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The Blessed Way of the Righteous

For the LORD knoweth the way of the righteous; but the way of the ungodly shall perish.

Psalm 1:6

We have here a most remarkable Psalm. As the first psalm in this memorable book of songs it sets forth the theme and tone for the entire book. It does this by showing us the attitude of God toward both the ungodly and the righteous. The first five verses describe the two.

On the one hand, the righteous man does not walk in the counsel of the ungodly, nor does he stand in the way of sinners, nor sit in the seat of scorners. On the other hand, he delights in the law of the Lord, meditates in it day and night, and is likened to a tree planted by the rivers of water. This tree brings forth fruit in its season and its leaf does not wither. As such the righteous prosper.

In contrast the ungodly are like the chaff that the wind drives

away. Having no roots he cannot and shall not stand in the judgment or in the congregation of the righteous.

Our text serves as a conclusion to the Psalm and states the reason for what was said in the first five verses. It tells us why the righteous are like a tree and why the wicked are likened to chaff.

From a spiritual point of view the way of man is the way he himself chooses to walk according to the dictates of his own heart. It is also the way that God determines and regulates and on which He leads man according to His sovereign good pleasure.

The child of God is righteous in two different senses. He is righteous by faith, which means that he has not earned his righteousness but has been declared righteous by God. He is also righteous by the Spirit of Christ, which results in a walk of righteousness that is really a walk in the way of sanctification. His walk is in harmony with his righteousness. It is the latter sense that has the emphasis in our text. The righteous delights to do God's will and commandments. It is his will and desire to meditate on that way. That way is externally deter-

mined by the law of God and internally by the choice of a regenerated and sanctified heart.

Similarly, the way of the ungodly is internally determined by his own life's choice. An ungodly man is free only to do evil, a way in which he meditates and delights. From within he is bound, so that the only thing that he can do is sin. Externally he follows the will of the prince of darkness. As a result, in the counsel of the ungodly he plans and plots ungodly things. If you look for him, you will find him in the way of sinners and in the seat of the scorners.

Thus, the two ways are quite different. The one is hard and dark; the other is smooth and straight. This is the experience both of the righteous and of the ungodly as God determines and directs their ways.

However, according to some, the ways are very much alike. They will agree that the end of each is different, but they insist that the ways themselves are alike, in that both the righteous and the ungodly are the objects of God's good favor and grace. We have heard of this before under the guise of what is called common grace.

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In no sense of the word are the two ways alike, for from the external point of view the ungodly prosper while the righteous have trouble and suffering. This is everyday experience as well as the testimony of God's Word. In Psalm 92:7 we read, "When the wicked spring as grass, and when all the workers of iniquity do flourish; it is that they shall be destroyed for ever." And Christ in Matthew 5:11 declares, "Blessed are ye when men shall persecute you."

Everyday experience bears this out. Generally speaking, from the viewpoint of temporal prosperity the wealth and goods of this world are not in the hands of the righteous, but in the hands of the ungodly. The same is true with respect to might, power, name, position, and honor. Furthermore, one does not find that the righteous persecute and subjugate the wicked. No, it is just the other way around. It is the righteous that suffer and are oppressed.

This situation exists exactly because the ungodly have all these things through their ungodliness, while the righteous are oppressed and must suffer precisely because of their righteousness.

Contemplating this, a question begins to form in our minds: must we measure the reality of the respective ways and judge those ways according to that which is external? If we answer in the affirmative, then the next question that comes to mind is, must we measure God's favor according to these external things? If we also here answer in the affirmative, then we really have a situation that is worse than common grace. Then the prosperity of the wicked is a revelation of the favor of God and the suffering of the righteous a revelation of God's wrath. That, of course, cannot be. So what is the attitude of God toward the righteous and the ungodly?

Very plainly the psalmist declares that the way of the ungodly perishes. He does not say that the

end of the ungodly is destruction, although that is true in itself. Nor does he say that the way of the ungodly ends in or leads to destruction, although this also is true. What he says is that the way itself perishes; it is a way of destruction.

Three elements are implied here. First, without a doubt the everlasting end of that ungodly man on that way is everlasting destruction. Already from this point of view the ungodly is not to be envied because of his way. It is much better to enjoy everlasting salvation with brief suffering of this time than everlasting destruction and pleasures for a brief time. Secondly, it must be seen that the way leads to that destruction. It certainly is not true that the way has nothing to do with the end. That way leads to everlasting destruction for that is its direction. And thirdly, that way works destruction. Hear the apostle Peter in II Peter 2:1 as he speaks of false prophets and teachers: "and bring upon themselves swift destruction."

The text under consideration brings this out by way of contrast: "the LORD knoweth the way of the righteous." In this way one enjoys God's love. God despises and hates the other way, the way of ungodliness. The ungodly are not the objects of His favor, but of His wrath. That is why the ungodly are never truly happy, for they experience the curse of God in their way. The reason for all the unrest in the world is that the peace of God is not in the ungodly. Everything that the wicked receive, no matter how good it may seem, must not be confused with blessings, but be understood rather to be a means to their destruction. They become fat with sin and, thus, ripe for destruction. God's dispensation over the wicked is as expressed in Psalm 92:9, "For, lo, thine enemies, O Lord, for, lo,

thine enemies shall perish; all the workers of iniquity shall be scattered."

How gloriously different it is for the righteous, the child of God. God knows the way of the righteous. It would appear otherwise sometimes, but God knows that way from eternity. This knowledge of God is a knowledge of love. From eternity God has ingrafted the righteous in Christ. From eternity He knows their life and their way. Truly they are the workmanship of God, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which He has before prepared that we should walk in them (Eph. 2:10). God delights in that way because it is the way of the righteous.

This too is the experience of the child of God. God knows the destination of that way because He has prepared for His people glory. Through all the difficulties of life God is preparing us that we might be made like unto the image of His Son. Therefore, He knows the way with all its experiences, for He has determined it, willed it, and prepared it. It is a deep way, but this deep way is necessary in order that we may obtain the higher glory. God knows the exact place in glory that each of His people shall occupy. Not all receive the same reward; and the crown is different for each one. And God knows the exact way that is necessary for us to attain that glory. He does not make any

errors. He is not sidetracked by anything that is unexpected.

All in all, we may confess that the way of suffering is the necessary way for God's people in general and for each individual member of the body of Jesus Christ. That very way, with all its experiences, He knows with His favor. The Lord our God is longsuffering to usward. All of our suffering and adversity do not arise out of wrath. No, God takes no pleasure in see-


Through all the difficulties of life God is preparing us that we might be made like unto the image of His Son.

ing His people suffer. All that we experience arises out of the love of God. As a father chastises his child in love to correct the child so that he walks in the fear of God, so our Father in love chastens us. "For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth" (Heb. 12:6).

Now we begin to see the bless-

edness of the way of the righteous. It is blessed with a view to the end. It is the way that does not perish. When the righteous stand at death's door they know that they shall pass through to the new, redeemed creation.

It is blessed with a view to the way. It is the right way, the way that leads to everlasting glory.

And finally, it is blessed with a view to God's favor. It is the way that leads to the pleasures that are at God's right hand. That means also that we enjoy God's favor on the way. Therefore, we, as God's people, should not envy the way of the ungodly, nor stand and walk in it. Rather, let us walk by faith in the way of the righteous, which leads to glory. 

