

# THE *September 15, 2004* STANDARD BEARER

A REFORMED SEMI-MONTHLY MAGAZINE

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Volume 80 ♦ Number 21



# Those Other Sheep

*And other sheep I have, which are not of this fold: them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice; and there shall be one fold, and one shepherd.*

John 10:16

**O**ther sheep I have which are not of this fold." Notice that the text twice uses the word "fold." The Revised Version translates the text using that word only once. It reads, "Other sheep I have which are not of this fold: them also I must bring,... and there shall be one flock and one shepherd." In this instance the latter is better. These sheep are not of the same fold, but they will be one flock. The point is important. The "fold" was the place where the sheep were kept, enclosures in the open country where the shepherds of the Orient herded their flocks at night. "This fold," therefore, refers to the old dispensation; the Jewish theocracy;

the people out of which Christ Himself was, historically; the natural seed of Abraham; national Israel. The "other sheep" are not of this fold. They are, therefore, the elect that are not out of the natural seed of Abraham. They are the elect of the new dispensation, of the Gentile nations, referred to in so many Old Testament prophecies. "In those days it shall come to pass, that ten men shall take hold out of all languages of the nations, even shall take hold of the skirt of him that is a Jew, saying, We will go with you: for we have heard that God is with you," (Zech. 8:23). Those are the "other sheep."

"Them also I must bring," says Jesus. His final sufferings and death and resurrection and ascension and redemptive work throughout the new dispensation still lay ahead. These sheep, therefore, and they only, are the objects of the bringing. They only are the objects of the bringing in the intentions of God. Always God reveals Himself as willing only to those whom He Himself has sovereignly ordained unto eternal life. They only are the objects of the

bringing in the intentions of the Christ. "I came down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me. And this is the Father's will which hath sent me, that of all which he hath given me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day" (John 6:38, 39). And even as these sheep, and they only, are the objects of the bringing in the purposes of the Most High and His Christ, thus they, and they only, are actually saved. "Them also I must bring."

This assures us, and all who labor in the gospel, that, regardless of apparent futility, our work is never in vain in the Lord. The work of the gospel often seems so fruitless, like a plowing on rocks. Never fear, God is accomplishing all His good pleasure. This leaves God GOD, out of whom and through whom and unto whom are all things. And this preaches a Christ who actually brings to pass all He came to do.

There is a slogan that reads, "Christ saves to the uttermost." That is as true as true can be, if only we understand it to mean:

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Christ saves all He came to save. Our Canons of Dordt state it so beautifully in Head 2, Article 9: "This purpose, proceeding from everlasting love towards the elect, has from the beginning of the world to this day been powerfully accomplished, and will henceforward still continue to be accomplished, notwithstanding all the ineffectual opposition of the gates of hell."

"Them also *I* must bring." The Son of God is speaking here. John, more than all the others, emphasizes the deity of Christ. It is in the sublime consciousness that He is the only begotten Son, and therefore Himself God, that Christ speaks throughout this chapter. "I am the door of the sheep ... I am the good shepherd.... As the Father knoweth me so know I the Father ... I give unto them eternal life ... I and my Father are one." So well do the wicked Jews understand Him, that they want to stone Him, because, say they, "Thou makest thyself God." As the Son of God He speaks in our text: "Other sheep *I* have ... them also *I* must bring ... and they shall hear *my* voice." The Son of God alone must bring the sheep — if brought they shall be.

As the Good Shepherd, Jesus stands in contrast to the evil shepherds referred to in Scripture. They fed themselves instead of the sheep. They ate the fat, clothed themselves with the wool, but fed not the flock. They strengthened not the diseased, healed not the sick, sought not the lost. They enter by another way than the door, to kill and to steal and to destroy. They flee when the wolf comes because the sheep are not their own. These are the evil shepherds at whose hands the flock will be required. Jesus is the Good Shepherd. He feeds the flock; He strengthens the diseased; He enters by the door; He calls the sheep by name; He leads them forth; He gives His life for the sheep. And thus, as the Good Shepherd, the

Son of God is in deep reality the only missionary.

True, it pleases Him to use human preachers and missionaries as His instruments. These have the calling to preach the gospel of salvation to all creatures, beginning at Jerusalem and thence to the ends of the earth. With such mission work we agree with all our hearts. Mission work aims to proclaim the blessed gospel of Christ to all creatures. Even so, in truth Christ is the only missionary. We do not win the souls for Jesus. We preach Christ crucified. Christ, through that preaching, wins His own souls. "Them also *I* must bring."

Literally, this word "bring" means "to drive or to lead." It means to lead by laying hold of, so that the basic idea of the word includes the notion of determination and power on the part of Him who does the bringing. It refers, therefore, to all that the Good Shepherd does to bring the sheep to salvation, actually, efficaciously, irresistibly.

To this bringing belongs all Jesus does *for* us in the fullness of time. Remember, we wrote at the beginning of this article that His final sufferings and death, resurrection and ascension, outpouring of the Spirit and redemptive work throughout the ages still lay ahead when He uttered these words. The Good Shepherd is thinking of all these. He suffers and dies, pays the penalty of sin and removes the guilt, reconciles with the living God, and merits the right to eternal life.

All this He does for His own. Limited atonement! "I lay down my life for my sheep." Then He rises from the dead and is exalted on the right hand of God, and there He receives all power and authority over all things and the Spirit without measure to bless His own with every spiritual blessing in heaven. "Them also *I* must bring" includes all this.

Subjectively, this bringing to salvation is realized in all that the

Good Shepherd does *in* us. He calls by the preaching of His Word. Therein He speaks of sin and guilt, punishment and eternal wrath, and calls to repentance. He speaks of grace and pardon in Calvary's blood and calls to faith. He reveals Himself as the only way and truth and life for lost and damnable sinners. He calls the weary and heavy-laden, the hungry and thirsty, the contrite and those that mourn in Zion, and thus He calls His own by name.

And while He calls He works in the hearts of His sheep by His overpowering grace and Spirit. That Spirit seeks the wandering ones, regenerates, inclines the heart, bends the will, opens the eyes, and thus applies the gospel call to the heart. He convicts of sin and guilt, makes weary and contrite, leads to Calvary, sanctifies, and prepares unto every good work. Thus the Good Shepherd does not merely *desire* to bring; He *brings*. The gospel is not an offer of some kind or other; it is the power of God unto salvation.

Finally, what must and shall be the result of this "bringing" of Christ? Jesus says, "They shall hear my voice," the voice of the Good Shepherd—the voice that speaks of incarnation and suffering and death and resurrection, of peace and reconciliation and grace and pardon in the blood that speaks of infinitely better things than the blood of Abel—the voice that speaks of righteousness in the midst of unrighteousness, blessing in the midst of curse, life in the midst of death, glory in the midst of shame—the voice that comes not only to our natural ears and minds though the preaching of the gospel, but to our hearts through the inner, mystical operation of the Spirit within.


This hearing, therefore, is a spiritual matter. Obviously, Jesus is not speaking of physical hearing and mere natural perception. In that sense, all who hear the gospel hear the voice of Jesus, also those



for whom this voice is a savor of death unto death. The sheep hear His voice spiritually. It is the hearing of spiritual understanding, of personal appropriation, of obedience and faith. When Jesus calls, the sheep prick up their ears, as it were, and they come, they follow, they forsake sin and every evil way, they repent, they turn, they seek their salvation in His cross alone, they walk according to the Spirit, whereby we know that we too are sheep.

And note the certainty of it all.

"They shall hear." Irresistible grace! If salvation, even in the remotest sense, were dependent on man, this could not be said. But now, salvation is of the Lord. And, says Jesus, "there shall be one flock and one shepherd." There *shall* be! Perseverance of the saints! One flock and one Shepherd. No unscriptural separation of Jew and Gentile. The sheep of the Jewish fold and those not of that fold would all become one flock, with and under the eternal Shepherd Jesus Christ.

Thus it must be to the glory of God's grace. For there is one God, whose one glorious image, through the one Mediator, must be revealed in the one people. However, even as that one image consists of a multitude of perfections, even so that one flock must consist of a multitude of sheep, each of which must reflect that one unspeakable glory of God, to the revelation of the whole and the praise of the Father, through our Lord Jesus Christ, the one, the only Shepherd of His chosen race. 

