an incorruptible life. Therefore though the child of God suffers periods of spiritual decline it is impossible that he shall ever perish.

The Lord is the restorer of His people. He always takes the initiative to bring His people back to Himself. If this were not the case there would be no hope for us. If the Lord would leave us in our sins and in our backsliding then we would surely perish everlastingly. But the Lord seeks His wandering sheep. He restores those who have fallen. He strengthens the weak and the feeble. He restores the souls of His people. "The Lord redeemeth the soul of his servants: and none of them that trust in him shall be desolate" (Ps. 34:22). Several of the parables which our Lord taught when He was on earth beautifully illustrate the mercy and love of God to seek and to recover those who have departed from Him. Think of the parable of the lost sheep where the Lord leaves the ninety and nine to seek and find the one that has gone astray. And when He has found His straying sheep, with great joy He car-

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ries it upon His shoulder, in great compassion seeing its weakness and its own helplessness. And so the Lord brings back His own. Think of the parable commonly called the parable of the prodigal son. In that parable we read that God is so full of love and compassion to receive back His erring son that we read of God the Father seeing His son yet a great way off and running to meet him and falling on his neck and kissing him. What a beautiful picture of the Lord's restoration of His wayward sons.

Many are the loving, urgent, and inviting passages of Scripture in which the Lord Himself earnestly calls His people who have departed from Him to return again to Him. "Seek ye the Lord while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near: Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him: and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon" (Is. 55:6, 7). "Return, thou backsliding Israel, saith the Lord; and I will not cause mine anger to fall upon you: for I am merciful, saith the Lord, and I will not keep mine anger for ever Turn, O backsliding children, saith the Lord; for I am married unto you: and I will take you one of a city, and two of a family, and I will bring you to Zion: And I will give you pastors according to mine heart, which shall feed you with knowledge and understanding" (Jer. 3:12, 14, 15). "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (I John 1:8, 9). These wonderful words of the gospel (and hundreds more could easily be quoted) stand as a great encouragement for the child of God to return unto the Lord. The gospel of God is even more than mere outward encouragement to His saints to return to Him. It is the Word of God's effectual power and love whereby He draws His people back to Himself.

The way of return from backsliding begins with a recognition and acknowledgment of sin. The Word of

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God tells the Christian in the state of decline, "Remember from whence thou hast fallen and repent." In calling His people to return from their backslidings, through Jeremiah the prophet in the passages we quoted above, the Lord commands, "only acknowledge thine iniquity, that thou hast transgressed against the Lord thy God" (Jer. 3:13). "Let the wicked man forsake his way and the unrighteous man his thoughts." This is a truth that we know so clearly, because it is told us so very often in Scripture, yet it is so easy to ignore. One of the chief reasons for spiritual decline in our life is impenitent sin, seeking to cover up, or hide or deny our sin. We can so easily become dull to our sin and so accustomed to it that we fail to recognize its great seriousness. The only way back to the Lord is the way of repentance. Repentance must begin with a sincere sorrow over our sin in which we understand profoundly how grievously our sin offends the holy and righteous God who has saved us. Spiritual revival cannot come unless we daily humble ourselves in repentance before God, in dust and ashes, because of the greatness of our sin. How little there is in modern Christendom of real sorrow over the sin and wickedness of man, and of recognition of its great seriousness, how dreadfully offensive it is to God. In most of the modern-day church there is more and more the imagination that sin is something of the past. There is a glorying and boasting in the goodness of man and the greatness of his deeds. No one who has such vain imaginations in his heart can ever dwell with the holy God.

Continued sinfulness often makes necessary the chastening hand of the Lord in our lives. When we are

chastened of the Lord we must humble ourselves under His gracious hand. The Lord does not chasten us in order to destroy us or in order finally to condemn us. He chastens His people in love to correct them and bring them to repentance. He chastens His people to cause them to return unto Him and to teach them to fear before Him. Though not all trouble and trials in our lives are chastisement from the Lord, we ought always to consider whether the Lord is chastening us when He sends us trouble and affliction. The Lord chastens us in love and mercy with compassion for our weaknesses. We ought not to become discouraged when chastened of the Lord but rather turn again to the Lord and learn the riches of His grace and mercy. We ought to rejoice and be thankful unto the Lord that through loving chastisement the Lord brings His children back to Himself.

The way back to God involves the recognition of the idolatry of our modern age and the urgent need of forsaking that idolatry. The Bible calls the materialism and covetousness of our age idolatry. It is an idolatry every bit as serious and God-denying as the idolatry of heathen lands. Many who call themselves Christians today are far more enslaved to this idolatry than they realize. The Lord solemnly warns: "Ye cannot serve God and mammon." It is impossible for spiritual life to thrive in the heart that is full of covetousness and materialism. There is no other way back than forsaking all our idols and seeking the Lord as God alone.

The way of returning to God involves separation from this ungodly world. The love of the world destroys love for God. He that loves the world is an enemy of God. That is why the Scriptures say so loudly, "Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers; for what fellowship hath righteousness and unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness? And what concord hath Christ with Belial and what part hath he that believeth with an infidel? and what agreement hath the temple of God with idols" (II Cor. 6:14, 15).

True revival will come in the church of God and in the lives of God's people only when they recognize again the sharp antithesis that there is between the truth of God and the lie of the world, and between the kingdom of the Lord and the kingdoms of this world. The modern-day church under the influence of the evil one is working to blur more and more the distinction between the church and the world, and is preaching that one can virtually adopt any and all of the wicked philosophies of the world and still be a Christian. Every member of the church is in danger of being at least subtly influenced by the teachings of modern-day apostate Christianity. Spiritual revival will come only in the way of absolutely forsaking the world. The Lord calls us to come out from among them and be separate. Only when we do that will the promise of God be ours that He will be our God and make us His temple and dwell in our midst and be a Father unto us and we shall be His children.

Spiritual restoration in the life of the child of God comes only in the way of earnest, prayerful, and diligent striving against sin and wickedness, against the temptations of the devil, and the weakness of our own sinful nature. Because of our sinful nature we can easily be led away by

the temptations of the world. Sin ensnares and enslaves and brings a man into bondage. The devil by means of temptation seeks to lead the child of God away from God, to destroy his spiritual life and bring him to final ruin. The Lord calls His saints constantly to fight, to strive, and to labor earnestly. These admonitions do not deny the truth of sovereign grace. God does not save and preserve us as machines or automatons. He calls us to work out our own salvation with fear and trembling for it is God who works in us to will and to do of His good pleasure.

The Christian is restored only through the cross of the Lord Jesus Christ. He must come again and again to that cross to seek the forgiveness of his many sins. There is no other power than the power of the cross that can revive and strengthen and restore the child of God, the same cross that saved him in the beginning. God calls us to consider the great wonder of the cross. He calls us ever and again to remember the amazing sacrifice of perfect love and obedience that Christ offered for us on the cross. The true, spiritual, constant remembrance of the cross draws the child of God back to the Lord, fills his heart again with love for God and constrains him to live not unto himself but unto the Lord that has re-

deemed him at such a great cost.