Editorials

Covenantal Universalism: New Form of an Old Attack on Sovereign Grace (3)

Many of the reputedly conservative Reformed and Presbyterian churches are nourishing in their bosom an open, frontal attack on the gospel of salvation by sovereign grace.

Seminary professors, ministers, and ruling elders publicly reject every one of the doctrines of grace, beginning with justification by faith alone. They deny that these doctrines hold in the *sphere of the covenant of grace*.

Big names in the conservative Reformed realm plug their books. Powerful colleagues protect and defend them at the assemblies, if ever a layman screws up his courage and protests the heresy. Prominent seminaries pay their salaries.

Other ministers and elders remain prudently silent—prudently silent in the face of one of the gravest threats to the Reformed faith since Dordt.

Source of the Attack

The source of the contemporary attack on the gospel of sovereign

grace in the Reformed churches is a certain doctrine of the covenant. The teaching that rejects the doctrines of grace, beginning with justification by faith alone, is covenant doctrine. It advertises itself as covenant doctrine. It grounds its rejection of sovereign grace in a definite covenant conception. This is the power of its influence within the Reformed churches. This is why the Reformed churches stand helpless before the onslaught, or welcome it, as the case may be. God knows.

The doctrine of the covenant spawning the denial of the doctrines of grace holds that God extends His covenant grace (which is His saving grace in Christ) to all who are in the sphere of the covenant. God is gracious to every baptized child of godly parents. God is gracious to every adult who professes faith and is baptized. Such is the grace of God to all in the sphere of the covenant that He elects them all with the election of Ephesians 1:4 and II Thessalonians 2:13; Christ died for them all; all are savingly united to Christ; and

all enjoy the blessings of the covenant of grace.

Universal grace in the sphere of the covenant!

Covenantal universalism!

All are objects of grace, but all are not finally, everlastingly saved, for this covenant of universal grace is conditional. It depends for its continuance, for the continued enjoyment of its blessings, and for its accomplishment of final and everlasting salvation upon the faith and obedience of the member of the covenant. Faith and obedience are conditions of the covenant. Therefore, according to covenantal universalism, many lose their justification, lose their election, lose their atonement, lose their union with Christ, and lose their salvation. They perish eternally. They failed to fulfill the conditions.

The universal grace of the covenant is resistible.

By implication, the reason why others, similarly united to Christ at baptism, *do* endure to the end and *are* saved everlastingly is that they *did* fulfill the conditions. The reason cannot be the grace of the cov-

enant, for the grace of the covenant is given to all alike. In covenantal universalism, not the covenant grace of God, but the obedience of the sinner is decisive. The work of the sinner in fulfilling conditions gives the grace of the covenant its power to save.

This lethal assault on sovereign grace by the men of the "federal [covenant] vision," as they like to describe their movement, has its killing power from the doctrine of a conditional covenant.

Covenantal universalism is a new form of an older attack on sovereign grace. Covenantal universalism develops the older doctrine of a conditional covenant. It is especially the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands ("liberated") that have taught the conditional covenant. Their theologians were K. Schilder, B. Holwerda, and C. Veenhof. They have influenced many Reformed and Presbyterian churches and theologians. They were the main influence on Norman Shepherd.

Admittedly, the doctrine of a conditional covenant is popular in Reformed circles.

In the April 15 issue of the *Standard Bearer*, I described covenantal universalism. I demonstrated its rejection of all the doctrines of grace *in the sphere of the covenant*. The editorial in the May 15 issue showed that the teaching of covenantal universalism now troubling many Reformed churches bases itself on, and develops, the older doctrine of the covenant taught by the "liberated" Reformed Churches.

Reexamination of Covenant Doctrine

The contemporary controversy over justification by faith alone, as well as all the other doctrines of grace, requires that Reformed and Presbyterian churches reexamine their doctrine of the covenant.

The churches will not be able to resist covenantal universalism's attack on sovereign grace without

condemning the erroneous covenant doctrine from which this attack naturally arises. The root of covenantal universalism's attack on the doctrines of grace is the doctrine of a conditional covenant.

By the doctrine of a conditional covenant, I do not refer to the teaching that faith is the necessary instrument, or means, by which the elect sinner receives the covenant and its blessings, particularly justification. Some orthodox theologians, including Francis Turretin, spoke of faith as the "condition" of the covenant, meaning only that faith is the necessary instrument of covenant salvation. Turretin was at pains to spell this out: "Faith has the relation of a condition in this covenant ... *as it is the means and instrument of our union with Christ*" (*Institutes*, vol. 2, p. 187; emphasis added).

Nor do I refer to the teaching that in the covenant faith and obedience are required of the member of the covenant. Some otherwise sound men have called faith and obedience "conditions," unwisely and inaccurately, when they meant nothing more, or other, than that faith and obedience are demanded by God and are the way of covenant life and salvation. By "conditions," they meant covenant duties. As Turretin observed, this was an "improper" use of the term "condition" (*Institutes*, vol. 2, p. 189).

But the doctrine of a conditional covenant that is at the root of the current attack on the doctrines of grace teaches that a universal covenant grace of God—*grace extended more widely than only to the elect in Christ*—is conditioned—*really conditioned as regards its saving efficacy*—by the works of sinful men.

This is not a matter of terminology, not even a matter of improper, dangerous terminology. This is heresy. This is denial of the gospel of salvation by sovereign grace, in the sphere of the covenant. The saving grace of God,

which God bestows upon all, saves no one by virtue of its own inherent power. Grace in the covenant depends for its saving of any upon the faith and obedience of the sinner.

This covenant doctrine does not differ essentially from the teaching that faith and obedience *merit* salvation. A condition of the covenant upon which universal grace depends for its saving efficacy is, in fact, what Turretin called an "impulsive cause to obtain the benefits of the covenant." Turretin lumped condition in the sense of "impulsive cause" with condition in the sense of "meritorious cause" and condemned them both.

If the condition [of the covenant] is taken ... for the meritorious and impulsive cause and for a natural condition, the covenant of grace is rightly denied to be conditioned. It is wholly gratuitous, depending upon the sole good will (*eudokia*) of God and upon no merit of man. Nor can the right to life be founded upon any action of ours, but on the righteousness of Christ alone (*Institutes*, vol. 2, p. 185).

From this conditional doctrine of the covenant proceeds the denial of all the doctrines of grace. Those who love, and are determined to defend, the gospel of sovereign grace must repudiate this doctrine of the covenant.

Particular Covenant Grace

There is one, and only one, doctrine of the covenant that magnifies and safeguards the sovereign grace of God in His work of salvation *in the sphere of the covenant*. This is the teaching that the grace of God in the sphere of the covenant, as everywhere else, is particular. God's gracious covenant and covenant grace are for the elect alone.

Covenantal particularism!

But the gospel of particular grace is offensive. It is offensive,

not only to the ungodly world and to all the churches whose gospel is that of man's willing and running, but also today to many who profess the Reformed faith. The ungodly world hates the message that Jesus Christ is the only way to God and the only way of salvation. The non-Reformed churches insist that God must love all, that Christ must have died for all, and that all must at least have an equal chance at salvation. And now professing Reformed churches oppose particular grace in the sphere of the covenant.

Nevertheless, as B. B. Warfield observed in his *The Plan of Salvation*, particularism has always been the hallmark of Calvinism.

Why should this particularism be lost in the sphere of the covenant?