## Editorial

# The Gift of Assurance

**T**he one who gives assurance to the believing child of God, we saw last time, is the Spirit of Christ.

There is nothing surprising about this, since He is the one who gives certainty about everything. The Spirit gives the church certainty that the Bible is the inspired Word of God. We believe "without any doubt all things contained in them [the sixty-six books of the Bible], not so much because the church receives and approves them as such, but more especially because the Holy Ghost witnesses in our hearts that they are from God" (Belgic Confession, Art. 5).

The Spirit gives the elect believer certainty that the gospel is of God, and true, as also the certainty that Jesus Christ is Savior from sin and death. "For our gospel came not unto you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance" (I Thess. 1:5).

Within the divine being of the Holy Trinity, it is the Spirit who is God's own certainty of His own infinite truth. "The Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of

God" (I Cor. 2:10). Verse 11 adds, in explanation, that, just as it is the spirit of a man that knows the things of a man, so only the Spirit of God knows the things of God.

This Spirit of certainty, to whom doubt concerning the things of God in Christ is foreign and obnoxious, works assurance of salvation in those described in I Corinthians 2:15 as spiritual men and women. Spiritual men and women are not a few super-saints among the believers. They are not, as the Puritans taught, the few special friends of God favored with assurance, whereas all the other friends are left to languish in doubt, uncertain therefore whether they are God's friends at all. Spiritual men and women are most certainly not those who claim, mistakenly, if not arrogantly, to have had a mystical experience, which now sets them apart from, and above, the groaning, doubting masses in the congregations.

Spiritual men and women are those—all those—who are born again by the Spirit, who are taught the truths of the gospel by the Spirit, and who have the mind of Christ (I Cor. 2:13, 16).

## Experience

Assuring us spiritual men and women of our salvation is simply part of the Spirit's saving of us at every step of the order of salvation. So far is it from being true that assurance comes only at the distant end of one's salvation, if it comes at all, that, in fact, assurance comes at the very beginning of the divine process, or order, of salvation, and at every step thereafter.

The Spirit regenerates, and with this new birth into heavenly life comes awareness that we are alive unto God. Born physically, we soon know that we are alive. We do not mope through earthly life for thirty or fifty or seventy years with an anxious look on our face, lamenting, "I doubt that I am alive." So it is with the new, spiritual birth. The Spirit unites us with Christ, and the risen Christ is a commanding, compelling, charismatic presence. The birth from above makes us alive with His life, and His life is vibrant and unmistakable, particularly in love and awe of the God and Father of Jesus Christ and in hatred of sin.

The Spirit calls us to Christ

Jesus by the gospel, and we come. We come to Jesus Christ. We come to Him as Savior and Lord. We come to Him as Savior and Lord of every one who comes to Him. We come to Him as *our* own Lord and Savior. This is assurance of salvation. Assurance of salvation belongs to His very Saviorhood and Lordship.

The Spirit gives faith, and faith is assurance, as was demonstrated in an earlier editorial.

The Spirit sanctifies, and we consecrate ourselves to God in Jesus Christ with heart, mind, soul, and strength in thankfulness for His redemption of us in Christ. The consecration that is holiness is the conviction that God is our God and we are His people. And this consecration is motivated by thankfulness for the redemption of the cross—*our* thankfulness for Christ's redemption of *us* by His cross. This is certainty of salvation. Certainty of salvation is essential to sanctification.

When in the day of Christ the Spirit raises our body from the grave in the glorious likeness of Christ, we will *know* that we are glorified. Certainty of glorification will be of the essence of glorification. No one will doubt his resurrection. Nor do I suppose that we will arrive at certainty of our resurrection by painstakingly examining each member of our glorified body, to determine that it is, in fact, a glorified finger, a glorified foot, and a glorified torso. Rather, we will spontaneously know our own resurrection with certainty by gazing with love and adoration into the face of the glorified Jesus Christ.

Every aspect of the saving work of the Spirit of Christ includes the assurance of salvation.

*God does not only desire to save all His children. He also wants all His children to know and enjoy their salvation, for the consciousness of salvation is an important part of salvation.*

*Salvation is not only the deliver-*

*ance of the sinner. It is also the sinner's experience of his deliverance.*

It is ironic that those who talk much about "experience" (leaving the distinct impression that no other Reformed church does justice to experience) are content that many believers and children of believers, members of the congregations, be shut out from all experience of salvation. Indeed, by their Puritan doctrine that faith is not assurance and that most believers must work and wait for many years to obtain assurance, as well as by the pernicious teaching of many that there is a "preparatory grace" in unregenerated people, they themselves rob their members of the experience of salvation. Lack of assurance is lack of experience.

We, on the other hand, who are viewed as being "doctrinal" (as though this were a weakness in a church, and not a church's supreme strength), and suspected of minimizing experience, insist on the experience of salvation by all who believe and by their covenant children. The Spirit blesses our doctrinal preaching and teaching, to give this experience to all those in the covenant, adult believers and their children. Assurance is experience.

That the work of the Spirit is assuring Jesus' disciples of their salvation is expressed by the name Jesus gives Him in John 16: "the Comforter." "If I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you" (v. 7). Whatever else the Comforter may do, He actually puts to rest the sinner's fears and doubts and assures him in the midst of all his tears and struggles, "God loves you; Christ died for you; you are justified by your faith in Christ; your destiny is eternal life and glory."

Some Comforter the Spirit is if He leaves us, or most of us, doubting our salvation, much, if not all, of our life.

### Sealing

Then there are the texts that

make the Holy Spirit the seal to us of our salvation (II Cor. 1:19-22; Eph. 1:13; Eph. 4:30). Ephesians 1:13 reads, in the Authorized Version: "In whom [Christ] ye also trusted, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation: in whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise."

Sealing is the assurance of one who believes in Christ that he is saved and that he shall be saved to all eternity. Calvin explained, in his commentary on the text:

The true conviction which believers have of the Word of God, of their own salvation, and of religion in general, does not spring from the judgment of the flesh, or from human and philosophical arguments, but from the sealing of the Spirit, who imparts to their consciences such certainty as to remove all doubt.

The Spirit Himself in the believer is this seal, as is indicated by verse 14, which calls Him the "earnest [or deposit, or down payment] of our inheritance." The Spirit seals us in Christ: "In whom [that is, in Christ] ... ye were sealed." There is absolutely no assurance apart from Christ. Nor does the Spirit give any assurance apart from Christ and trust in Christ as He is presented in the "word of truth." All Christ-less "mystical experiences," in which the Spirit and the mystic, or experientialist, have their delightful *tête-à-tête*, are mere fantasy, and of the devil. "In Christ you trusted; in Christ you believed; in Christ, you were sealed." And verse 14 adds that the Spirit is the earnest to us until the completion in us of the redemption of the cross of Christ.

Of great importance is the teaching of Ephesians 1:13 that the sealing with the Spirit is immediately connected with one's trusting in Christ upon hearing the Word of truth. Introduction by the Authorized Version of the word "af-

ter" could be misleading, as though the believer's sealing follows his believing in time, perhaps even a long time. Literally, the Greek text reads, ". . . in whom also having believed, you were sealed with the holy Spirit of promise." There is no "after" in the text. When one hears the gospel of Jesus Christ and believes in Jesus Christ, he is sealed—immediately, as part and parcel of the work of the Spirit in him giving faith. Immediately, as an essential aspect of faith in Christ, the believer is assured of his salvation, now and in the day of the "redemption of the purchased possession."

This is the nature of the saving work of the Spirit.

Indeed, this is the nature of the indwelling Spirit Himself. He Himself is the seal—the certainty, the assurance—of the believer.

This is the nature of the indwelling Spirit *in every one who trusts in Christ, having heard the Word of truth.*

Those Puritans who separated assurance from faith by many years, often by an entire lifetime, grounded their dreadful error in a mistaken interpretation of Ephesians 1:13. They explained the sealing with the Spirit as separated from, and following in time—often many years—one's believing the Word of truth. In some of the Puritans, this error was aggravated by their teaching that the sealing, when it finally happens, is such a direct and immediate testimony of the Spirit as amounts to the mysterious experience of "overpowering light" (see J. I. Packer, "The Witness of the Spirit: The Puritan Teaching," in *Puritan Papers*, vol. 1, P&R, 2000, pp. 17-29).