Revival comes in the life of the child of God when he remembers again the wonderful truth of the Word of God and the gospel of Jesus Christ. The gospel reveals the glory and majesty, the sovereignty and faithfulness and holiness of our God. Revival does not come in a mystical way in the life of the child of God. It comes when the child of God renews his consideration of the gospel of God, the doctrine of salvation and the glory of God that is revealed in it. This means faithful attendance at the worship services where the Word of God is preached; and it means diligent, personal, private study of God's Word in our homes. Returning to the Lord is returning to truth and to doctrine, the doctrine of God and of His Son Jesus Christ found in the Bible. This is the means that the Spirit of God uses to restore His saints and bring them back to lively rich fellowship with Himself and His Son Jesus Christ. The child of God is restored when once again he stands transfixed and amazed in wonderment at the glory of God and His Son Jesus Christ.

May the Lord by His almighty and wonderful grace and Holy Spirit turn us again unto Himself that we might forever experience and enjoy the blessedness of His knowledge and fellowship. □

The Day of Shadows

Rev. John Heys

Joyful Princes in God's Kingdom

Last time our attention in this department was called to The Proper Weeping and Laughing. Now we do well to delve a bit more deeply into that proper laughing.

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The reason for this is that the child which our gracious God gave to Abraham and Sarah was called Isaac. And that name "Isaac" means "laughter." We must then also remember and emphasize the fact that our God gave him that name. Abraham and Sarah did not choose that name. Our God told them that his name must be Isaac (Gen. 17:19).

Here we have a shadow of what

will be given us fully and everlastingly, when Christ Jesus our Savior returns to bring us with body and soul into the new Jerusalem. There we shall laugh fully and everlastingly. For laughing is expressing joy and gladness.

Turn then to Psalm 136:1-3. There the psalmist declares, after Israel was brought back from the Babylonian captivity: "When the Lord

turned again the captivity of Zion, we were like them that dream. Then was our mouth filled with laughter, and our tongue with singing: then said they among the heathen, The Lord hath done great things for them. The Lord hath done great things for us; whereof we are glad."

A similar beautiful truth, which in the deepest sense looks for the return of Christ, we find in Psalm 53:6. There we read, "Oh that the salvation of Israel were come out of Zion! When God bringeth back the captivity of his people, Jacob shall rejoice and Israel shall be glad."

Let us then take a firm grip upon the blessed truth which Scripture presents in Galatians 6:16, where we read, "And as many as walk according to this rule, peace be on them, and mercy, and upon the Israel of God." That word Israel does not refer merely to the elect seed of Abraham and Isaac. The whole church of God, all the believers, are Israelites. And that name means "Princes of God." Isaac's son Jacob had his name changed by God to "Israel." Plainly the word "Israel" in the above verse refers to all the elect. A prince is the son of a king. All of us believers then are princes whose Father is the King of kings and Lord of lords (1 Tim. 6:15).

Now then, already we should:
Sing a new song to Jehovah
For the wonders He hath wrought;
His right hand and arm most holy
Triumph to His cause have
brought.

In His love and tender mercy
He hath made salvation known,
In the sight of every nation
He His righteousness hath shown.

(Psalter # 261, based on Psalm 98)

In this life we do have a beginning of that joy and laughter. But it is a shadow of the bliss, the blessedness, the joy and glory which shall be ours when Christ returns. Let us not forget that a shadow is always caused by a reality. For us a beautiful, fleecy, white cloud casts its shadow upon us in our present life (Rev. 14:14).

Think once of that white cloud which our gracious God used, of which we read in Exodus 13:21, 22.

Our God, we read, gave before Israel by day "a pillar of cloud to lead them in the way; and by night a pillar of fire to give them light: to go by day and night. He took not away the pillar of the cloud by day, nor the pillar of fire by night, from before the people." Here is a shadow of God leading His people, His church, into the Kingdom of Heaven with all its glory.

Get also the comforting truth as we read it in Exodus 14:19. There we read concerning that cloud: "And the angel of God, which went before the camp of Israel, removed and went before their face, and stood behind them." Thus not only do we have a cloud before us to lead us to heavenly glory, but we also have that work of God's grace whereby He keeps away the devil and world of unbelievers who try to keep us from seeking the kingdom of heaven and its righteousness. By that cloud Pharaoh and his army were kept from recapturing Israel, to bring them back to slavery in Egypt. What a wonderful God! And what an encouraging truth with the comfort of a sure salvation!

Yes, there are dark clouds which speak of God's wrath, and of a coming storm. When He sent that flood in the days of Noah, He sent a very dark cloud that brought the rain and flood that killed the whole world, while His church was saved in the ark. Look up 1 Peter 3:20, 21.

Now, turn to Genesis 9:8-17. After Noah and his family landed safely back on this earth, our God still had that dark cloud in the sky. He had cleared the sky where Noah and his family settled upon the mountains of Ararat. And He brought forth a beautiful rainbow for Noah and his family to see before that dark cloud of His wrath. He told Noah, and also us, that this rainbow is a sign and picture of His covenant, which is with us through His Son, our Savior.

Get this! And remember it! Whenever you see a rainbow you should laugh in your soul, and sing of the mercy and grace of our God in Christ. That rainbow is an arc reaching down from heaven (that is, from God) with seven beautiful colors. That

rainbow as an arc comes down on the two groups of people in His church: the believing Jews and the believing Gentiles. Behind that rainbow is that dark cloud of His holy wrath against unbelieving Jews and Gentiles.

Sing therefore:

When in His might the Lord
Arose to set us free;
And Zion was restored
From her captivity,
In transports then of joy and mirth
We praise the Lord of all the earth
(Psalter #358, based on Psalm 126)

That which is humanly impossible God realizes in His grace. Abraham and Sarah could not bring forth a son. Yet our God gave them the strength to do so when Abraham was 100 years old and Sarah was 90 years old.

Let us then, as pointed out last time in this department, listen to our God and not to the devil. The ungodly, unbelieving world presents the devilish idea of evolution, which denies creation by our God. Shall we then say that we are listening to God, while we are sinfully letting the devil teach us through unbelievers? Can we sinlessly combine God's Word with Satan's, and then insist on theistic evolution? Dare we add to what God says in His Word what Satan says through the lie of evolution?

Are we revealing faith in God, when we maintain what Satan says through unbelievers, whom he has under his devilish control? May we with Satan say that the first eleven chapters of Genesis do not present historical fact, when our God refers to incidents and people in those chapters, in Hebrews 11; and through the author of that epistle He speaks of Abel, Enoch, and Noah as men of faith? They are not there presented as fictional characters. (Read Heb. 11:1-7.)

And what about the flood? Does not the flood explain why our earth is as it is? And 1 Corinthians 15:45 speaks of Adam as the first man, not as a fictitious character in what is a story but not a fact.