Established with the elect alone, the gracious covenant, with its grace and blessings, is unconditional. It does not depend for its maintenance, continuance, or fulfillment upon the faith and works of the member of the covenant. Christ merited the covenant, the blessings of the covenant, and salvation in the covenant, for every member of the covenant. Christ also merited faith and its works for the members of the covenant. And Christ in His person and work on behalf of the covenant is a gracious gift of God.

The covenant depends only upon the grace of God in Jesus Christ. The covenant is unconditional.

To be sure, the bond of faith is the means of union with Christ and personal incorporation into the covenant. Certainly, faith is the necessary means of the covenant

blessing of justification, as well as of the other blessings of the covenant. Emphatically, faith and obedience on our part are demands of the covenant; God calls us to believe and obey, giving us what He calls for. Beyond all doubt, cov-

enant life is mutuality. God loves us and gives Himself to us in Jesus Christ; we love God, who first loved us, and devote ourselves to Him in a holy life. The covenant does, indeed, contain two parts. God's part is that He saves us, including the sanctifying work of the Spirit within us that enables and empowers us to do our part. Our part is obedience and service.

But faith and obedience are not *conditions* of the covenant. The faith and obedience of the member of the covenant are not the basis of the covenant. They are not the reason why the covenant is continued with someone. They are not the ground of the blessings of the covenant, especially justification, or of final salvation in the covenant.

Nor are the faith and obedience of the members of the covenant works that make a universal covenant grace effectual unto salvation for some, whereas that covenant grace is not effectual in the case of others, who all share it alike.

"With Whom was the Covenant of Grace Made?"

Reformed churches and people, struggling with covenantal universalism's denial of sovereign grace in the sphere of the covenant, must seriously consider the doctrine of an unconditional covenant of particular grace. This is the doctrine confessed by the Protestant Reformed Churches.

The covenant of grace is no agreement, or contract, or bargain, dependent on conditions to be fulfilled by the two bargaining parties, God and every sinner who hears the gospel, or who is born to believing parents. Nor is the covenant a conditional promise of God to all who are baptized.

The covenant is the living, spiritual relationship of love and fellowship between the triune God and His chosen people in Christ. In this relationship, God is our God

and saves us, and we are His people and serve Him by His grace. Genesis 17:7, Revelation 21:3, and many other passages define the covenant as fellowship in a phrase that amounts to the "covenant formula": "I will be your God, and you will be my people." This is confirmed by the two great earthly symbols of the covenant: the father/child relation and marriage (Ex. 4:22, 23; Eph. 5:22-33).

God has established His covenant with Christ as head of the covenant of grace. This is the teaching of Romans 5:12-21. The passage compares Adam and Christ as two federal (covenant) heads. Adam was head of the covenant of creation before the fall, so that his act of disobedience rendered all whom he represented guilty. Similarly, Christ is head of the covenant of grace, so that His obedience constituted all whom He represents righteous.

Since God has established His covenant with Christ, He establishes it with all those humans, but only those humans, who are Christ's by eternal, sovereign, gracious election. This is the teaching of Galatians 3:16, 29. God established the covenant by promise with Abraham's "seed." This "seed ... is Christ." Those people, therefore, who are "heirs according to the promise," that is, objects and heirs of the covenant promise, are those, and those only, who are "Christ's."

That God has established His covenant with Christ, as head of the covenant, and with the elect in Him is explicit, official doctrine for all Presbyterians subscribing the Westminster Standards. Question 31 of the Larger Catechism asks: "With whom was the covenant of grace made?" The answer is: "The covenant of grace was made with Christ as the second Adam, and in him with all the elect as his seed."

This binds all Presbyterians to a rejection of covenantal universalism and to a defense of covenantal particularism.

*...particularism
has always been
the hallmark
of Calvinism.*

The Canons of Dordt likewise teach that Christ is head of the covenant of grace, so that the gracious covenant is made with the elect only and the grace of the covenant is bestowed upon the elect only. The Canons teach Christ's headship of the covenant in II/8, where Christ's death for the elect alone is presented as His confirmation of the new covenant with the elect: "Christ by the blood of the cross ... confirmed the new covenant." In articles 2-5 of the rejection of errors section of the second head, the Canons condemn as Arminian heresy the notion that Christ's death merely enabled God to establish a conditional covenant with all. The conditions of the universal covenant of Arminianism, we note, are "faith ... and the obedience of faith," just as is the teaching of the advocates of covenantal universalism today (Canons, II, Rejection of Errors/4).

Children of the Promise

As regards the children of believers, the promise of God to be the God of our children refers to the elect children, not all the physical children without exception. This is the teaching of the Holy Spirit in Romans 9:6ff. The fact that many of Abraham's offspring perished in unbelief does not prove that the word of God's promise took "none effect." For the word of promise referred only to some of Abraham's physical offspring, those who are "the children of the promise." And that which distinguished them, and set them apart, is God's eternal election. "Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated."

With the elect children of godly parents, God establishes the covenant personally in their hearts by the Holy Spirit, usually early in childhood. Them, He unites to Christ. To them, He gives the blessings that are theirs in Christ their head. In them, He works faith and obedience. So far is it from being true that faith and obedience

are covenant conditions that, in fact, they are covenant gifts. "This shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel ... I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts" (Jer. 31:33).

The other children receive the sign of the covenant, hear the promise of the covenant; receive covenant instruction; and are commanded by God Himself to believe and obey. When they, like Esau, despise the covenant and leave the covenant community, they very really transgress the covenant and apostatize from Christ. This is the charge against them of Hebrews 10:29: "[They tread] under foot the Son of God, and [count] the blood of the covenant, wherewith [they were] sanctified, an unholy thing." But they never were Christ's. They never were united to Christ by a true faith. They never were "children of the promise." They always were "children of the flesh"—wholly and exclusively "children of the flesh."

Romans 9:6ff. clearly teaches that "they which are the children of the flesh, these are not the children of God: but the children of the promise are counted for the seed." Only some of Abraham's physical children were counted for the covenant seed. Only some of our children are counted for the seed.

Covenantal Apostasy

When some children of believers, or some who joined the church as adults, reject Christ and forsake the church, the word of God in I John 2:19 applies: "They went out from us, but they were not of us." They were certainly "of us" in their former profession, in their outward behavior, in their membership in the visible, instituted church, and even in their blood. But they were

So far is it from being true that faith and obedience are covenant conditions that, in fact, they are covenant gifts.

not "of us" as regards union with Christ, spiritual life, true faith, and membership in the "general assembly and church of the firstborn, which are written in heaven" (Heb. 12:23).

The preachers of covenantal universalism love to appeal to Hebrews 10:19ff. in support of their terrifying, God-dishonoring doctrine that baptized children and others who were truly united to Christ and once possessed the saving benefits of the covenant can fall away into perdition. But also this passage distinguishes

two kinds of church members. Some apostatize, to be sure. This is the warning of verse 29, quoted above.

But there are other members who abide in Christ, continue in the faith, persevere in holiness, and remain in the church. These members "are not of them who draw back unto perdition; but of them that believe to the saving of the soul" (v. 39). The faithful are not "of them," that is, of those who fall away. Rather, the faithful are "of them that believe." The implication is that those who fall away, regardless that they were baptized and outwardly resembled the believers, never were among those who believed.

Hebrews 10:29 and the similar passage in Hebrews 6 describe the apostates according to their outward position as members of the visible church and covenant community, according to their earlier profession, and according to their real guilt. It does not describe those who fall away according to a work of grace in their hearts uniting them to Christ.