This Puritan doctrine of sealing (which, of course, puts assurance forever out of the reach of all but a few elite Christians) opened the way to Wesley's heresy of the second blessing and then to the charismatic movement with its doctrine of the baptism with the Spirit.

The English preacher D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones strongly advocated

the separation of sealing with the Spirit from faith in Christ, with appeal to Ephesians 1:13. In this way, he became the instrument by whom the Puritan doctrine of assurance led on to the acceptance of the charismatic movement, not only in his own congregation, but also widely in so-called evangelicalism in England.

### Gift

The comfort, the sealing, the witness of the Spirit of Christ, that is, assurance of salvation, is a gift. Like every other aspect of salvation and like salvation as a whole, assurance is pure, free grace.

The Spirit works assurance in all of God's children, not because they deserve it, not because they have made themselves worthy of it by many years of maturing in their faith, and not because they themselves work for it and finally obtain it by their noble efforts. God forbid! But the Spirit gives God's people assurance because God graciously is pleased, not only to adopt children, but also to have these children know Him as their Father, and themselves, His children for Christ's sake.

The Spirit gives assurance by giving faith. Faith is a gift. One of the two elements of true faith, according to Q. 21 of the Heidelberg Catechism, is assurance. Giving faith, the Spirit gives assurance.

To be condemned is the Puritan doctrine that assurance is something Christians must work for, must obtain themselves by their hard work, and must make themselves worthy of over many years. This doctrine concerning the assurance of salvation is not a whit different from the teaching of Rome and of Arminianism: salvation by man's own efforts, his own heroic running and willing. The result is the same: widespread, God-dishonoring, destructive doubt.

J. I. Packer describes this Puritan error (and really defends it) in his article in the book, *Puritan Papers*, referred to above. Most Chris-

tians do not have assurance at once when they believe. Assurance is reserved for only a few Christians: "God's best and dearest friends." Most of those who do finally obtain assurance get it many years after their conversion.

But what now accounts for God's favoritism? What makes these few Christians His dearest friends? Why do these few finally get assurance?

Not God's mercy!

But their own efforts!

"Assurance," writes Packer, describing the Puritan doctrine, "is not normally enjoyed except by those who have first laboured for it and sought it, and served God faithfully and patiently without it" (p. 20).

This doctrine is a form of the heresy of salvation by works. The salvation in view is assurance. The works are laboring, seeking, and serving faithfully and patiently. The doctrine breeds, and breathes, pride. A few worthy souls get assurance by their own hard work. The doctrine produces doubt. Who can ever be sure that he has worked long and hard enough?

To set the believer to the work of energetic service of God, hard spiritual struggle, and intense Christian warfare for many years, while depriving him of the assurance of salvation, is like telling a man to run a race, after you have cut his legs off. There can be no spiritual struggle, Christian warfare, or service of God without assurance of salvation.

I speak personally, but in the name of the children of the covenant.

I have believed since my earliest years. If I had to fight my spiritual battles uncertain of God's love and my salvation, I would have perished in my warfare a hundred, no, a thousand times. If I had to serve God doubting whether He was my Father, I would have quit before I began.

I fought and endured, I patiently served, I struggled in my calling in the covenant of grace,



sometimes intensely, *because I was certain of the love of God for me personally in Jesus Christ my Lord.*

Doubters cannot faithfully and patiently serve God. Doubters cannot struggle and fight in and on behalf of the covenant and kingdom of Christ. Doubters cannot live a vigorous, healthy, joyful Christian life of holiness.

Whatever got into the heads of the Puritans, learned divines and in many respects wise teachers of the gospel, when it came to the vital matter of assurance? Why do Reformed ministers doggedly follow them today?

If I have a sick child, mentally and emotionally sick, who is always dragging himself about the house asking, "Am I your child? Did you beget or adopt me? Do

you really love me?" it is nonsense to demand of him a vigorous life. He will contribute precious little to the healthy life of the family. He will be no great joy to his parents. The poor fellow must be healed.

Assurance is not the achievement of sick, doubting Christians.

Assurance is a gift. It is the gift of the grace of God in Jesus Christ by the Spirit.

Reformed thinking about assurance does not speak of a "quest" for assurance. That is Puritan thinking and talk, implying the obtaining of assurance by one's own efforts. The Reformed faith confesses the "gift" of (full) assurance. Assurance is an essential element of faith (Heid. Cat., Q. 21). Faith is the gift of God (Canons, III, IV/14). Shall we indeed speak of a

necessary "quest" for faith?

Reformed believer, do not work for assurance. Rather, receive it, and enjoy it, by and with faith.

Assurance of salvation, like the salvation of which it is a precious part, is not of works, lest anyone should boast (for example, of being one of God's best and dearest friends).

Assurance is of grace, so that he that glories should glory in the Lord.

—DJE

P.S.

*In the end, time ran out after all. There is more to be said about assurance. I have more to say about assurance. The series on assurance is unfinished. Perhaps, another day, in other space.*

## Finally

**F**or the past sixteen years, it has been my responsibility, but also my privilege, to serve the members of the Protestant Reformed Churches as editor of the *Standard Bearer*. In some small way, I may hope, a much wider audience has benefited. Nearly half the present subscriptions to the magazine go outside the Protestant Reformed Churches. Responses, public and private, have indicated appreciation, as well as vigorous opposition, from without.

Although the *Standard Bearer* exists primarily for the building up of the members of the Protestant Reformed Churches in the truth, it is also a voice, sometimes friendly, at other times critical, but always deeply interested, to the entire Reformed community worldwide. I need not mention the issues, controversies, and developments affecting the broad Reformed community that were addressed in the editorials. Even when I was speaking to the Protestant Reformed

Churches, I seldom forgot the distant relations listening in. To paraphrase the church father, "I am Reformed. I esteem nothing Reformed foreign to me."

I acknowledge, not the assistance, but the cooperation of the managing editor. We simply worked together to publish a magazine that would be the very best in appearance and content we could make it.

At long last, I may, and must, publicly express my gratitude for the help of my wife in this work now completed. During the first five hectic years, without complaint she virtually gave up having a husband. She has always read the editorials and other articles of mine before they were published, with a critical eye. Now and again, she wisely moderated, not the zeal of the editor, but certain sharper expressions of his zeal (which moderation will come as a surprise to some).

The *Standard Bearer* has not deviated from the course laid out by

my illustrious predecessors. It maintains, develops, applies, defends, and boldly promotes creedal Reformed Christianity as confessed by the Protestant Reformed Churches. God be praised!

We may confidently expect the same from the capable men who now take on the editorship. They will, of course, add their own insights in their own styles. God bless and prosper their work!

Eighty years of faithful witness to the truth of the sovereignty and glory of the God and Father of Jesus Christ, and our God and Father for Christ's sake!

The *Standard Bearer* is now the oldest continuously published, subscription-based Reformed magazine in North America—a tribute, not from associations of periodicals, but from the providence of God.

May its witness long continue!

May its witness increasingly be heard!

Finally, then,

—DJE 



# A Defense of the Presbyterian Doctrine of Infant Baptism—Finally

*The Presbyterian Doctrine of Children in the Covenant: An Historical Study of the Significance of Infant Baptism in the Presbyterian Church*, by Lewis Bevens Schenck. Phillipsburg, New Jersey: P&R, 2003. Pp. xvii + 188. \$15.99 (paper).

## Infant Salvation in the Covenant

**T**he message of this reprint of a work first published in 1940 is precious. It is traditional, confessional Presbyterian (Reformed) doctrine that infant baptism means the infant salvation of the elect children of godly parents. Parents and the church must view and rear the baptized children as elect and regenerated. "The doctrine of the historic Reformed church [is] ... that 'since the promise is not only to parents but to their seed, children are by the command of God to be regarded and treated as of the number of the elect'" (p. 127). Right, covenantal upbringing consists of the gradual nurture of the children in the salvation they possess from infancy.

Christian nurture was, then, the appointed, the natural, the normal, and ordinary means by which the children of believers were made truly the children of God. Consequently it was the method which these leaders believed should be principally relied upon and employed for the salvation of their children. They recognized a marvelous adaptation of this means to the end which it was intended to accomplish, and they were convinced that success was

assured to them in its use by the covenant promise of God (p. 145).