Did our God in six days create the heavens and the earth with all they contain? Or did things evolve

over billions of years? Did it take our God that long to begin to bring forth the church of His Son? And are we spiritually, and in love to God, willing to add to His Word what the devil says through the ungodly? Never, *no never* should we be glad and laugh spiritually because of what the servants of the devil say and teach about God's creation!

Let us read that awesome truth in Jeremiah 23:32. There we read, "Behold, I am against them that prophesy false dreams, saith the Lord, and do tell them and cause my people to

err by their lies, and by their lightness; yet I sent them not, nor commanded them; therefore they shall not profit this people at all, saith the Lord." The dreams of evolution are false dreams, and our God is against all evolutionists, who dream about this earth rather than search the Scriptures. Let us take a firm hold on all that God wrote in Genesis 1-11 and receive His Word as the truth.

We must laugh and sing under the beautiful white cloud of God's grace in Christ. And when we appear before the judgment seat of Christ (II

Cor. 15:10) no one will dare to combine God's Word with Satan's philosophies which he wrought in man.

Oh, that blessed cloud of God's grace! How wonderful it is to be joyful princes of our God, and sing of what He taught us in His Word. Let us thank Him for having given us His Word of truth, and delivered us from Satan's lies; so that we do begin to live as His princes; and will become perfectly holy princes in His coming kingdom. □

A Word Fitly Spoken

Rev. Dale Kuiper

Scandal!

Although the word "scandal" or "scandalize" does not appear in our Authorized Versions, the Greek word *skandalon* could well be transliterated. It is sometimes translated "offence" and sometimes "stumblingblock." The Septuagint (the Greek translation of the Old Testament) uses *skandalon* for the Hebrew word which means to trap, to hinder, to be the cause of ruin.

In the New Testament, Jesus is the great offence and stumblingblock; He is always a scandal to natural men. The Jews were offended by this carpenter, this son of Mary, who had wisdom and did mighty works (Mark 6:2, 3). Peter was an offence to Jesus because he denied the necessity of the cross and evidenced a satanic spirit (Matt. 16:23). A sign of the end of the world and the second coming of Christ is that more than ever before men are offended by Him (Matt. 24:10). Those that seek righteousness by the works of the law stumble at the stone that God has laid in Zion (Rom. 9:32, 33).

Now Jesus as a mere man is not an offence to any one. Jesus, the good man of Nazareth, as a reformer, teacher, and example, does not cause anyone anywhere to stumble. But Jesus according to the Scriptures, Christ crucified, and the preaching of Christ crucified, that is the scandal! The preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness, and the preaching of Christ crucified is a stumblingblock to the Jews and foolishness to the Greeks (I Cor. 1:18, 23). When Christ is set forth crucified, as the only hope of salvation, then people are scandalized and the preachers are persecuted. But if He be preached in some other way, as a partial Savior perhaps, as one who saves those who are willing to be saved perhaps, as one who saves those who are circumcised or do other works of the law perhaps; then is the offence of the cross ceased (Gal. 5:11).

Why is the preaching of Christ crucified such a scandal? There are three reasons: 1) The preaching of the cross speaks of sin, of the transgression of God's holy law, of accountability for these sins, of guilt and liability to everlasting punishment. 2) The preaching of the cross speaks of man's inability to do the smallest thing to save himself. God sent Christ to do what no man could do or even will to do. 3) The preaching of the cross speaks of the grace of God -- amazing, unmerited, and powerful! When Christ crucified is preached, there may be no thought of merit, wages, or works. The only possible conclusion anyone may draw, having heard the blessed gospel, is that God saves in sovereign grace. He saves through His gift of faith; it is by faith that it might be of grace!

Some are appointed to stumble over this Rock (I Pet. 2:8) and to be crushed by Him. Others fall down before Zion's Stone, and find in Him their soul's satisfaction now and forever. To chosen, covenant generations He is precious! He that believeth in Him shall never be confounded. □

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Go Ye Into All the World

Rev. Ronald VanOverloop

Mission Principles (V)

The Executor

Previous articles have presented some of the principles of missions.

First, the work of missions and evangelism is a part of the very essence of the church. It is not an option, which you can add on to the church if it can be afforded and if it is desirable. Therefore, the true church of Jesus Christ performs missions as an on-going act of obedience to her Lord. Doing her best with the means God has given the church brings the good news of Jesus Christ to all whom God in His providence puts in her path.

Secondly, the supreme motive for going "into all the world" is to glorify God by proclaiming Him as the One who is so abundantly worthy to be known and praised for who and what He is. Other motivations are great gratitude for the free gift of salvation, love for and conviction of the truth, love for our neighbor, and confidence in the irresistible work of the Holy Spirit and in the power of the preaching.

Thirdly, the task of the church in her mission work is to *teach*, not to save souls, nor to improve self-esteem, nor principally to create church growth, nor to make a conservative citizenship of an earthly nation. She is to teach the truths of God's Word which bear the fruit of disciples of

Christ, who are ready and willing to observe all the things Jesus commands them. This task is gigantic.

When we see that the task is so great, then it is no wonder that we ask ourselves, Are we sufficient for the task? Is there anyone who is able? Who is sufficient for these things?

* * * * *

The work of missions and evangelism is principally the work of the sovereign Lord, *Jesus Christ*. He is the One who executes this great work. He is the only One who can perform, effect, and realize the Plan of God.

First, let us gather some proof for this assertion.

The Bible plainly teaches both that Jesus is the sovereign King over all and that He is the Head of the church. Remember the intimate relationship between the work of missions and the church: it is only the church which does mission work, and the objects of that mission work are taught to be disciples, which implies church membership.

At His ascension into heaven the Lord said, "All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth" (Matt. 28:18). Paul also speaks of this sovereign dominion of Jesus when he writes that God "set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places, far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come: and hath put all things under his feet" (Eph. 1:20-22).

This last mentioned passage continues, informing us that there is a relationship between Jesus' sovereign dominion and His headship over the

church. "And (God) hath put all things under his feet and gave him to be the Head over all things *to the church*, which is his body." It is as the Head of the church that the Lord Jesus exercises His great authority and power.

In a passage which is very similar in content, Peter and the other apostles told the Sanhedrin that it was Jesus whom God "hath exalted with his right hand to be a Prince and Savior, for to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins" (Acts 5:31). Jesus was exalted with the purpose of being able to give repentance and forgiveness of sins to His people.

No wonder it is the "Lord" who opened Lydia's heart (Acts 16:14). And no wonder He says that no one can "pluck them out of my hand" (John 10:28).

*The principal agent
in the performance
of the work of missions
and evangelism
is the sovereign
Lord, Jesus Christ.*

God eternally determined to gather unto Himself a people *in Christ*, which is the biblical doctrine of election (Eph. 1:4-6; II Thess. 2:13).

The Heidelberg Catechism not only instructs us to believe that it is the Lord Jesus Christ who is the principal agent in the work of missions and evangelism, but also teaches that those objects of evangelism which are saved and brought into the church had been elected unto such member-

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ship. It does so in Question and Answer 54.