One can contemptuously trample underfoot the Son of God, even though he was never united to Him. One can profane the blood of Christ, even though the blood of Christ was never shed for him,

or sprinkled upon his soul. One can despise the Spirit of grace, even though he never personally was the object of grace, or received it. One can break the covenant of God, even though that covenant was never established with him individually by promise and by the Spirit's uniting him to Jesus Christ.

One can commit all this horrendous iniquity by coming into close contact with Christ and the covenant in the gospel and the sacraments, and refusing to believe. This is the extreme wickedness of the carnal seed—the “children of the flesh”—in the sphere of the covenant.

“Israel” / “of Israel”

According to the doctrine of the unconditional covenant, the membership of the visible church, the members of the covenant community, and the physical children of godly parents are distinguished and differentiated by eternal, sovereign predestination, election and reprobation. This is the teaching of Romans 9. This chapter is not mainly about predestination, even though it is the classic passage on predestination in the Bible. Rather, it is the explanation of the covenant problem, specifically the Old Testament covenant problem. The problem was this: How could so many children of Abraham perish in unbelief and disobedience in view of Jehovah's covenant promise to Abraham, “I will be the God of your seed”? Indeed, in view of this promise how could even *one* child of Abraham perish?

The explanation is that there was a twofold seed of Abraham: “children of the flesh” and “children of the promise.” God counted only the children of the promise for the seed of Abraham in His covenant promise. And that which accounts for the children of the promise is God's eternal, sovereign, gracious election: “the purpose of God according to election.”

Not all the physical children alike of godly parents are in cov-

enant relation with God, whether by gracious promise or by a work of grace in their hearts that unites them to Christ. Some are merely in the sphere of the covenant.

Against this distinction between being in the covenant and being in the sphere of the covenant, the theologians of covenantal universalism object, just as the “liberated” Reformed objected before them. In reality, their objection is against Paul and the Holy Spirit, for the apostle makes exactly this distinction in Romans 9:6: “They are not all Israel, which are of Israel.” Some physical children of Abraham were “Israel.” They were elect in Christ, redeemed, objects of the promise, united to Christ by the Holy Spirit, and covenant friends of God.

The others were merely “of Israel.” They were part of the manifestation of Israel in history. In every possible physical, earthly way they were related to Israel. They were flesh-and-blood offspring of Israel. Formally, they lived the life of Israel, at least for a while. But they were not Israel. They never were Israel. They were not elect, redeemed, objects of the promise, united to Christ, and covenant friends of God. And the reason they were not Israel was not that they failed to fulfill the conditions, whereas Israel did fulfill the conditions. If that were the case, covenant salvation would have been by works. But the reason was God's reprobation of them, whereas He elected Israel.

Israel/of Israel!

The sovereign God makes the same distinction between two kinds of physical children of godly parents today.

Covenant/sphere of the covenant!

There is only one alternative to this explanation of the covenant problem. That is the teaching that

the gracious promise comes to all alike *conditionally*, but some fail to fulfill the conditions. In this case, the word of promise is of none effect in many. Or, to put it in the language preferred by covenantal universalism, all alike are *conditionally* united to Christ, but some fail to perform the conditions, and fall away. In this case, covenant grace is resistible in many.

This is the denial of sovereign grace—in the sphere of the covenant.

Then, as regards His saving work in the sphere of the covenant, it cannot be said of God, “Of him, and through him, and to him, are all things: to whom be glory forever” (Rom. 11:36). Rather, we must say, “Of him and of those who fulfill the conditions; through him and through those who fulfill the conditions; and to him and to those who fulfill the conditions, are all things, in the sphere of the covenant: to him and to those who fulfill the conditions be the glory of covenant salvation forever.”

As covenantal universalism robs God of His glory in the covenant, so it strips every member of the covenant of assurance. All alike are united to Christ, and all alike can fall away into perdition. So I must live, according to this God-dishonoring, soul-destroying covenant theology: “I am united to Christ by faith today; I may fall away to hell tomorrow.”

In the conditional covenant, the prevailing mood is terror.

The unconditional covenant of particular grace has a different message. To every one united to Christ by faith—every one who believes the gospel from the heart—it promises, unconditionally, that He who has begun the good work in him will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ (Phil. 1:6).

In the unconditional covenant of grace—*particular* grace—we have assurance.

— DJE

As covenantal universalism robs God of His glory in the covenant, so it strips every member of the covenant of assurance.

2004 Synod of the PRC

The annual synod of the Protestant Reformed Churches (PRC) meets outside the Grand Rapids, MI area only infrequently. This year, it does. Synod convenes at the Hull PRC, Hull, IA on June 8, God willing. The last time synod met away from the Grand Rapids area was 1995. Then also, synod met in Hull.

The agenda is comparatively light. There is no examination of a graduating senior of the Protestant Reformed Seminary. There is no weighty appeal or overture regarding doctrine. The twenty delegates—ten ministers and ten elders—from the two classes will take care of what is for the most part the routine business of the churches in common. Synod will hear and act on reports from its committees, as well as the reports of church councils involved in syn-

odical work, reports of missionaries, and the report of the stated clerk. Synod will also treat materials brought by the two classes.

A member of the PRC overtures synod to rescind a previous synodical decision regarding the administration of the sacraments and pronouncement of the benediction on the mission field (Art. 27, Synod 2001).

A committee on Bible translations of the Free Reformed Churches of North America addresses synod concerning the interest of the PRC in cooperating with other confessional Reformed churches in a “low-grade revision” of the King James Version of Holy Scripture.

Synod is informed of the acceptance of a new congregation into the PRC, the Wingham PRC, Wingham, Ontario, Canada. The

congregation was formerly part of the Orthodox Christian Reformed denomination.

Two individuals appeal their discipline.

The Yearbook Committee reports that the PRC continued its steady growth over the past year. The denomination now numbers more than seven thousand members.

The pre-synodical worship service will be conducted by the Hull Council the evening before synod convenes, Monday, June 7. Rev. Ron VanOverloop, president of the previous synod, will lead the service and preach.

May Christ, the king of the church, guide the churches in the way of righteousness and peace at their synodical assembly.

— DJE 

Letters

■ Bible Versions

The contribution, “In Favor of the ‘Vernacular’” (*Standard Bearer*, April 1, 2004), has raised an issue which is in need of further investigation. The Greek text of the New Testament was written in the common language of the day. A good translation ought to exhibit the same simplicity which it had for the original readers. The KJV is a wonderful piece of English literature, but it is not written in the common tongue. We should not place unnecessary stumbling blocks for those who wish to learn the doctrines of Scripture. One of the PR distinctives has been the ability of our ministers to explain profound doctrinal truths in simple language. There is no reason why our Bible translation should not do

the same. It is God’s Word which must bring us to our knees. If we are brought to our knees by Elizabethan English, we are not showing reverence to God’s Word, but to Elizabethan English. Some of the language in the KJV means the opposite today of what it meant when it was written. The NKJV uses the same Greek text as the KJV, and is both clearer and sometimes more accurate. In many passages the NASV is both more literal and easier to understand than the KJV is. The Greek manuscripts used must be considered; however, no doctrine is missing from these manuscripts. Much of our literature equates the Textus Receptus with the Byzantine/Majority text. However, these are two different, though related things. In many

cases there is a minority reading found in the KJV, in a small number of cases there is no manuscript support at all. We must be willing to evaluate the various translations honestly and choose the one which is the clearest and most accurate and not merely seek to defend a particular translation against all others. There is nothing scriptural or confessional which tells us to use a particular translation. It is not a battle of good versus evil, but of good versus better. We should be honest and willing to discuss the strengths and weaknesses of the various translations in brotherly love.