Schenck demonstrates that this doctrine of infant baptism was that of John Calvin, Charles Hodge, Abraham Kuyper, and others, as well as that of all the Reformed confessions. Reformed orthodoxy was in fundamental agreement with Calvin.

Baptism has no significance for Calvin if it does not mean admission to the visible church on the ground of the covenant promise, which includes the presumptive regeneration of the children in the covenant. Calvin looks upon the child in the covenant as God's child, forgiven of sin and regenerated, with the new life as a latent seed, already at work in its heart. The child then opens its eyes redeemed on a world in which by careful nurture it is expected to grow and develop in the Christian ideal of life and character. The important point is that *this child is presumptively a Christian* (p. 13).

Although "presumptive" and "presumptively" do not do justice to Calvin, for Calvin did not presume, but *believed* that infant baptism means infant regeneration, and although the analysis does not make as plain as it could that Calvin referred to the elect children of godly parents, this account of Calvin's doctrine is right. Calvin saw infant baptism as signifying infant salvation.

That this was Calvin's teaching, Schenck proves by this quotation from Calvin:

The offspring of believers are born holy, because their children, while yet in the womb, before they breathe the vital air, have been adopted into the covenant of eternal life. Nor are they brought into the church by baptism on any other ground than because they belonged to the body of the Church before they were born. He who admits aliens to baptism profanes it .... For how can it be lawful to confer the badge of Christ on aliens from Christ. Baptism must, therefore, be preceded by the gift of adoption, which is not the cause of half salvation merely, but gives salvation entire: and this salvation is afterwards ratified by Baptism (p. 13).

## Presumptive Unregeneration

Schenck takes dead aim at the radically un-Reformed doctrine of infant baptism that was prominent in Presbyterian churches already in 1940 and that prevails today. This is the teaching that infant baptism means nothing more than that the children of believers are formally and externally set apart as likely, or possible, candidates for salvation in later years. The children are viewed, and taught to view themselves, as unregenerated. As regards their spiritual condition, baptized children of believers are no different from the ungodly world.

A Presbyterian theologian who taught this un-Presbyterian doctrine of infant baptism put it this way:

While they [baptized children of believers] are in the church by external union, in the spirit and tem-



per of their minds they belong to the world.—Of the world and in the Church—this expresses precisely their status, and determines the mode in which the church should deal with them (p. 93).

Accordingly, parents and church do not rear the children in godliness. Rather, they try to convert them, just as missionaries try to convert the heathen outside the church. And the conversion looked for by parents, church, and children alike is a dramatic experience.

This is the miserable doctrine of infant baptism taught and practiced today by many churches that profess the covenant with the children of believers and baptize infants. The doctrine is not Presbyterian (Reformed). It is Baptist through and through. This is why these nominally Presbyterian (Reformed) ministers can readily cooperate with those who are Baptist in name as well as in fact. An outstanding instance is the Banner of Truth organization, headquartered in Edinburgh, Scotland. Presbyterian in reputation and much of its leadership, the organization and its ministries allow themselves to be heavily influenced by Baptists and the Baptist denial of the covenant. The editor of the magazine and now also the Editor of the Trust are Baptists, to say nothing of many of the writers and lecturers.

The timeliness of Schenck's warning against this apostasy from the Presbyterian doctrine of infant baptism and therefore from the covenant is illustrated by the publication last year of a fat volume in which many Presbyterian and Reformed theologians from many different denominations advocated and defended the doctrine of infant baptism. Schenck condemns. The book is erroneously and misleadingly entitled *The Case for Covenantal Infant Baptism*. Ironically, the publisher is the same as the publisher of *The Presbyterian Doctrine of Children in the Covenant* (see my review article, "A Presbyterian

Case for the Baptist Rejection of Infant Baptism," in the February 15, 2004 issue of the *Standard Bearer*).

### Anti-Covenant Revivals

The cause of the falling away of Presbyterians from the Presbyterian doctrine of infant baptism was the "Great Awakening" under Jonathan Edwards, the Tennents, Whitefield, and others in the early eighteenth century. The theory of the salvation of the church and of individuals by revivals insists that salvation be a matter of dramatic conversion experiences. Applied to the children of believers, as it was by all the revivalists (Edwards famously regarded his own and others' baptized children as "little vipers"), the notion of revival destroyed the truth of infant baptism. In its place came the hope that God would one day save the little baptized heathen by a conversion experience urgently exhorted upon, and often extorted from, the children by parents and wandering "evangelists."

The Great Awakening made an emotional experience, involving terror, misery, and depression, the only approach to God. A conscious conversion from enmity to friendship with God was looked upon as the only way of entrance into the kingdom. Sometimes it came suddenly, sometimes it was a prolonged and painful process. But it was believed to be a clearly discernible emotional upheaval, necessarily "distinct to the consciousness of its subject and apparent to those around." Preceding the experience of God's love and peace, it was believed necessary to have an awful sense of one's lost and terrifying position. Since these were not the experiences of infancy and early childhood, it was taken for granted children must, or in all ordinary cases would, grow up unconverted. Infants, it was thought, needed the new birth, as well as adults. They could not be saved without it. But the only channel of the new birth which was recognized was a conscious experi-

ence of conviction and conversion. Anything else, according to Gilbert Tennent, was a fiction of the brain, a delusion of the Devil. In fact, he ridiculed the idea that one could be a Christian without knowing the time when he was otherwise (p. 71).

### Heathenizing the Church

This un- (and anti-) Presbyterian doctrine of infant baptism is grievous error. It is sin against infant baptism and covenantal salvation. In addition, it implies a doctrine of the church that is both defaming of and dangerous to the body of Christ. The church is described as a gathering of regenerated (adult believers) and unregenerated (children). As an assembly whose membership includes a large number of unregenerated persons—all the children—the church becomes a mission field. Preaching to the church, which is by definition the assembly of those called out of the ungodly world, takes the incongruous and disobedient form of mission-preaching to heathens, albeit baptized heathens. Christ tells pastors to feed His sheep and lambs. The revivalist and Baptist doctrine of infant baptism in Presbyterian and Reformed churches has pastors feeding the sheep and converting their "little vipers."

Later, when the unregenerated children grow up and marry, these unbelievers are permitted to baptize their own unregenerated children. Although Schenck does not make the observation, what this amounts to is the horrific doctrine that God establishes His covenant with unbelievers and their unsaved children.

Further, since the children are viewed as unregenerated, no church discipline can be exercised upon them.

What was the use of judicial discipline for children in the covenant, anyway, it was argued? No claim was made that they were in Christ, and their offenses were consequently no reproach to His


name. Besides, it was thought to be absurd to use spiritual remedies on one who had "no adaptation to receive them," who had "never heard the voice of God in his soul" (p. 95).

Schenck is right, explaining Calvin's doctrine: To baptize infants while denying the infant salvation of elect children is "a de-

nial of the truth of God's covenant promise" (p. 21).

It is worth noting that Schenck shows that historic Presbyterianism has always distinguished "the essence and the administration of the covenant" (p. 122). The administration of the covenant includes many who are not saved. The "es-

sence" of the covenant is enjoyed only by the elect. All the children of believing parents are in the sphere of the covenant. Only the elect children are in the covenant.

*The Presbyterian Doctrine of Children in the Covenant* is no longer the doctrine of covenant children of most Presbyterians. May it become so once again. 

## Taking Heed to the Doctrine

Rev. James Laning

# The Apostolicity of the Church (1)

**R**eformed believers officially confess to believe the apostolicity of the church. The Nicene Creed is one of our official creeds, and in this creed we confess to believe "one holy catholic and apostolic church." Thus it is very important that we understand the meaning of the church's apostolicity, so that we may confess this truth with understanding from the heart.

When considering the apostolicity of the church we once again make a distinction between the church as the universal body of the elect and the church as an institute upon this earth. First of all, it is the church as the universal body of the elect that is apostolic. The passages cited below to prove the apostolicity of the church refer to the church as the universal body of Christ. But this truth also applies to the church as institute, and thus it is proper to refer to a faithful church upon this earth as an apostolic church.

### The Apostolic Church: the Church Holding to the Apostolic Doctrine

That the church is apostolic means that it is built upon the truth set forth by the apostles in the New

Testament. Apostolicity has to do with the very foundation of the church. A true church is built upon the Truth, since Christ is the Truth, and this Truth has been set forth infallibly for us by the divinely inspired apostles in the New Testament.