Q. 54. What believest thou concerning the "holy Catholic church" of Christ?

A. That the Son of God from the beginning to the end of the world, gathers, defends, and preserves to himself by his Spirit and word, out of the whole human race a church chosen to everlasting life, agreeing in true faith.

Still another passage of Scripture shows that ultimately the work and the success of gathering the church is the Lord's. "I will build my church: and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it" (Matt. 16:18).

As a last (but certainly not the least) proof for the truth that the Lord Jesus Christ is the principal agent in the work of missions and evangelism, I point to Acts 2:47, "And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved."

* * * * *

It is most fitting and even necessary that our Lord Jesus be the Executor of missions and of building and adding to the church. It is that for three reasons.

First, only He *knows who* should belong to the church. Not everyone belongs to the church. Only the elect (the ones given Him of the Father from before the foundation of the world) belong. Only the redeemed (the ones He so painfully purchased with His suffering and death) belong to the church. It is obvious that only Jesus knows who they are. So it is He who adds "such as should be saved." God has "given him power over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to as many as thou (God) hast given him" (John 17:2).

Secondly, only the Lord Jesus Christ has the *right* to add to the church, making her evangelism fruitful. No one else has that right. This is His right because He only is the Lord and Head of the church (Eph. 1:22, 23). This is His right because the church is His purchased property, His wife, and His body (Acts 20:28; Eph. 5:15; I Cor. 3:23).

And thirdly, it is fitting and necessary that the Lord does the adding

to the church because only He has the *power* to add to the church. Those added to the church are those being saved, and only Christ has the power to save. All men are naturally darkened in their minds, perverse in their wills, and hard in their hearts. As the slaves of sin they cannot save themselves. The Lord's power is the irresistible Holy Spirit. His Word is the sovereign Word of the Gospel which enlightens the mind, sweetly inclines the will, and softens the hard heart (Eze. 36:26ff.).

* * * * *

What are some implications to be drawn from the fact that the principal agent in the work of evangelism and missions is the Lord Jesus Christ?

The obvious has to be said: people do not add themselves or others to the church. Believers did not add themselves. Notice the use of the passive voice in Acts 2:41, 47; 4:14: the "were added." Nor do other humans add to the church those being saved. The apostles did not add them. And certainly some modern high-powered evangelist does not. To attribute the growth of the church either to a minister or to the congregation may be very flattering, but it is a temptation of the devil. The church and every individual believer must be aware of the constant danger of thinking that man's efforts, programs, and funds accomplish this awesome task. It is only "the Lord" who does the adding.

All the glory for any positive fruit of any mission or evangelistic effort belongs to the Lord Jesus Christ. This is the Reformed faith.

* * * * *

How does the Lord add to the church? How does Jesus execute the task of missions?

He uses means. One is His Spirit. Another is the Word and the preaching of that Word. For proof I would point to the context of Acts 2:47 ("The Lord added to the church daily"), which speaks of two major events: the Spirit of Christ was poured out upon the church, and Peter preached. Also I would refer you to the quote which I gave earlier from the Heidel-

berg Catechism. The Son of God gathers, defends, and preserves a church, and He does this "by his Spirit and word."

First, Jesus uses His Spirit. (While I will treat them separately, remember that the Word and Spirit may never be separated the one from the other.)

It was because of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit that some three thousand were added, and others were added daily to the church. The Holy Spirit of Christ made Peter's sermon effective: many "were pricked in their heart." Man can prick another man's skin. Man may even be able to irritate another's conscience. But only the Holy Spirit can prick a heart, and can bring about re-birth. Regeneration is being "born of the Spirit" (John 3:8), and it is called the "renewing of the Holy Ghost" (Tit. 3:5).

*That Christ is the One
who adds to the church
does not make the church
inactive and passive.*

It is God the Holy Spirit who is always responsible for the efficacious application of the Word of God to the hearts of elect believers. He opens the closed and softens the hardened heart, He infuses new qualities into the will, and He illuminates the mind. Then He actuates and strengthens these faculties so they bring forth the fruits of obedience to God's commandments (John 3:5; Acts 16:14).

The second means Jesus uses in adding to and building His church is the preaching of the Word of God by the church. That Christ is the One who adds to the church does not make the church inactive and passive. The sovereign Lord uses His body, the instituted church. He gives the church the responsibility of preaching the gospel and of praying that the Spirit will bind the Word on the hearts of men. Via its officebearers, the church is busy in the sending forth and supervision of the preaching of the Gospel (Acts 13:1-3; Rom. 10:13-17).

It is not with gimmicks, nor with charisma or friendliness or four spiritual laws that the Lord adds. He uses the instrumentality of the pure preaching of the Word of God. The Lord has determined in His good pleasure to tie Himself to the use of the preaching of His Word.

This may seem "foolishness" to many. It did in Paul's day, and it certainly does in ours. But we must be very careful that we do not attempt (pretend) to be wiser than God. "It pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe." Remember that "the foolishness of God is wiser than men." Therefore "we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumblingblock, and unto the Greeks foolishness; but unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God." These quotes are from I Corinthians 1:21-25.

* * * * *

And the Lord is pleased also to use the instrumentality of the office of believer. This office functions as an extension of the preaching of the Word.

The Bible teaches that all believers have the responsibility, in their own station and calling and according to their gifts, to let their light so shine before men that their heavenly Father may be glorified (Matt. 5:14-16; Ps. 51:13; Prov. 11:30; I Pet. 3:1, 2).

The beginning of the fulfillment of this calling occurs when each believer, out of the grateful experience of his own salvation, supports and delights in the preaching of Christ crucified every Sabbath. Out of the consciousness of what God has done

and continues to do for him through the preaching of the good news, he prays for the preacher, for the preaching, and for the efficacy of the preaching.

Secondly, each believer is used of the Lord, the principal agent in all evangelism, when he gives himself actively to work for the healthy life in his congregation. Notice that the statement that Jesus adds to the church (acts 2:47) comes as a conclusion to the description of the life of the church in verses 42-46. This passage mentions three things, all of which make for a healthy spiritual life in any congregation. Every believer plays a very important role in the development and maintenance of these three characteristics.

One, the church at Jerusalem was characterized by steadfast continuance in the apostles' doctrine. The whole congregation took a lively interest in the Word, coming together for the hearing and discussion of that Word eagerly and expectantly. Each member lived in the Word. And each member lived out of it.

Two, the church was (and is to be) characterized by the rich fellowship of the members. This is expressed chiefly in their gathering often for the worship of God under the preaching and sacraments. It is also expressed by the love shown to the poor members, with each member living in the consciousness that he is a part of the one body of Christ.

Three, the church was (and is to be) characterized by pious fear of God. This makes for a spiritual church. Then continuance in doctrine is not dead orthodoxy or mere formalism,

but love of God and of His Word. Each believer reverences the holy things of God's kingdom and cause.

After taking care of things at home (each believer fulfilling the calling to maintain the spiritual health of his congregation), then we look outside of the home (evangelism and witnessing). Remember, that if things are not well at home, we cannot expect God's blessing upon our mission efforts. God can give His blessing anyway, but usually He causes us to reap what we sow.