Chuck Wiese
Grand Rapids, MI

■ KJV, Still the Best

I read with interest the contribution "In Favor of the Vernacular" (*Standard Bearer*, April 1, 2004). I believe that the King James Version (KJV) has served our churches well, and to suggest that we ought to replace it is dangerous and potentially divisive.

The brother's comparison between the usage of the Romish Church at the time of the Reformation and our usage today in our churches falls to mush under closer examination.

What is it to have a Bible translation using "vernacular language"? According to Webster's *New World Dictionary*, "vernacular" means "using the native language of a country or place; commonly spoken by the people of a particular country or place." The KJV uses English, the language of the United States, and hence is most certainly a "vernacular" (though not dumified) translation. To compare our usage of the KJV with the Latin usage of Rome at the time of the Reformation is *absurd!* Latin was not the native language of most of the areas and hence the Latin Bible was not in the "vernacular." Most of the clergy, let alone the laity, could not read, much less understand, Latin.

The constant drumbeat about the "archaic" language of the KJV is exaggerated and overblown. It is true that in a small number of cases it is useful to refer to a modern conservative translation such as the NASV or NKJV to clarify obscure readings. But that is not the issue. The issue is whether clarity and readability in all cases is more important than a proven and theologically sound version, which the KJV is.

Modern, so-called vernacular translations often gut the Word of God of important theological terms such as "propitiation," "justification," and the like. What is the advantage of the modern vernacular translation over the KJV

when the modern translations cloak in obscurity whole doctrines? For instance, many modern translations, including the NKJV and NASV, consistently replace "seed" with "descendants," thereby obscuring an entire doctrine! The modern vernacular translations, almost without exception, exchange the reverent use of "thee" and "thou" when referring to God with the irreverent "you" and "yours."

Also, one need only consult "A textual key to the New Testament" to see how much of the New Testament has been altered or altogether omitted by the modern vernacular translations. While in some instances these changes are probably better, the overall pattern is disturbing, to say the least.

A lesson from our past history would be useful here. Rev. Hoeksema was open to adopting different renderings than the KJV at points. He openly would admit those few times when the KJV does not convey the right meaning of the text. And Rev. Hoeksema ministered when the old, and now discarded, ASV was all the rage in our mother church. And yet, for all of that, he retained the KJV and never, to the best of my knowledge, suggested that our churches should replace the KJV. He was wise enough to know that the "cure" was worse than the "disease." We should be instructed by his example at the present hour. The KJV is still the best.

Mark Brooks
Sauk Village, Illinois

■ A Faithful Translation

In response to the contribution "In Favor of the 'Vernacular,'" in the April 1, 2004 *Standard Bearer*, one wonders about the validity of the arguments for the use of the vernacular language in the Bible. The contribution maintains that this should not only be used in the mission fields but in our churches as well.

Mr. VanderWoude offers the comparison between the Roman Catholic Church at the time of the Reformation and the Protestant Reformed Churches (PRC) today. He states, "The sad irony is that our dogmatic use of old-fashioned English is more Romish than Reformed." He asks the PRC rather to "fully embrace the implication of its Reformed heritage."

However, a closer look at the motives of languages used by the different churches would show no similarities at all. The Latin used in the Roman masses was a secret language meant to keep the laymen of the church in the dark. It offered no spiritual nourishment for the people who sat under its preaching because the common people did not understand a word of Latin. The papal seat used this language so that they could conveniently twist the Word of God to support their own doctrines. They maintained the belief that the people were intellectually inferior and that the Holy Spirit was incapable of penetrating the hearts of believers through the preached word of the gospel. I find it difficult to believe that this definition of "Romish" could really be applied to any of our ministers or churches today.

Can the implications of our Reformed heritage really be found in such matters as vernacular language? Or is this matter simply a by-product that ignores the true issue at hand? Vernacular language is hardly an implication or issue that Luther, Calvin, and others were compelled to confront. The issue was Rome's denial that Christ had chosen the foolishness of the preaching to gather His people as it is stated in I Corinthians 1:21 and Romans 10:14. They could not abide Rome's insistence to keep the Bible out of the hands of the people. They wanted the Bible in a language that the people could understand. This remains true today as we use a translation that is

in a language that people can understand.

The catalyst of the Reformation was an unwavering desire for the truth of God's Word, uncorrupted by the poison of Rome. Certainly the KJV is not in the vernacular of the people today but it is a faithful translation not tainted by man's philosophies or opinions. Luther and the Reformers would have praised the KJV for its faithfulness to the original manuscripts. They would have been willing to sacrifice the vernacular for the sake of the best translation.

These are the true implications of our Reformed heritage: salvation is of God alone and nothing can bring it about by the "power" of man. This is a comforting truth that the salvation of others is not dependent on our strengths. We may try to make our services more community friendly as we "seek souls." We may think to use simple translations that are written in the plainest of terms. But in the end all our efforts are in vain unless God gives the increase. We are only called to worship Christ as He requires of us in John 4:24: "God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth." He made no demands on His disciples to make this truth more beautiful. He did not ask them to bring the word in a cunning manner. He did not tell the disciples to add to or detract from His words. He told them rather "Go ye therefore,

and teach all nations ... teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you" (Matt. 28:19, 20).

Without the Spirit we cannot understand any text of Scripture, whatever the language or vernacular it may be. It is only the Spirit that will cause a person to understand the Bible. You may use the plainest of terms, draw detailed pictures, and explain the gospel five times over to the most brilliant man. But unless God has chosen this man as His own, there are no words in this earth or out of it that will make him believe. It is the Spirit only that will do this. As Paul says in I Corinthians 2:9, 10, "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath entered into the heart of man the things which God hath prepared for them that love him. But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit." Also, in Romans 8:15, "Ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby ye cry, Abba, Father."


And when God causes a person to believe, He will open His eyes to the truth of His Word. For that believer there will be no barrier in earth or below that will separate him from the revelation of the gospel. For we are promised that "The Lord openeth the eyes of the blind" (Ps. 146:8). God will cause us to see the salvation of Christ. This is God's promise to those who worship Him in spirit and in truth.

The accusation of not fully embracing the implications of our Reformed heritage is a harsh accusation. Years of faithful pursuit of the truth as well as the struggles of 1924 and 1953 might prove otherwise. Yet it is a question we must ask ourselves. Have we not truly embraced our Reformed heritage? Search the Scriptures whether these things be so and you will find this heritage in the words of Paul in I Corinthians 2:9, "For I determined not to know anything among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified." Look for the church that preaches the gospel of Christ crucified in all its purity and wonder, and you will have found a church that has embraced *all* the implications of its Reformed heritage.

Trisha Haak
Allendale, MI

■ Best Criticism of the Error

I have just read your editorial, "Covenantal Universalism: New Form of an Old Attack on Sovereign Grace" (*Standard Bearer*, April 15, 2004). It is, to the best of my recollection, the best brief statement and criticism of this error I have ever seen anywhere. You have done a great service. I hope this editorial receives wide circulation. I plan to commend it to many. Thanks for your continued contributions in defense of the Reformed faith.