The Scriptures make specific reference to this in a number of places. First, there is Ephesians 2:20, which says that the church is "built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone." Here the truth revealed through "the apostles and prophets" is referred to as the foundation of the church. The prophets referred to in this passage were the inspired prophets of Paul's day, as is evident from the other references to "the prophets" in the book of Ephesians (cf. Eph. 3:5; 4:11).

In Revelation 21:14, we read the following symbolic description of the heavenly city, the new Jerusalem: "And the wall of the city had twelve foundations, and in them the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb." Clearly the reference here is to the apostles not as mere men, but as ambassadors of Christ who spoke the words of Christ. To be built upon the apostles is to be built upon the truth spoken and written by the apostles.

That this is the idea is found

more explicitly elsewhere in Scripture. In Acts 2:42, we read that the believers in the new dispensation "continued stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship." Still today the believers are those who remain "in the apostles' doctrine." A church that is truly apostolic is one that continues to proclaim the same truth that the apostles proclaimed and wrote down infallibly in the New Testament Scriptures.

### Apostolicity & the Relation of the New Testament to the Old

But if the church is built upon the truth set forth by the apostles in the New Testament, what does that mean for the Old Testament? Obviously it does not mean that the New Testament writings are the only ones to which we hold. Rather, it means that when one is holding to the truth set forth by the apostles in the New Testament, he is, in fact, also holding to the truth set forth in the Old Testament, since it is the same truth taught in both the Old and New Testaments. In addition to this, however, it does mean that there is a certain priority to the New Testament. It is in the New Testament that we have a divinely inspired explanation of what is taught in the law and the prophets of the Old Testament. For example, the truth of the Trinity is taught in the Old Testament, but

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in our creeds we confess that this truth "which appears to us somewhat obscure in the Old Testament is very plain in the New" (Belgic Confession, Article 9).

To reject the New Testament explanation of the Old Testament is really to deny the apostolicity of the church. For example, there are many who take the Old Testament promises concerning all nations coming to Christ, and say that these promises are teaching that one day soon every nation on this earth will be governed by Christian rulers. Such people try to prove their position by quoting frequently from the Old Testament, while ignoring the apostolic explanation of these promises that is found in the New Testament. The apostles said that the promises concerning all nations coming to Christ are fulfilled when a remnant from the different nations is converted and believes in Jesus (Acts 15:17). The rejection of this is a rejection of the truth of Scripture and very really a rejection of the apostolicity of the church.

#### **A Succession of the Truth, not of Persons**


The Romish church says that she alone is the apostolic church because, so she claims, there is a continuous line of succession from the present pope back to the apostle Peter, and from the bish-

ops in the Romish church back to the other apostles. Peter, they say, was the first pope and the rock upon which their church is built. To prove this, they have invented a long line of popes, starting with Peter and ending with their present leader, Pope John Paul II.

Contrary to this, we say that maintaining the truth taught by the apostles is what is important. Let us say, just for the purpose of argument, that Peter was the first pastor of the church in Rome. This would by no means prove that the Romish church today is an apostolic church. All around the world there are churches that once had faithful pastors proclaiming the truth of the gospel, which now have completely apostatized. We know from the epistle to the Romans found in Scripture that there once was a sound church in Rome, a church that was founded by the teaching of the apostles. But this church later apostatized, so that it no longer was an apostolic church. At the time of the Protestant Reformation, the Reformers knew that the Romish church had a long history, going back to the days of the apostles, but the Romish church had long ago departed from the teaching of the apostles. The Reformers reformed the church by breaking away from this apostate institute and forming congregations that were based squarely and

solely on the truth set forth by the apostles in the Scriptures.

The Romish church, of course, rejects this, and appeals to her "catholicity" to prove her "apostolicity." The church that is truly holding to the truth taught by the apostles will be a church visibly spread throughout the whole world, she says, and churches holding to false doctrines will be confined to only a few regions. But this is based, in part, on Rome's false view of what is meant by the catholicity of the church, a view that was refuted in the previous article. There is one central mark that indicates whether or not an instituted church is a true manifestation of the one catholic and apostolic church, and that is the mark of the pure preaching of the apostles' gospel. A true church is a church that preaches the apostolic doctrine, no matter how small she may be, and no matter how few like-minded churches she can find with whom she can enjoy fellowship.

Remaining steadfast in the apostles' doctrine is our calling. It is the church that does this, and only the church that does this, that also "groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord" (Eph. 2:21). It is the apostolic church that is holy, living apart from this world and in close covenant communion with her God and Husband. 

## *All Around Us*

*Rev. Kenneth Koole*

### **■ Who Is to Blame for the Scandal of Rome's Priests (OR: What Else Would One Expect?)**

**I**n the wake of Rome's sex-abuse scandal the U.S. conference of Catholic bishops undertook an investigation into the allegations

against its priests and the irresponsible response of its Bishops. The results have recently been published. According to the study, the bishops concluded that 4,392 priests allegedly have abused more than 10,000 victims over a 50-year time span. [You may be sure this is the most favorable estimation (and spin) possible.]

What is noteworthy is that the study was honest enough to acknowledge that the molesting

priests were by and large homosexual. This is one of the dirty little secrets of the homosexual lifestyle. From the homosexual population come the predators of young teenage boys. And it has nothing to do with consent. The gay-liberation movement (with its supporting politicians) has not welcomed such press. The liberal news media has acted equally ignorant that such might be the case. Truth is not what such folks are looking for.

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Now, however, in response to Rome's bishops' study, a book has been written by an openly homosexual author, David France. It is entitled *Our Fathers: The Secret Life of the Catholic Church in an Age of Scandal*. In this book, in a surprising admission, France acknowledges that the offending priests were homosexual after all. He had little choice in the matter. He interviewed a number of the priests involved, and they all informed him that they were gay. Um-m-m-m.... Imagine that! Now what?

What should not surprise us is where Mr. France has decided to put the blame. It is not on the offenders themselves, of course. In an article entitled "'Homophobia' Blamed for Priests' Abuse" (Agape Press), reporters Ed Vitagliano and Sherrie Black inform us just where Mr. France thinks the blame should be. In an interview by a pro-gay magazine, France stated

"[W]e now know from talking to these priests [who molested teenagers]: they're gay," France told *The Advocate*, a magazine targeted to the homosexual community, adding, "And if they were gay men, we should ask ourselves why that was happening. What caused it?"

What is France's explanation in *Our Fathers*? "What I argue is that these guys represent homosexuality in pure and total repression," he said. "This is what successful repression looks like: men so alienated from their own sense of self that their sexual expression came out in explosive ways."

So, it is all due to "homophobia." The "real" offenders are not the priests who did the molesting. Rather, they themselves, like those upon whom they preyed, are to be numbered amongst the victims. The real "perps" are those in society and church "guilty" of condemning homosexuality and calling such behavior a forbidden thing. This means, of course, that those really to blame for this whole

sordid mess are those who had nothing to do with the scandalous behavior and those with whom adolescent boys would be perfectly safe. Why of course! Who else?

Unbelievable! The brazenness and illogicalness of the reasoning leaves one gasping. But we live in an age when such reasoning is more and more considered compelling and sound. An intellectual madness rules.

The question that begs to be asked of France and his cronies is, "So what are you implying? If I understand you right, it is this — the desire for adolescent boys is due to the repression of homosexual desires. Therefore we should let such men pursue their desires (just be themselves), and, if society and church would simply give these men free rein to pursue their cravings, then suddenly young boys would be safe. In other words, the only way to make sure your adolescent boys are safe from such men, is to let such men loose amongst your adolescent boys." Amazing. Who has heard of anything quite so "insane." Yet, today this makes perfect sense.

Fortunately, not everyone as yet has bought into such "reasoning." The article also points out

That explanation is rejected by pro-family groups. "So France's solution would be for the Catholic Church to embrace homosexuality and allow practicing homosexuals to serve as priests? And then the abuse would stop?" asked Tim Wildmon, president of the American Family Association. "That's ridiculous fantasy denied by history and the undercurrents within gay culture. The real solution is to make sure that homosexuals aren't in the priesthood."