Thirdly, each believer is used of the Lord when by his conduct and speech he witnesses of the truth to his neighbor. It is the preaching which continually motivates him in his witnessing. It is the preaching which gives him the contents of his witnessing. And it is to the preaching that he seeks to bring others.

This great calling of each believer is a subject which I want to treat in a later installment in this rubric. Meanwhile I would recommend an excellent treatment of this subject in a sermon by the Rev. Charles Terpstra. A tape of this sermon may be obtained for \$3 from:

Protestant Reformed Church
16511 South Park Avenue
South Holland, IL 60473
Ask for Tape #739B.

* * * * *

To conclude, the One who executes the Plan of God in the building of His church is the Lord Jesus Christ. It is He who gathers, defends, and preserves a church. He does so by His Word and Spirit.

Worthy is the Lamb!! □

I Shall Be Satisfied

After the storms and the trials are
past,
After the shadows which sorrow has
cast,
And I am at home with my Savior at
last,
I shall be satisfied.

In that bright world where there
cometh no night,
Where ev'ry hope is perfected in light,
When faith shall be changed into
wonderful sight,
I shall be satisfied.

When I awake in that City of Gold,
When those I loved I again shall be-
hold,
Amid all that rapture and beauty un-
told,
I shall be satisfied.

Standard Bearer,
March 1, 1933

A Cloud of Witnesses

Prof. Herman Hanko

Anselm of Canterbury

The Middle Ages, from the time of Augustine, bishop of Hippo, to the time of the great Reformation, was a period of spiritual darkness. The Roman Catholic Church ruled supreme in Europe. It is difficult, if not impossible, to find the church during much of this troubled period. It is perhaps to this period, along with others, that our Belgic Confession refers in Article XXVII:

And this holy Church is preserved or supported by God, against the rage of the whole world; though she sometimes (for a while) appears very small, and in the eyes of men, to be reduced to nothing: as during the perilous reign of Ahab, the Lord reserved unto him seven thousand men, who had not bowed their knees to Baal.

In our discussion of outstanding men in the church, it is difficult to find men about whom to write who were genuinely men of God in all respects -- i.e., men who held firmly to the truth and who represented the cause of God without the additions of erroneous and Roman Catholic heresy and practice. In short, there were few, if any, who were in all respects faithful to the Word of God.

In treating men of this period, therefore, we have to deal with men who carried the freight of Romish error with them. But, in spite of this, they were men who were, for one reason or another, outstanding men in the history of the church, or who

were representative of various currents of thought in the days in which they lived. We shall have to tolerate their mistakes.

Anselm, archbishop of Canterbury, was one such man.

Anselm was born in 1033 in Aosta of Northern Italy in the shadow of the towering Alps. His mother, Ermenberga, was a pious and godly woman who gave her son such spiritual education as was important for the religious upbringing of a child born in the church. His father was quite another matter. Gundulf by name, he was a thoroughly worldly and rude nobleman who attempted to dominate the lives of others and who was without compassion or sympathy in his dealings with others. Ermenberga lived with the "Nabal" of her day. Gundulf's spiritual insensitivity changed when he lay on his death bed and, just prior to dying, he became a monk to escape, if possible, the torments of hell.

It seems that Anselm, from youth on, was a sensitive and somewhat mystically inclined youth who delighted in contemplating the soaring pinnacles of the mountains in his backyard as means to bring him nearer to God. In his own words, when he was not yet 15, he sought "to shape his life according to God."

This soon brought him into such fierce conflict with his father that he left home, never to return, and fled to Normandy in France, far to the north and west. There he found his heart's desire and became a monk in the Dominican monastery at Bec. It was the gracious providence of God which led him to the monastery of Bec, for here he came under the influence of

the great Lanfranc, one of the most notable men of his age. Lanfranc was the prior¹ of the monastery and took Anselm under his wing to give him the education which was to prepare him for his life's calling.

When Lanfranc left France to become Archbishop of Canterbury, Anselm was appointed prior in Lanfranc's place. Already Anselm's reputation as a scholar, a man of brilliant intellect, a theologian of considerable note, and yet a kind and gentle man, caught the attention of Europe's leaders. He served as prior in Bec from 1078-1092. During this period he did much of his writing.

In 1092 he too was called to England, where his reputation had preceded him. He went at the request of the Earl of Chester, who wanted Anselm's help in his sickness. Anselm did not remain idle in England but spent his time organizing the monastery of St. Werburg's in Chester. But after a year had expired, Lanfranc died, and Anselm was appointed to Lanfranc's place once again, this time as Archbishop of Canterbury. He took this position with the greatest reluctance because the archbishopric of Canterbury was the highest ecclesiastical post in England, and all the responsibility of the welfare of the church fell upon his shoulders. He was ordained to this office in December 4, 1093 and served here for 16 years until his death on April 21, 1109.

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1 A prior of a monastery was its governing head.

He served with distinction and has gone down in history as one of the great churchmen of the Middle Ages.

We must try to put some flesh on these bones of Anselm.

There are many different facets to his character.

Anselm was a gentle man, apparently more like his mother than his father. This gentleness was shown in his love for animals. The story is told that as Archbishop of Canterbury he was riding his horse from Windsor when a rabbit found refuge from its hunters beneath his horse. He dismounted with tears, picked up the quivering rabbit, and sharply reprimanded the hunters by comparing the plight of the rabbit to the plight of a dying man who fears the torment of punishment to come.

Anselm was not a great preacher. His strength lay in study and teaching. He was able to counsel troubled souls who sought his help. He easily understood the problems of spiritual struggles with sin and doubt. He could enter into the minds of his students and anticipate and answer questions which they dared not ask. He carried on an extended correspondence in which he was always understanding and sympathetic, but firm when this was needed. He offered advice, compliments, consolation, reproof, and affection to those who sought his counsel. To one troubled monk he wrote: "Of evil works we ought to repent, and forsake them before we die: lest the day find us in them. But of good works we ought to persevere till the end, that in them our soul may be taken out of life." He was surely beyond his times in education and was one of the most popular teachers of his day. He maintained a discipline which was wise and fair. When a fellow abbot complained that he could not improve his boys, however much he beat them, Anselm responded: "Have you tried not beating them?"

Anselm also was given to works of mercy. His greatest delight was in nursing the sick in the hospitals of his day and taking the poor under his care. About the only thing that an-

gered him was the greediness and immoderation of his fellow monks.

He was an extremely mild man who suffered easily the follies of his fellow men. The story is told that at the Synod of Rockingham in 1095, during a period of bitter controversy among the delegates, Anselm was noticed sound asleep with a smile on his face.

Three aspects of Anselm's character and work are important.

Anselm found himself deeply involved in the investiture controversy in England. While this controversy was a complicated one and was carried out over several centuries, its basic issues are easily understood. Many of the higher clergy in the Romish church were also feudal lords who ruled over vast estates. The pope wanted to control the clergy, something which he could do only if he possessed the right to ordain the clergy into office. On the other hand, the kings of Europe also wanted to ordain the clergy because these same clergy were secular rulers who ruled under the king. The kings claimed, therefore, that they should have the right to appoint to office since these bishops and archbishops were under the secular jurisdiction of the king.