(Dr.) Carl W. Bogue
Akron, Ohio 

The Reader Asks

A few comments before my question. As I was growing up, my parents always emphasized to us children the importance of church membership. This included membership in the church with the three marks of a faithful church as described by Article 28 and 29 of

the Belgic Confession. My father, who served many years as elder in the church, reminded us not a few times that when the elders had their meetings with those who desired to leave the denomination, these individuals were warned that leaving was sin. If they persisted in their request, they were sent a

certificate of dismissal from the Protestant Reformed Churches.

Now my questions. What is the significance of the certificate of dismissal? Does not the seriousness of this action warrant such a certificate?

Bill Oomkes

RESPONSE:

A certificate of dismissal is an official document signed by a consistory that testifies that an individual (or family) has been a member of a congregation until the date given — the point being, that the said individual is a member no longer. (For the form, cf. *The Church Order Book of the Protestant Reformed Churches*, p. 125.) The consistory sends this to an individual who insists on leaving the congregation and the denomination. (It is not sent to a member who wishes to join another congregation within the denomination, or a sister church; his membership is transferred.) If the individual is under discipline at the time of his departure, that fact is noted on the certificate.

At first reading, the certificate might not indicate its grave implications. The significance of the certificate of dismissal is that the individual is not a member of the church of Christ as instituted on this earth. Few circumstances in a man's life could be more serious. The Belgic Confession correctly expresses the Reformed believer's confession (Art. 28) — "We believe, since this holy congregation is an assembly of those who are saved, and that out of it there is no salvation, that no person, of whatsoever state or condition he may be, ought to withdraw himself to live in a separate state from it...." And it concludes "Therefore all those who separate themselves from the same, or do not join themselves to it, act contrary to the ordinance of God."

Sometimes a certificate of dismissal is sent to those who desire to join another (non-sister) denomination. It is obvious that the circumstances of the individuals and the reasons for leaving vary widely. Some leave in obvious rebellion against the rule of Christ as exercised through the elders. Some seek a more entertaining worship service or non-offensive preaching. Still others leave reluc-

tantly because of some family situation, including marriage. In all these situations, the consistory gives the warning and instruction appropriate to the individual and the situation. Nonetheless, it bears emphasizing that a serious warning must be given.

Let there be no misunderstanding on this. The Protestant Reformed Churches have never taken it upon themselves to judge whether one church or another is a "true church of Jesus Christ." Nor do we embrace the Belgic Confession's strong statements because we think the Protestant Reformed Churches are the only true church. Yet the Belgic Confession makes it clear that a member may not leave his congregation without solid (which is to say, biblical) grounds. Schooling, jobs, family, marriage, convenience, or "just don't like the minister" are not justification for changing churches. Only if the member is convinced that his church is no longer faithful in its calling, and that another church is faithful, may he rightfully change membership. In fact, if he cannot convince his own church of its errors, obedience to Christ demands that he change his membership to the faithful church.

The standard for judging a church's faithfulness is the Bible. The Belgic Confession sets forth the three biblically prescribed marks of the faithful church in Article 29. "The marks by which the true church is known are these: if the pure doctrine of the gospel is preached therein; if she maintains the pure administration of the sacraments as instituted by Christ; if church discipline is exercised in punishing of sin...." These are the marks of the true church because Jesus specifically commanded His church as institute to preach, administer the sacraments, and exercise Christian discipline (cf. Matt. 28:19, 20; I Cor. 11:23-26; Matt. 18:17, 18). And the reason why Christ so charged His church is that

preaching, sacraments, and Christian discipline are the means of grace that He gave the church on earth. By these means, Christ gathers, defends, and preserves His church. One who wrongfully separates himself from a faithful church rejects the care and instruction of Christ Himself.

Does the seriousness of such an action warrant sending a certificate of dismissal? Truly, it does. And there is another consideration, equally significant.

The preaching is clearly the chief mark, even as it is the chief means of grace. Whether or not the preaching is "the pure doctrine of the gospel" (as the Belgic Confession puts it) must be judged by every believer on the basis of the Bible. The Reformed believer is aided immeasurably in this evaluation by the confessions. The preaching must set forth the truth, the whole counsel of God, in all its glory. Preaching that is faithful to the Bible reveals God in the face of the crucified and risen Lord. Thus, one sins grievously who leaves the preaching of the pure gospel and is willing to sit under preaching defiled with error, for he despises the truth of God. This has dreadful consequences for his own soul, as well as for his succeeding generations.

No wonder then that when a member of a faithful church "requests his papers" for illegitimate reasons, the consistory works long and hard to show him that it is a sin to leave. If he persists in his demand, the consistory has no option but to acquiesce and send the certificate of dismissal. However, when this fact is announced, the congregation ought to know that the elders have diligently labored to draw the individual back from this sin, and that it is with grief that they sent him this official dismissal from the congregation.

— Editorial Committee 

(A)Shame(d)

The various Hebrew and Greek nouns translated shame and ashamed agree that shame is a painful feeling or emotion caused by the consciousness of guilt, shortcoming, or impropriety. The verb means to bring shame or cause to feel shame. The word is often found in context with the terms confusion of face and being confounded. Shame is not only a feeling or an emotion, but it is also a state or sphere in which one may find himself. Also, these terms have a strong eschatological emphasis, relating to one's hope.

Scripture is replete with references to the shamefulness of the unbeliever. Jeremiah complains of those in his day: "Were they ashamed when they had committed abomination? nay, they were not at all ashamed, neither could they blush" (Jer. 6:15). Jesus teaches in Luke 9:26 that "who-soever shall be ashamed of me and of my works, of him shall the Son of man be ashamed, when he shall come in his own glory." Those whose god is their belly, who mind earthly things, and whose end is destruction "glory in their shame." The very things for which they will be judged they boast of! No, they cannot blush! We are not to have company with those who do not obey the Bible, that they may be ashamed (II Thess. 3:14) and perhaps be brought to repentance.


He that puts his trust in the Lord shall never be ashamed (Ps. 31:1). "They shall not be ashamed in the evil time..." (Ps. 37:19). "And hope maketh not ashamed" (Rom. 5:5). If any one suffers because he is a Christian, "Let him not be ashamed; but let him glorify God on this behalf" (I Pet. 4:16). The book with the most occurrences of the word shame is the Book of Psalms. There we find the authors, and us, singing, both that shame may cover the heads of the enemies of God, and that shame not come to us who believe on Him. "Let the proud be ashamed ... but let me not be ashamed of my hope" (Ps. 119:78, 116).

Faithful prophets, apostles, and pastors find

nothing in the gospel that they would like to change or be silent about; that's their faithfulness. "For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ; for it is the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek" (Rom. 1:16). In jail at Rome, Paul writes the Philippians that nothing can put to shame his earnest expectation and hope; whether he lives or dies, it's all the same to him, for Christ will be magnified in him (Phil. 1:20). The apostle instructs the young Timothy never to be ashamed of the testimony of the Lord, but be ready to suffer affliction (II Tim. 1:8); he can never be put to shame because he knows whom he has believed (v. 12). Finally, Paul's word to Timothy and every preacher is to *study*! "Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth" (II Tim. 2:15).