How true. The trouble is, as the article goes on to say, Rome continues to reassign priests charged with such behavior to other parishes "incognito," and so the cycle continues. Ever true to herself, Rome really admits to very

little and essentially changes nothing about itself in this area either.

## ■ Where This Is All Heading

In the end, what the laws and the judges that are granting the homosexual lifestyle legal protection and recognition are aiming at is no secret. It's the freedom of the pulpit. An article entitled "Hate-Crime Law Worries Pastors: Some consider liability insurance to cover pulpit remarks" (Worldnet Daily) makes this very plain.

Pennsylvania (not exactly known as a hotbed for the liberal movement) now has laws against "hate-crimes" on its books. It just recently approved of amendments to these laws that make the interpretation of what constitutes a "hate-crime" very broad indeed. As of June, "harassment by communication" now constitutes a "hate-crime." No wonder churches and pastors in the Quaker state are beginning to shake a bit.

A religious liberty group is trying to reassure Pennsylvania pastors who fear they could face prosecution under a new law if they preach against homosexuality.

The *Becket Fund for Religious Liberty* sent a letter to 9,000 houses of worship across the state June 18 after a hate-crimes law was amended to add "sexual orientation" and "gender identity" as motives that trigger heavier penalties for the crimes of "harassment."

"It is a measure of our times that religious leaders have lately considered taking out liability insurance to cover remarks made from the pulpit," said Becket Fund President Kevin J. Hasson.

Of particular concern to pastors is the amendment's expansion of the definition of "harassment" to include "harassment by communication" — which means one could be convicted on the basis of spoken words alone.

"Although legislators expressly disavowed the motive at the time, one might be forgiven the impression that one purpose of this leg-



isolation was to generate a fear of prosecution among those who would preach and teach in favor of the traditional prohibition on homosexual behavior — a teaching so common to so many faiths," Hasson noted.

However, the Becket Fund's letter explained to clergy that the new law should not deter them from preaching against homosexual conduct.

The group says that although the language of the law appears to cover preaching from the pulpit, it is unlikely to be applied that way.

The Becket Fund also offered to help ministers threatened with such prosecution. "We will defend, free of charge, anything said from the pulpit, conservative or liberal, wisdom or nonsense, so long as it is a religious message given in good faith," Hasson declared.

Will such a law be used against the pulpit, churches, and preachers who speak out against homosexuality? You had better believe it will. We do not doubt that Mr. Hasson says what he says in good faith. He simply cannot bring himself to believe anybody would stoop so low as to use this law to charge preachers (who condemned the homosexual lifestyle as displeasing to God) with being guilty of "hate-crimes." Legislators assured him this was not their intention.

Brother Hasson is mistaken. He may be sure that the one main purpose of those promoting the Pennsylvania legislation is exactly "...to generate fear of prosecution among those who would preach and teach in favor of the traditional prohibition on homosexual behavior." Supporters of the gay-movement are convinced that the primary generator of hate and prejudice against homosexuality (by calling it sin and deviant behavior) is the Christian church and its pulpits. They intend to get at such. This legislation, all pious blandishments aside, simply gives them the

legal club with which to do it down the road.

And Pennsylvania's legislation is an indicator of the coming wave.

## ■ "When Ball Becomes Baal"

The above heading is within quotation marks. I cannot take credit for it. It is another man's phrase — a certain Jim Elliff, writing an article for the Baptist Press. It is timely. It hits home.

Sports has become much of Christianity's new "god." Those of us living in West Michigan can verify that. Last month the *Grand Rapids Press* ran a three part series on Christians (of the Reformed community in particular) getting more and more involved in Sunday sports in every way — as fans, as participants, as professionals earning their living [desecrating] the Lord's Day. The Grand Rapids community has noticed this development. The *Grand Rapids Press* thought it high time for the Christian community, its Reformed section in particular, to explain (and justify) itself after so long having condemned those who played on the Lord's Day.

The same Christian churches that so recently condemned sports and recreation as a transgression of the Lord's Holy Day, now have members out there hitting a pitching wedge to the green and trying to leg out a double with the best (worst?) of them. Professing Christians lead the Sunday hit parade. What gives? What changed? The community wonders.

The Christian "apologists" did their best to explain. According to the "apologists," the new "freedom" to "violate" the Lord's Day has to do with Christian maturity, that is, Christians finally growing up and learning not to be so legalistic, that is, judging others by one's own personal preference as to what one may or may not do on the Lord's Day. Spiritual maturity means each has the right to deter-

mine for oneself what's the best use of the Lord's Day for one's spiritual growth. Some evidently find arguing with an umpire over another blown call another step in their spiritual development.

In short, it appears to me what comes to light is a new insight into the Bible, in particular a passage we evidently have misinterpreted for all too long: "When I was a child, I spake as a child, I thought as a child: but when I became a man, (and spiritually mature), I embraced with even greater fervor childish things and refused to put them away even on the Lord's Day." I am sure that is what I Corinthians 13:11 really must have meant to say.

Evidently the Baptist community where Jim Elliff lives is dealing with the same sports craze our Reformed community is dealing with here in West Michigan. He writes as one who knows.

I love to watch my kids play sports. In fact they need to play — some.

But it's not as easy as handing over 70 bucks and saying, "Sign up Johnny and Susie this year." Making that decision means that you may be out four to five times each week during the season. Sports soon becomes all about calendarization [sic] and control of your life — especially if you have more than one kid. Perhaps nothing outside of a change in your job has so much potential to turn the family schedule upside down.

"This man understands," you say.

Now comes the part you won't like: "Behold, I say unto you, you have made sports the household god." Too strong? Okay, not everyone has done this. But the deification of sports is happening to many.

How does ball become Baal? Answer: When it controls you, and you give it devoted worship. It is around your god that you order your life — and you can almost never say 'no' to it.

Like athlete's foot on the hygienically challenged teenager,

sports has taken over more and more of the life of believers. Almost overnight we have awakened to the sad fact that, in many communities, sports has even usurped the hours believers meet on the Lord's Day.

All too often members are saying to church leaders, "We'll be gone next Sunday because of the soccer tournament." In turn, leaders are supposed to acquiesce humbly. After all, we can't afford to appear "legalistic"; everyone knows that the greatest crime a church can commit is to demand something of someone.

You'll hear, "But the team needs all the players. We can't let the team down." It never occurs to them that the church body is being deprived of a necessary body

part, or that God is marginalized and disobeyed. We are not to forsake the assembling of ourselves together, God states in Hebrews 10:25.

Devotion is the operative word. When the team says, "We need you," we sacrifice to do it. But when it crosses the time allotted to spiritual edification and worship, the Ruler of the universe is often sent to the bench. In the process, we teach our children that devotion to sports is more important than both devotion to God and loyalty to our spiritual family. Have you considered that you may be teaching your kids to worship sports?

Timely.


The Olympics are past, and fall sports loom on the horizon, both

school and professional. Has ball become Baal with us? Don't say it is not there.

And what is happening in our homes on Sundays?

Do we really think watching on our televisions Sammy Sosa take another mighty cut or Phil Mickelson go for another major or the Lions take on the Bears on Sunday afternoon is any different than watching in the stadium itself? Do we really think one Apostle would join us and commend such "Christianity"?

Come now.

To what extent is ball becoming Baal in our family rooms on Sunday afternoons? The angels must weep. 

## Book Reviews



*Praying Together for True Revival*, by Jonathan Edwards. Ed. T. M. Moore. Phillipsburg, New Jersey: P&R Publishing, 2004. Pp. xvii + 204. \$11.99 (paper). [Reviewed by the editor.]

In connection with the 300<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Edwards' birth in 1703, a number of works by and about Jonathan Edwards are appearing. *Praying Together* is one of Edwards' own works under a new title. The original title was, in shortened form, *An Humble Attempt to Promote Explicit Agreement and Visible Union of God's People in Extraordinary Prayer for the Revival of Religion and the Advancement of Christ's Kingdom on Earth, Pursuant to Scripture Promises and Prophecies Concerning the Last Time*. The book was first published in 1747.

The book is Edwards' plea that all Christians unite at stated times over several years to pray for worldwide revival of true religion.

Edwards was enthusiastic for revivals. For the welfare and growth of the church in the world, he looked, in large part, to extraordinary outpourings of the Spirit.