But the bottom line, as is usually the case, was money. Both the popes and the kings wanted the taxes and revenues from these estates as their own. The pope wanted the money to flow into the coffers of Rome, and the kings wanted the money to come into the royal treasury. Then too the love of money was the root of all evil.

Anselm was deeply involved in this controversy in England, but was a loyal member of the church who did what he could to stymie the actions of William Rufus, wanton son of William the Conqueror, and Henry I to ordain clergy. In his loyalty to the pope he was forced to flee England two different times to save his life. Part of his archbishop tenure was spent in exile in France.

Anselm was also a thinker of great note. He is, in fact, often called the "father of the scholastics."² While many in his day set reason before

faith, Anselm himself followed the dictum: faith precedes knowledge. "I do not seek to understand," he wrote, "in order that I may believe, but I believe in order that I may understand, for of this I feel sure, that, if I did not believe, I would not understand." Certainly in this respect he was on the right track. But he was not always faithful to his own commitment.

Anselm is the father of the so-called ontological proof of God. In attempting to prove by reason God's existence, he argued that all men have an idea in their minds of "most perfect being." But, so he argued, that which is most perfect being must exist in fact as well as in thought. Hence, God exists. Philosophers for centuries struggled with this "proof" of God's existence, and efforts were constantly being made to show him wrong. However, apart from the whole question of whether Anselm's proof is sound or not, the fact is, as every child of God knows, that God is so great that He lies beyond the reach of human proof. He is God. He can be known and believed only by faith.

In all the Middle Ages, almost no advancement in the truth of Scripture was made. Anselm stands out as an exception. If he is worthy of our respect for no other reason, we ought to know about him for his doctrine of the atoning sacrifice of Christ. He carried this truth beyond anything the church had confessed prior to his time. He developed his views in an important book called *Cur Deus Homo?*, or, *Why Did God Become Man?* He answered his own question by arguing that the incarnation and atonement of our Lord Jesus Christ

2 The scholastics were the great university teachers, professors, and theologians who wrote voluminously on theological questions. One of their chief goals was to harmonize faith and reason, to synthesize biblical truth with ancient Greek philosophy, especially that of Aristotle. Some of the well-known scholastics were Thomas Aquinas, Bonaventura, Peter Abelard, and William Occam.

was necessary because of the justice of God. We need not go into his argument here, for it was substantially taken over by our own Heidelberg Catechism in Lord's Days V and VI. To read these Lord's Days is to read a brief summary of Anselm's argument. His great insights into these truths have become part of the confessional heritage of the Reformed churches.

Anselm wrote many meditations and prayers.³ It is enlightening to read them. Being a child of his times, he directed his prayers to Mary and many of the saints. They are filled with a profound understanding of sin, of the struggle which the Christian experiences in his battle against sin, and of his longing for forgiveness and holiness. They breathe a spirit of genuine piety and godliness.

And yet there is one characteristic of them which cannot escape the attention of the reader: Anselm never came to assurance. He never attained comfort and peace. Always reaching, never attaining, he continues lost in what is almost hopeless and black despair. We give here a few quotes

3 A number of these have been published and are available in paperback put out by Penguin Classics. They are well worth reading to gain some sense of the deeply spiritual character of Anselm.

from these writings. In a prayer to St. John the Evangelist Anselm prays:

Jesus, against whom I have grievously sinned,
Lord, whom I have wickedly despised,
Omnipotent God, whose anger I have stirred up by pride;
you are the lover of John, your blessed apostle,
and to him your terrified accused flees.

Your sinner, your offender, however great his wickedness,
however great his disgrace,
holds the name of your beloved between him and the threatening sentence
of your just judgment.

By that blessed love spare him who seeks John's protection.

Lord, by what name will you have mercy upon sinners

if you condemn someone who prays

by the name of your beloved?
Lord, under what cover is there protection,

if under the name of your beloved there is punishment?

Where is there refuge if with your beloved there is peril?

Lord, do not feel hatred for him who flees to your beloved.

Lord, Lord, do not let my iniquity avail for damnation

Or, again, in a prayer to St. Nicholas:

But if God looks down on me, who

will look up to me?

If God turns his face from me, who will look towards me?

If God hates me, who will dare speak on my behalf?

O God, 'merciful and pitiful,'
do you indeed ward off one who would return to you,
so that you cannot bear to have mercy upon one who cleaves to you?

Will you curse one who has grieved you so much that you will not hear any of your friends on his behalf?

...

This is instructive -- and yet inevitable. Within the context of Romish thought, true comfort is beyond the reach of the sinner, for he must merit peace with God through his own good works. It is all reminiscent of Luther's great struggles. Within Roman Catholicism, comfort is impossible.

These prayers underscore the great gospel of the Reformation which broke like a thunderclap over Europe. We have, the Reformers insisted, a gospel which brings peace to God's people. We come with comfort. Can you imagine the mighty power, on Europe's despairing throngs, of that simple question and answer with which our Heidelberg Catechism begins? "What is thy only comfort in life and in death? That I belong ... to my faithful Savior Jesus Christ." That is all. That is enough. Anselm never knew it. □

Book Reviews

A Quest for Godliness: The Puritan Vision of the Christian Life, by J. I. Packer. Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 1990. 367 pages. Hardcover. \$15.95. (Reviewed by the Editor.)

Those who like J. I. Packer and those who like the Puritans will like this book. It should sell well. It deserves to. It is a splendid introduction to Puritanism and the leading Puritans. In his characteristically lucid style, Packer tells us what Puritanism essentially was and what the Puritans taught and practiced. Packer is an advocate. The opening chapter is,

"Why We Need the Puritans." Almost the closing words of the book are a comparison of modern evangelicals and the Puritans, as "zany pygmies" and "wise giants."

Of great interest to the Reformed covenantal thinker is Packer's insistence that the doctrine of the covenant was central in Puritan theology and practice and that the covenant was seen as communion with God. In the chapter on "The Spirituality of John Owen," Packer writes:

We all know that the Puritans were deeply and constantly concerned with the doctrine of the covenant of

grace. . . . The covenant of grace has been called the characteristic Puritan doctrine. . . . And to the minds of the Puritans the direct end and purpose of the covenant of grace was to bring men into union and communion with God (p. 202).

Communion with God, for the Puritans, was the "comprehensive reality that is central to Christian existence. . . . The thought of communion with God takes us to the very heart of Puritan theology and religion" (p. 201). It is especially in the area of the experience and practice of this communion that Reformed people, even though not "zany pygmies," can learn

from the Puritans, many of whom were, in fact, thorough-going Presbyterians and ardent disciples of John Calvin.