Above all others, Jesus Christ suffered shame; for thirty-three and a half years He, the Son of God in our flesh, was shamefully treated. He prayed (through David), "Thou hast known my reproach, and my shame, and my dishonour: mine adversaries are all before thee" (Ps. 69:19). In Hebrews 12:2 we read that Jesus endured the cross, despising the shame. We take that to mean that His nakedness, the words cast against Him, *all* of it, could not swerve Him from His mission. He despised it as nothing compared to the glory that had been shown Him on the mount of transfiguration, and that awaited Him after His ascension.

Two passages we simply present without trying to explain the incomprehensible. "For both he that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified are all of one: for which cause he is not ashamed to call them brethren" (Heb. 2:11). And, "But now they desire a better country, that is, an heavenly: wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God: for he hath prepared for them a city" (Heb. 11:16).

"And now, little children, abide in him; that, when he shall appear we may have confidence, and not be ashamed before him at his coming" (I John 2:28). 

Rev. Kuiper is a minister emeritus in the Protestant Reformed Churches.

God's Love and Hatred Toward Men (1)

A matter of vital interest to believers is that of God's attitude toward them in all that God does and sends in their lives. The concern of the child of God in all the circumstances and experiences of his life is that God loves him, and never deals with him in hatred. But is it true that God always loves us? Does He still love us when we sin grievously against Him? Does He still love us when He sends severe trials and troubles upon us? Or are there times when, for legitimate reasons, God's attitude (even if it is only for a short while) changes from love to hatred?

In order to answer these questions and in order to have a clear understanding of this matter, we also need to consider God's attitude toward the reprobate. Can it be said that God's attitude toward them is always hatred, and never anything else? Or does God sometimes send them things in love and favor? Does God in some sense and at certain times deal with them in love?



First of all, what is God's love? And what is His hatred?

To understand the love of God we must first consider God's love for Himself. That He loves Himself means that God delights in Himself. The Father and Son and Spirit take delight in and enjoy each other. They do so within an intimate bond of loving fellowship. And in that love for each other,

they constantly seek each other's good.

That love of God for Himself is reflected in His love for men. God's love as an attitude toward men is God's delight in them. God regards those He loves as precious and dear to Him. He therefore draws them into loving fellowship with Himself. And loving them, He is good to them. He is gracious toward them, showing them His undeserved favor. He is kind and merciful toward them, helping them in all their needs.

God also hates. That hatred of God is an aspect of God's love of Himself. Hatred is the opposite of love. As such, hatred is not simply, as some claim, that God "loves less." But hatred is God's attitude of abhorrence. It means that God detests and despises some. And He must, for He is holy and cannot love unholy sinners. Therefore His wrath is upon them. He finds them offensive and loathsome. And in His hatred of them He thrusts them far away from Himself.

Now the truth of Scripture concerning God's attitudes toward men is that God loves some (the elect), and hates others (the reprobate). But that is not all. Having said this, it is crucial that we define more precisely what Scripture teaches concerning God's love and hatred by adding two important adverbs, "only" and "always." God's love is *only* for the elect — His hatred *only* for the reprobate. God *always* loves the elect — He *always* hates the reprobate.



Why does God only and always

love the elect? Why does God only and always love you and me who are His?

The reason for this is that God's love always was, always is, and always will be a particular love. God's love is never general. God never loves all men. God's love is limited always only to the elect.

The particularity of God's love can be understood and explained as follows. A particular love means a particular election — God eternally choosing to Himself a limited number of people whom He loved in Christ. A particular election means a particular atonement — Christ dying only for those whom God loves. And a particular atonement means a particular attitude of God shown toward men — God loving only those who are in Christ Jesus.

We see from this that the possibility and basis of God's particular love for us is Christ.

The question needs to be asked by each believer, How can God love *me*? How can God be gracious to me, for by nature I am no better than those He hates? How can God always love me when I, a sinner, ought to be the object of His wrath?

The answer is Christ. From all eternity, in all time, and to all eternity, the elect belong to Christ. That is something that never changes. And therefore God's love and grace to the elect are also unchanging. Never for a moment, either now in this life or to all eternity, are the elect apart from Christ. Thus, never for a moment is love removed from them, and hatred shown instead.

God shows this love in everything He sovereignly sends us. He is loving and gracious in all His dealings with us, and through all the circumstances of life in which He places us. He is loving in all the good things He sends — rain, sunshine, children, family, health, strength, and prosperity. But it is also in His love that He sends so-called “evil” things upon us — cancer, poverty, death, floods, war, and family troubles.

God also deals with us in love (and what a wonder that is!) when we fall into sin. It is true that God is not pleased with us when we sin. And God causes us to know that, for He makes us feel, as David did, His heavy hand upon us (Ps. 32). But that heavy hand is never placed on us in hatred. Instead it chastises us and is used by God to lead us to repentance. Though heavy, it is always a loving hand of God.

We who belong to Christ may know that, because of Christ, God’s attitude is always one of love. Never hatred. Never! For all the wrath of God that we deserve for sin was placed upon Christ. Through His sacrifice and death on the cross, He satisfied the justice of God. He canceled forever the wrath of God against us.

How blessed we are to be those who are *always* and *only* loved by God.



God’s attitude toward the reprobate, on the other hand, is always and only one of hatred.

Just as love is particular, so also hatred is particular. These two are closely related to each other. The fact that God loves only the elect proves sufficiently that God hates only the reprobate. Likewise, the fact that God always loves the elect is sufficient proof that God always hates the reprobate. Particular love means particular hatred.

This is scriptural, for the Word of God speaks clearly of God’s hatred of the wicked. “The foolish shall not stand in thy sight: thou hatest all workers of iniquity” (Ps. 5:5). “Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated” (Rom. 9:13). God hates specific people. God always did and always will hate them. Esau, and all the reprobate with him, are hated by God from all eternity, in all time, and to all eternity.

The reason for God’s hatred of the reprobate is that they are outside of Christ. God loves and can love only those who belong to Christ. The reprobate, therefore, can only know His hatred. It is

impossible for Him to love them. He hates them, and that hatred is rooted in eternity. From all eternity God determined that they would be “vessels of wrath fitted to destruction” (Rom. 9:22).


God’s hatred of the wicked is constant. He hates them in all His dealings with them.

He hates them when He sends “evils” upon them — punishment for sin, sickness, war, floods, and death. He hates them when He gives “good” things to them — rain, sunshine, health, prosperity, and family. He also hates them by withholding things from them — such as hiding the truth from them (Matt. 11:25, 26), blinding them (Rom. 11:7, 8), hardening them (Ex. 4:21), sending them delusions (II Thess. 2:11-12), and causing them to stumble (I Pet. 2:7, 8). And, of course, He hates them when they sin.

God’s attitude toward the reprobate wicked is always hatred and never love.



God deals with men in particular love and particular hatred. What wretchedness that implies for the reprobate! But what unsurpassed comfort that gives to the child of God!

...to be continued. 

All Around Us

Rev. Kenneth Koole

■ Oh Canada!

A few issues back we reported that a bill, C-250, was pending before the Canadian legislature. This bill petitioned the Canadian parliament to declare “sexual orientation” (read: “those living as homosexuals” — kk) as an “identi-

fiable group,” placing them in the same category as various ethnic groups, and therefore protected by law against any perceived discrimination, just like ethnic groups. It intended to categorize all speech deemed “anti-gay” as criminal offense. That legislation is now, as of April 28, law in Canada. It sailed through their Senate by a vote of 59 - 11. Anything but close.