The united prayer of many over a long time would move God to send these revivals. Edwards found biblical support for revivals everywhere in Scripture, especially in the Old Testament.

Basic to his zeal for revival and his plea for united prayer on behalf of revival was Edwards' pronounced postmillennialism. He expected the "future glorious advancement of the church," the "church's latter-day glory." Such was his hope for the earthly future of the church that he foretold the conversion of vast multitudes, the saving of all nations in at least the majority of their citizens and in their rulers, and a long period of earthly peace and prosperity for the saints. One wonders whether there will be any unsaved at all. No Christian Reconstructionist outdoes Edwards in describing the earthly triumph of the church. That which would accomplish this glorious age of the church would be the final and great revival. And the revival will come about by Edwards' huge "prayer chain."

Edwards' postmillennial dream may not have been "whimsical," as

he put it. But it was false doctrine. The prayer for worldwide revival, which was based on the postmillennial error, was—and is—rebellion against God. God has made known in His Word that His will for the "last time" is not the church's earthly glory, but the abounding of lawlessness in the world, the apostasy of the visible church, and the great tribulation of the remnant. Nor did the united prayers for the great revival by Edwards and the many who listened to him change God's revealed will. There was no great revival then or later.

All the New Testament's teaching of lawlessness, apostasy, and persecution in the last days, Edwards dispensed with by thrusting it into the past. He recognized that these prophecies were a "damp" to prayer for the great revival and the golden age of the church. All, therefore, were said by Edwards to have been fulfilled at the Reformation, when the papacy supposedly was destroyed. Edwards was a "preterist," as all postmillennialists are forced to be.

Implicit in the call to united



prayer for revival by all churches and Christians was an illegitimate ecumenicity. Genuine oneness in the Spirit is not effected or displayed by union in praying, but by unity in doctrine.

Evident in postmillennial Edwards as in all other dreamers of the dream of the church's earthly victory is a singular disinterest in seeing Christ. According to postmillennialism, Christ does not return to be seen and enjoyed by redeemed men and women until the long ages of the millennium have rolled on.

The postmillennialists burn to see the church's latter-day glory. Amillennialists long to see Jesus Christ.

Postmillennialists are much in prayer for the golden age of the church. The prayer, day and night, of the amillennialist is, "Come, Lord Jesus, come quickly." ■

*Justification*, by Francis Turretin. Tr. George Musgrave Giger. Ed. James T. Dennison, Jr. Phillipsburg, New Jersey: P&R, 2004. Pp. xxvi + 115. \$9.99 (paper). [Reviewed by the editor.]

This one hundred-page excerpt from Francis Turretin's work of Reformed theology is timely. Unbelievably, Reformed and Presbyterian churches are being troubled by brazen attack on the truth of justification. To a large extent, the ministers and theologians either support the heretics or fail to give clear, sharp instruction on justification that will expose the heresy and help the troubled members of the congregations.

Francis Turretin, seventeenth century Swiss theologian and professor of theology at Calvin's Academy in Geneva, gave clear, thorough, polemical instruction on the fundamental truth of justification.

Those directly involved in the life-and-death struggle with the current false gospel of justification by faith and the works of faith

should read this short work. All Reformed Christians will profit from it. In a few places, the going gets heavy, but for the most part the layman will have no trouble understanding the language and following the arguments. The instruction is biblical.

The importance of the sound doctrine of justification, Turretin indicated at the outset.

Justification ... must be handled with the greater care and accuracy as this saving doctrine is of the greatest importance in religion. It is called by Luther "the article of a standing and a falling church." By other Christians, it is termed the characteristic and basis of Christianity—not without reason—the principal rampart of the Christian religion. This being adulterated or subverted, it is impossible to retain purity of doctrine in other places. Hence Satan in every way has endeavored to corrupt this doctrine in all ages, as has been done especially in the papacy (p. 1).

R.C. Sproul has a hard-hitting introduction to the book. He affirms the fundamental importance of justification by faith alone to the gospel as indicated in Luther's assessment, "the article of a standing and a falling church."

Without this doctrine the church falls; she collapses into ruin. She ceases to be a true church. Though every other article of historic Christian faith remains intact—if this one (*sola fide* [by faith alone]) is lost, the church is lost with it (p. vii).

One of the "serious questions" raised today regarding the Reformation's doctrine of justification is that which Norman Shepherd taught for years at Westminster Theological Seminary.

The controversy at Westminster Theological Seminary in Philadelphia over theologian Norman Shepherd's teaching regarding justification remains unresolved. The

number of Shepherd's followers has increased over the years since he was dismissed from Westminster (p. xiii).

The next-to-the-last chapter considers the question whether there is an eternal justification.

The last chapter explains the justification that takes place at the final judgment. ■

*The Path of True Godliness*, by Willem Teellinck. Tr. Annemie Godbehere. Ed. Joel R. Beeke. Grand Rapids: Baker, 2003. Pp. 303. \$19.99 (paper). [Reviewed by the editor.]

Written by a prominent Reformed minister in the Netherlands, Willem Teellinck, early in the seventeenth century, *The Path of True Godliness* is a book about godliness. Teellinck defined godliness as "a gift of God by which man is made willing and able to serve God."

In keeping with Teellinck's conviction that the purpose of the Christian faith is a godly life, the book is intensely practical from the first page to the last. The concerned pastor urged upon the individual Christian the attitudes of heart and behavior of life that ought to adorn the doctrines of the gospel. What he exhorted, he drew from Scripture.

The godly realize that the greatest disgrace is to boast of possessing and agreeing with the purest doctrine yet failing to show the power of godliness and to avoid evil in their lives. This makes them walk carefully and live a modest life so that their lives are more righteous than those of the pagan moralist philosophers of yesterday and the legalistic sectarians of today. We read in 1 Corinthians 9:25-27, 2 Corinthians 11:12, and Philippians 4:8 that such was the practice of the godly Paul (pp. 104, 105).

It is evident that Teellinck saw,

or thought he saw, worldliness in the members of the Dutch Reformed churches. Against it, he struck out sharply and pointedly. One weakness was the drinking, gluttony, and dubious merriment at weddings. Teellinck returned to this evil again and again. His warning against such corruption of the Christian fellowship at weddings is timely. Professing Reformed Christians permit excessive drinking, ribald jokes, ungodly noise passing for music, and even dancing at the wedding receptions for which they are responsible.


Imagine the scene of people who profess to be Christians having a drinking party in a dirty tavern. Or think of the frivolous and inappropriate behavior of such people at a carnival or festival or sinful wedding feast. Imagine that some Muslims, pagans, or Turks who were present heard these so-called Christians ranting,

raving, boasting, and drinking. If they asked what kind of people they were and learned that they were Christians, would this not cause them to despise the God of all Christians, the one who is the true God? When they see so-called Christians lying, deceiving, and cheating, will this not give them the wrong impression of the Christian God? A Christian's sinful lifestyle is a very strong way of blaspheming the name of the mighty and true God (p. 287).

Here and there, Teellinck is guilty of disturbing, erroneous teaching of universal, resistible grace. We must "let the loving-kindness of God win us over to true repentance and the practice of godliness," or we will perish (p. 241). Jesus "knock[s] on our hearts with kind invitations (Rev. 3:20)," desiring to save us, and we should "let him in" (p. 245). "The Holy Spirit promises to give you a new

heart and a new spirit *when you sincerely decide to practice godliness*" (p. 245; emphasis added). "Seeing that the Lord God offers to take away our hearts of stone and give us new hearts and spirits in order to serve him well, how can we still refuse him?" (p. 247).

This serious departure from the gospel of sovereign, particular grace is both the more significant and the more inexcusable in view of the fact that the book was first published in 1621—two years after the Synod of Dordt condemned such teaching as Arminian heresy. There was reason why, as the editor notes, "some Reformed leaders ... put him [Teellinck] in league with the Arminians" (p. 22).

*The Path of True Godliness* is one of several smaller works on "Reformed Spirituality" translated and published under the auspices of the Dutch Reformed Translation Society. 