The Reformed preacher should read the chapter on "Puritan Preaching." So should the Reformed elder so that he knows what is expected of every preacher as regards his attitude toward preaching; his preparation for it ("most of the Puritans were writing their sermons out in full to the end of their lives"); and the kind of sermon he should produce. The Puritan sermon was expository in method; doctrinal in content; orderly in arrangement; popular in style; Christ-centered in orientation; experimental in interest; and piercing in application. Commenting on the doctrinal nature of Puritan sermons, Packer remarks, "Doctrinal preaching certainly bores the hypocrites; but it is only doctrinal preaching that will save Christ's sheep" (p. 285).

The chapter on "Jonathan Edwards and Revival" does nothing to allay the fear of a Reformed man that the peculiar hope of the salvation of the church by means of revivals slights the Spirit's operations through the ordinary means of grace regularly exercised by the instituted church. Edwards supposed that a revival is "the most glorious of any work of God whatsoever." The Spirit's "ordinary" work in the congregation through weekly preaching, daily teaching, periodical administration of the sacraments, and on-going discipline suffers in comparison with the rare and extraordinary revival:

From the fall of man, to our day, the work of redemption in its effect has mainly been carried on by remarkable communications of the Spirit of God. Though there be a more constant influence of God's Spirit always in some degree attending his ordinances; yet the way in which the greatest things have been done towards carrying on this work, always have been by remarkable effusions, at special seasons of mercy (p. 323).

This is a radical departure from the Reformed faith's teaching on the Spirit's use of the ordinary means of grace in the instituted church for the

edifying of the church and for the gathering and perfecting of the saints (cf. the Westminster Confession, 7.6, 14.1, 25.3; the Heidelberg Catechism, Q. 65; the Belgic Confession, Articles 27-35). So far as I know, there is nothing in the Reformed creeds concerning revivals at all, much less any teaching that leads Christians to pin their hopes on them for the quickening of dead churches and for a coming great victory of the church in all the world.

The worth and interest of *A Quest for Godliness* are enhanced by apt quotations throughout from the Puritans themselves. ■

The Sermons of Thomas Watson, by Thomas Watson (736 pages, hardcover, \$29.95); *The Puritans on Conversion*, by Samuel Bolton, Nathaniel Vincent, and Thomas Watson (211 pages, hardcover, \$16.95); *The Golden Sceptre*, by John Preston (248 pages, hardcover, \$14.95); *Heart Treasure*, by Oliver Heywood (400 pages, hardcover, \$21.95); *The Almost Christian Discovered*, by Matthew Mead (211 pages, hardcover, \$10.95). Published by Soli Deo Gloria Publications, 213 W. Vincent St., Ligonier, PA 15658. [Reviewed by the Editor.]

J. I. Packer's new work on the Puritans, *A Quest for Godliness* (reviewed above), encourages turning to the Puritans themselves. There is no better place to start than these five 1989 and 1990 reprints issued by Soli Deo Gloria Publications. All are books of sermons by Puritans of the 16th and 17th centuries, with the exception of *Heart Treasure*. Oliver Heywood's book is an extended meditation on Matthew 12:35, "A good man, out of the good treasure of the heart, bringeth forth good things." Heywood's concern is the spiritual condition of a good man's heart, and how to preserve it.

The other works are sermons. One benefit for the preacher, therefore, is that he learns firsthand the nature of Puritan preaching. The subjects are wide-ranging. Of particular interest in Watson are his funeral sermon on Philippians 1:23, "The Saint's

Desire to be with Christ," and his sermon on Song of Solomon 5:16, "Christ's Loveliness." The latter is typical both of the Puritan fascination with the "song of songs" (which we tend to neglect, sometimes studiously) and of the Puritan manner of explaining the Song. Preston, one of the more celebrated Puritans, has six sermons on II Chronicles 7:14, Jehovah's answer to Solomon's prayer at the dedication of the temple. What all the sermons have in common is the Puritan emphasis on the experience of the workings of grace in the heart.

The Almost Christian Discovered (the title is taken from Agrippa's strange response to Paul in Acts 26:28) is an almost frightening treatment of another characteristic Puritan theme: how closely one can approximate Christianity without being a true Christian.

The book on conversion contains three sermons on this topic by three Puritan preachers. Included is the sermon by Vincent on Ezekiel 33:11, "turn ye, turn ye, from your evil ways," etc. It strikes me that the 17th century Puritan is far more restrained in expressing a sincere desire of God for the salvation of those who perish than are many of the self-proclaimed disciples of the Puritans in the 20th century.

Most of the books are the only modern reprints of these works available. All have been modernized as to spelling and the formation of letters.

They make good devotional reading. These Puritan writers have a lively, expressive, epigrammatic style. Watson is a master. Here is a sample (he is setting forth love of the Word as a mark of the godly man):

Do we love the sanctity of the word? The word preached is to beat down sin, and advance holiness: do we love it for its spirituality and purity? Many love the word preached only for its eloquence and notion; they come to a sermon as to a music-lecture, or as to a garden to pick flowers, but not to have their lusts subdued, or their hearts bettered: these are like a foolish woman, which paints her face, but neglects her health (p. 439). ■

Congregational Highlights

Rev. B. Gritters, pastor of Byron Center, MI PRC, hoped to preach on a series of texts submitted to him by his congregation. Plans called for the membership of Byron Center to write down special texts that they may have found difficult, either doctrinally or practically. They could drop this text, along with possible explanation of the difficulty, into a Sunday collection plate, or, even easier, slip the note under the study door. Rev. Gritters hoped to take a selection of these texts and preach on most (not necessarily all) of them.

The congregation of our First PRC in Edmonton, Canada was invited to stay after the afternoon service for supper on March 24. After eating together, the congregation planned to have a sing-song with special numbers by the choir and the catechism classes (Beginners #134 and #57 and Seniors #297 and #353). Coffee was also served for those who wished to stay after the program.

A special Sing-Along Evening was held on Easter evening in our newest church auditorium, Lynden, WA PRC. Lynden's choir included in

its performance numerous selections to be sung by the audience that complemented their Cantata. A special offering was received to help with the purchase of a new organ.

The Consistory of Lynden has recently approved a new project undertaken by their Extension Committee. A room in their newly-completed building has been set aside for use as a Church Library. It is this committee's goal to obtain books which will be useful for the congregation in Bible study, as well as books considered classics in Reformed theology. These books would be available to the members of the congregation for their own personal use. We can also report that already Lynden's library has received a donation of 20-30 books from a brother in Grand Rapids, MI, and from a member of their own congregation.

The Choral Society of Faith PRC in Jenison, MI, as well as the choir of the Hope PRC in Walker, MI, presented their annual Spring concerts in their church auditoriums on March 24 and April 7, respectively.

During the first week in April, the young adults of the Loveland, CO PRC sponsored a Young Adults' Retreat at the Covenant Heights Conference Center, just south of Estes Park, CO. On Thursday evening Rev. Cammenga spoke on the theme of

"The Coming Antichrist," and on Friday evening Rev. Bruinsma spoke on "The Final Judgment."

According to Rev. Bruinsma, there were 35 to 40 young adults in attendance. They came from California, Washington, Michigan, Wisconsin, and, of course, Colorado. They ranged in age from 18 to about 30.

Besides the speeches and discussion groups dealing with the last times, activities planned included volleyball, downhill skiing, and tubing. However, because of warmer than expected temperatures, some of these activities were changed. From Rev. Bruinsma's account, it was a great weekend, in a very scenic location, and very worthwhile.

We could also add that Rev. Bruinsma remained in Loveland for the weekend, preaching there twice on Sunday, and giving a slide presentation of his missionary work in Jamaica on Monday evening.

Ministerial Calls

The PRC in Kalamazoo, MI has formed a new trio for missionary to Venice, FL consisting of Revs. J. Kortering, R. Moore, and T. Miersma.

On Sunday, April 21, the congregation of the Hudsonville, MI PRC extended a call to Rev. D. Kuiper to serve as missionary to Larne, Northern Ireland. □

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

RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The Consistory and congregation of the Immanuel Protestant Reformed Church of Lacombe, express their Christian sympathy to Mr. and Mrs. John Wierenga and family in the death of her father, and grandfather,

MR. ROY KLOPSTRA,

on March 14, 1991.

May our heavenly Father comfort the bereaved with the assurance that He doeth all things well.

Rev. D. Kuiper, President
Jim Wierenga, Clerk

RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The Consistory and congregation of the Immanuel Protestant Reformed Church of Lacombe express their Christian sympathy to Mrs. Greta Wierenga, John Wierenga and family, and Jim Wierenga and family in the death of their sister and aunt,

MRS. AGNES WIERENGA,

on March 23, 1991. "Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints," Psalm 116:15.

Rev. D. Kuiper, President
Jim Wierenga, Clerk

RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The Priscilla Society of the First PRC (Grand Rapids, Michigan) mourns the loss of a beloved and faithful member and current president of our society,

JESSIE DYKSTRA.

The Society also expresses its Christian sympathy to our member, Jean Dykstra, in the loss of her sister.

"The Lord knoweth the days of the upright: and their inheritance shall be forever" (Psalm 37:18).

Roselle Ezinga, President
Elaine Rietema, Secretary

WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

On May 14, 1991 our parents and grandparents

MR. and MRS. GERALD BOUWKAMP celebrated their 45th wedding anniversary. We are thankful to our heavenly Father for giving us God-fearing parents, and for the love and Christian instruction we have received from them. May the Lord continue to bless them and keep them in His care in the years ahead.

"But the mercy of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting upon them that fear him, and his righteousness unto children's children" (Psalm 103:17).

Henry and Shirley Bergman

Barb and Randy, Tom, Julie, Dan

Gary and Rachel Bouwkamp

Bill and Ruth Rutgers

Pam, Sandee, Ruthie, Katie, Billy

Gerry and Kathy Schut

Doug and Todd

Dave and Dawn Bouwkamp

Jeff

Dave and Carol DeVries

Kim

Lori Bouwkamp

Hudsonville, Michigan

WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

The children of

WILLIAM and CAROL HUBER

wish to announce their 25th wedding anniversary, which was on April 21. They are members of Faith Protestant Reformed Church. Their children are:

Craig and Heidi Ondersma

Anthony and Chelsea

William and Diane Huber

Chad Huber

Katie Huber

We give thanks to God for our Christian parents, and we rejoice with them in their 25th anniversary. Faithfully they have raised us according to God's Word, and have set an example of what a Christian marriage is. We would like to let them know that we appreciate all they have done for us, and to tell them we love them dearly.

Psalm 128:5, 6, "The Lord shall bless thee out of Zion: and thou shalt see the good of Jerusalem all the days of thy life. Yea, thou shalt see thy children's children, and peace upon Israel."

RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The Consistory and congregation of the Edgerton Protestant Reformed Church express their heartfelt sympathy to Mr. Cora Bleyenburgh, Esther Bleyenburgh, Mr. and Mrs. Dennis Bleyenburgh and family, Mr. and Mrs. Art Bleyenburgh, Mrs. Hattie VerHey, Mrs. Dorothy Brands, and Mrs. Christina VanderWolde, whose husband, father, grandfather, and brother,

MR. DICK BLEYENBURG, was taken to his eternal rest on March 20, 1991.

May they be comforted by the Word of God in 1 Corinthians 15:55-57, "O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ."

Rev. Michael DeVries, President

Andrew Brummel, Clerk

RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The Consistory and congregation of the Edgerton Protestant Reformed Church express their sincere sympathy to Mr. and Mrs. Bernard Hop and their family in the loss of his brother,

MR. GERRIT HOP, of Artesia, CA.

May they be sustained by God's grace and comforted in His Word: "The Lord will give strength unto his people; the Lord will bless his people with peace" (Psalm 29:11).

Rev. Michael DeVries, President

Andrew Brummel, Clerk

CALL TO SYNOD!!

Synod 1990 appointed Hope Protestant Reformed Church, Walker, Michigan the calling church for the 1991 Synod.

The Consistory hereby notifies our churches that the 1991 Synod of the Protestant Reformed Churches in America will convene, the Lord willing, on Tuesday, June 11th, 1991 at 9:00 AM in the Southwest Protestant Reformed Church, 4875 Ivanrest, Grandville, Michigan. (Hope Church will be undergoing extensive renovation in June.)

The Pre-Synodical Service will be held in Southwest Church on Monday evening, June 10, at 7:30 PM. Rev. Gise

VanBaren, president of the 1990 Synod, will preach the sermon. Synodical delegates are requested to meet with the Consistory before the service.

Delegates in need of lodging should contact Mr. Peter Koole, 554 Kenowa S.W., Grand Rapids, Michigan 49504. Phone: (616) 453-2524.

Consistory of
Hope Protestant Reformed Church
P. Koole, Clerk

RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The Ladies' Aid Society of First Church (Grand Rapids, MI) wishes to express their sincere sympathy to our fellow member, Jean Dykstra, in the loss of her sister

JESSIE DYKSTRA.

We pray that God will comfort her from His Holy Word believing that our Father will never forsake us and He is always at our side.

Mrs. George DeVries, President

Mrs. Sidney DeYoung, Secretary

WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

On May 8, 1991,

MR. and MRS. HENRY VANDER KOLK celebrated their 45th wedding anniversary. We, their children and grandchildren, give thanks to our heavenly Father for the love, guidance, and covenant instruction they have given us through the years. It is our prayer that God will continue to be with them and bless them.

"For the Lord is good, his mercy is everlasting, and his truth endureth to all generations" (Psalm 100:3).

Jerry and Shirley VanderKolk

Jim and Kathy VanderKolk

Mike and Linda Zuverink

15 grandchildren

Holland, Michigan

RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The Martha Society of the Doon PR Church would like to express their Christian sympathy to their fellow member, Mrs. Henrietta Klein, in the loss of her sister

MRS. JEANETTE LEMS.

May our heavenly Father comfort the bereaved with the assurance that He doeth all things well.

Rev. R. Dykstra, President

Mrs. Gert VanDenTop, Secretary