## News From Our Churches

Mr. Benjamin Wigger

### Evangelism Activities

**T**his past month members of the Evangelism Committee of the Randolph, WI PRC were able to host a booth at the Alto Fair. Pamphlets, books, and tapes were made available to fair goers in an effort to make them more aware of the Reformed distinctives and Randolph PRC. Related to that effort, in August Randolph will also be starting a series of community mailings this fall, intending to mail about three a year. This was intended to be yet another way in which members of Randolph could show their community that they do stand for the truth of God's Word. The congregation was also encouraged to talk to their neighbors af-

ter the first mailing appeared in their mailboxes, to see if they had any questions about it.

A summer singspiration sponsored by the Evangelism Society of First PRC in Grand Rapids, MI was held Sunday evening, August 8, at First Church. It was hoped that, since it was summertime, many young children would be able to attend. Anticipating this, First's Evangelism Society planned several songs for younger children. There was an offering for the evangelism work of First, and a light lunch was served before the program. What a joyful way to bring a Lord's Day to a close with praise to God with instruments and voices.

Members of PR congregations around the Chicago, IL area were reminded in early August that the Reformed Witness Hour program had changed radio stations. Beginning on August 8, the program be-

gan to be heard on Sunday mornings, 8:30 A.M., on radio station WAIT. Congregation members were asked to let their friends, family, and acquaintances know of the change. Peace PRC in Lansing, IL even encouraged their members to distribute flyers that included a listing of the programs for August to anyone they thought might be interested in listening to the messages.

### Mission Activities

**I**n a recent letter from Mrs. Phyllis Bekkering, wife of missionary Rev. W. Bekkering, serving our churches in Ghana, West Africa, we read that our missionaries there are having a difficult time right now. The mission is losing some of its members. Mrs. Bekkering continues her letter by saying, "Whether that is good or bad we leave in God's hands. The missionaries labor to preach the

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



Word to His people and His people are fed. God, who gives us strength to continue our work here, is working His good work. We trust in His wisdom in all things, which is a great comfort when times are difficult." Remember our churches' work in Ghana in your prayers.

When the committee of Rev. G. Eriks and Mr. Dave Poortenga, from the Loveland, CO PRC, the calling church for our denomination's mission work in Spokane, WA and the Covenant of Grace PR Fellowship there, were in Spokane recently, they heard the confessions of faith of Christopher Miersma, son of missionary Rev. T. and Janice Miersma, and Aaron and Deb Edwards, a young couple who have been part of the group for over a year and a half, on behalf of the Loveland consistory. All three gave a good confession of their belief in Christ as their Savior, as well as to their agreement with the doctrines and practices of the PRC.

With thanksgiving to God, the confessions, as well as the adult baptism of Aaron Edwards, took place on Sunday, August 15. We rejoice in this evidence of growth in Spokane.

Missionary Rev. J. Mahtani, his wife Esther, and part of their family were able to spend about two weeks, from August 9-23, in Fayetteville, N.C. with the members of the Protestant Reformed Fellowship there. This was scheduled to be a working vacation in order to fulfill Rev. Mahtani's long overdue visit to the saints there. For vacation time, those two weeks included spending time with families living in the area, relaxing on the beach, and time for the family to rest and reflect before another busy study season. The working part of the two weeks was to include visiting with the saints there, spending time pursuing past contacts in the area, besides preaching for two Lord's Days for the Fellowship and its members.


## Congregation Activities

Christian Fellowship members of the Hull, Iowa PRC were invited to join together at Rock Rapids pool on August 11. Swimming was from 7-9 P.M., with lunch served afterwards in the park.

Members of the Adult Fellowship of Hope PRC in Redlands, CA were asked to reserve August 14 for a beach day for the whole family. Members of Hope were invited to come any time during the day, and the committee would provide dinner.

The Men's Choral Group of the Loveland, CO PRC presented a program on August 8 after their evening service. Besides choral singing, there were several special numbers.

## Minister Activities

From a trio of Rev. W. Bruinsma, Rev. D. Kleyn, and Rev. J. Slopsema, the congregation of First PRC in Edmonton, AB, Canada extended a call to Rev. Kleyn to serve as their next pastor. 

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## Announcements

### WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

On September 21, 2004 our parents,  
**LEWIS and JANET DE JONG**,  
will celebrate their 25<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary.

We, their children, are so thankful for the many years of covenant instruction they have given to us. We give thanks to God for His faithfulness to them in their marriage and for their godly example to us. It is our prayer that God may continue to bless them in their marriage and care for them in the years to come. "Trust in the Lord with all thine heart and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him and he shall direct thy paths" (Proverbs 3: 5 & 6).

✿ Joseph and Rachael Venema  
✿ Tim, Michelle, Kurt, Phillip, Lanae,  
& Ethan De Jong  
South Holland, Illinois

### REMINDER!!!

This is the last issue of the volume year. If you desire to have your copies bound, please bring the entire set (October 1, 2003 — September 15, 2004) to the seminary by October 15. The cost of binding your own *SBs* is still \$13.00.

### LECTURE

Speaker:  
**Prof. David J. Engelsma**

Title:  
"The Reformed Worldview  
on Behalf of a Godly Culture"  
(a follow-up of the  
Mouw/Engelsma debate  
over common grace)

Date/Time:  
Friday, October 8, 2004, 7:30 P.M.

Location:  
Grace Community Church,  
3500 New Holland,  
Hudsonville, MI

Invitation extended by  
Grandville PRC Evangelism Society

### WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

Praise and thanks be to God, who has graciously allowed our parents and grandparents,

**MR. and MRS. HENRY W. KUIPER**,  
to commemorate their 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary on September 10, 2004.

We thank them for the many sacrifices they have made to give us a Christian upbringing. May they continue to experience God's blessing in the years ahead.

"But I have trusted in thy mercy; my heart shall rejoice in thy salvation. I will sing unto the Lord, because he hath dealt bountifully with me" (Psalm 13:5, 6).

✿ Henry and Betty Kuiper  
Sydney  
✿ Keith and Wanda Bruinsma  
Brian and Stacy Bruinsma, Dora  
Greg and Elizabeth Bruinsma  
Sheila  
Michael and Janelle DeJong  
Calvin, Micah  
✿ Barbara Kuiper  
✿ Daniel and Deb Kuiper  
Brittany  
✿ Henry and Judy Buiter  
Nathan, Alicia, Monica, Ryan  
✿ Paul and Christine Kenner  
Steven, David  
✿ Dave and Karla Zandstra  
Bart, Rhonda, Krystra, Caleb  
✿ Dolores Kuiper  
✿ Greg and Mary Flint  
Cassi, Ciarra, Colby

Lynden, Washington

### NOTICE!!!

Our pastor, Rev. Steven Houck, will be completing his 25<sup>th</sup> year of service as a minister in our denomination this September, the Lord willing. An evening of thanksgiving to God for Pastor Houck's faithful work among us is planned for Sunday, October 10, at 7:30 p.m. following the evening worship service. You are invited to join us at Peace PRC in Lansing, IL for this joyous occasion.

Peace PRC  
Bill DeJong, Clerk  
Garry Eriks, Vice President

### World and Life View Conference

September 24 & 25, 2004 in Hull, IA  
*Sponsored by the Christian  
Fellowship Society of Hull PRC*

Friday, September 24 at 7:30 P.M.  
**Lecture**  
at the chapel in Dordt College  
Sioux Center, IA

Speaker: **Prof. David Engelsma**  
"Reformed Worldview of Particular Grace"

Saturday, September 25  
Events held at Hull PRC  
9:30 A.M.

**Speech by Prof. Syd Hielema**,  
Professor of theology at Dordt College,  
giving Dordt's position on their world/life view.

**Lecture by Prof. David Engelsma**  
"Flawed & Fatal Worldview of Common Grace"

**Lunch**—Provided by the  
Hull Christian Fellowship Society.

**Symposium/Debate**  
**Prof. Engelsma, Prof. Hielema**

Check out  
the RFPa web-site:  
[www.rfpa.org](http://www.rfpa.org)

### 2004 FALL REFORMATION LECTURE

Rev. Charles Terpstra  
will speak on  
"Solo Christo"  
Principles of the Reformation:  
#2 — "Salvation by  
Christ Alone!"

Friday, October 29, 2004  
7:30 P.M.

Sponsored by  
First Holland PRC  
Evangelism Committee  
3641 104<sup>th</sup> Ave.  
Zeeland, MI 49464

Come, bring a friend;  
refreshments will be served