To say that this law is going to have severe consequences on the life and freedom of Christians liv-

ing in Canada and on the rights and privileges of churches is an understatement, to say the least. Those who promoted the bill assured the Christian public that churches would have nothing to fear in the free exercises of their speech and practices. We have as much confidence in that reassurance as in Satan’s reassuring Eve “Ye shall not surely die.”

In an article entitled “Remaining Silent” (*World Magazine*, May 8), Lynn Vincent informs us that

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in Canada, already "[b]efore C-250 it was ... illegal to publish, distribute, mail, import, or speak any communication that could be perceived as promoting or inciting 'hate' against 'identifiable groups,' such as members of a certain race or gender. The new law recognizes gays and lesbians as an identifiable group — and makes any person who criticizes homosexuals publicly subject to two years in prison." Vincent sees nothing but evil coming from this bill, and gives instances of how the previous, less stringent hate-speech laws have already been used to deny various Canadians their basic religious freedoms and rights.

The bill's salient text reads like an Inner Party edict out of [G. Orwell's book] 1984: "Every one who, by communicating statements, other than in private conversation, willfully promotes hatred against any identifiable group is guilty of ... an indictable offence and is liable to imprisonment for a term not exceeding two years."

That punishment might not be enough to suit Svend Robinson, the left-wing parliamentarian who authored C-250. In an article in the *Toronto Globe* last year, Mr. Robinson made it clear that he hopes his measure will criminalize not violence, but speech per se, making "the current use of homophobic pejoratives in public schools and in public places" socially and criminally reprehensible.

On record as labeling Christian leaders "ecclesiastical dictators," Mr. Robinson was the first openly gay member of the Canadian legislature. He is also the most recent member to step down. Video surveillance cameras recorded the lawmaker as he swiped a \$50,000 ring from an auction house (*World*, May 1)...

That kind of instability, and his history of anti-Christian invective, has Canadian conservatives skeptical of Mr. Robinson's claims that C-250 — which lives in spite of its author's demise — provides a religious exemption.

The bill does state that a person won't be prosecuted for anti-gay speech "if, in good faith, he expressed ... an opinion based on a belief in a religious text." But at least one Saskatchewan court has already held that certain Bible passages expose homosexuals to hatred.

Even without C-250, London, Ontario, officials recently slapped a Christian mayor with a \$10,000 fine for refusing to proclaim "Gay Pride Day." A Christian businessman in Toronto was fined \$5,000 for refusing to print materials for a gay-rights group.

In light of C-250's passage, church-law analysts already are advising religious leaders on how to shield themselves. Attorney Bruce W. Long in a March issue of *Church Law Bulletin*, wrote: "Churches and religious organizations may want to consider avoiding public criticisms of identifiable groups ... limiting opinions to private conversation, and if targeted or investigated, relying on the constitutional right to remain silent."

Note, the legal advisors suggest "limiting opinions to private conversation...." Such advice, for all its good intention, strikes me as being strangely flawed. First, since when is the condemnation of homosexual behavior a matter of the believer's "opinion"? It stands as biblical truth. And if one states as much, will the state consider it mere "opinion"?

Second, what about sermons, which are open to the public? How long will they be regarded as "private conversation?" Not long, we fear.

And thirdly, there goes the church's right to testify in public ways against the sins of this present age, and the call to repent or perish. Remain silent? How is that an option for the apostolic church? We are to obey God rather than men.

Troubles loom north of the bor-

der for those who will be faithful to their Lord. It is a portent of things to come for the "southern" neighbor.

■ Closer to Home

Part and parcel of this whole "gay-rights" movement is the movement in the States to legalize gay marriages. In a number of states, gay marriage advocates are moving vigorously to introduce legislation that would redefine marriage and legalize same-sex relationships as marriage. And in case after case "either judges are redefining state laws or defiant mayors are disregarding state laws to force legal confrontations."

As I write I have a packet of information in front of me sent to the Grandville PRC via Mr. Don Doezema (yes, our very own) as Stated Clerk of our Synod, a packet sent to other of our Michigan churches as well. It is a packet of information sent over the signature of a certain Kimberley Fraser of the Family Research Council in Holland. She is acting for Family Research as manager of a Marriage Amendment Petition Drive here in Michigan. The packet includes a request that we distribute information to our members about the

marriage issue here in Michigan. Its purpose is twofold: first, to inform us of a drive to place a proposal on the ballot box in the upcoming November general election that will protect the present law in Michigan that defines marriage as that of a state-

approved union between a man and a woman; and second to urge us to encourage our members to sign the petition to get the proposal on the ballot box this fall.

The occasion for this proposal is simple and in my judgment compelling. The issue is alive here in

... there goes the church's right to testify in public ways against the sins of this present age, and the call to repent or perish.

Michigan. At the moment this state has a law that defines marriage in terms of a union between a man and a woman. In 1996 this state passed a Defense of Marriage Act (Public Act 324). This declares in part, "Marriage is inherently a unique relationship between a man and a woman. As a matter of public policy, this state has a special interest in encouraging, supporting, and protecting that unique relationship in order to promote, among other goals, the stability and welfare of society and its children. A marriage contracted between individuals of the same sex is invalid in this state." That is pretty clear.

However, as the material I have points out, "[L]ike California and Massachusetts, a local public official or court could declare that Public Act 324 is contrary to Michigan's Constitution and, therefore, is void. In order to avoid the chaos that other states are now experiencing, Michigan must pass a constitutional amendment that clearly preserves marriage as a union of one man and one woman."

The trouble is, a concerned representative from the state proposed just such an amendment to the constitution (bill HJR U), one that would preserve marriage as a union between one man and one woman. It failed to get the 2/3 majority needed.

Now what? As the packet reads:

This is where you come in: if Michigan residents can garner 400,000 signatures, the amendment will be placed on the ballot so that the people — not the politicians or the judges — determine whether marriage is protected or redefined out of existence. The time is short, as the petitions have to be submitted by July 1, 2004 to the Citizens for the Protection of Marriage.

What is being proposed reads as follows:

A proposal to amend the Michigan Constitution by adding a new section 25 to article I (or if section 25 of article I already exists, then this proposal shall add a new section to article I in the next available numeric order) to read as follows: "To secure and preserve the benefits of marriage for our society and for future generations of children, the union of one man and one woman in marriage shall be the only agreement recognized as a marriage or similar union for any purpose." This proposal is to be voted on at the November 2, 2004 General Election.

This is a necessary and important piece of legislation that directly affects us as Christians and as churches. We do well seriously to do what we can as churches and citizens of the state to get such legislation on the books and into the constitutions not only in Michigan, but in all the states in which we live. Fraser reminds us what is at stake in this issue, if left to the judges and the radical left.

For those pushing the homosexual agenda, tolerance is a one-way street — their way. Where is their tolerance targeted? The church. Just north of us in Canada, the Parliament passed Bill C-250 last week, making it a crime for anyone to publicly criticize homosexuality. Known as the "chill bill," the law makes it illegal to advocate traditional Christian opposition to homosexual sex. The quoting of Scripture will soon be legally defined as "hate speech."

Already in Sweden, an anti-hate speech law passed to protect homosexuals explicitly covers sermons. A Pentecostal minister there is facing charges for using Scripture references that state homosexuality is a sin. And in England, the House of Lords passed the Gender Recognition bill last month, which makes it illegal for


a clergyman to refuse to marry a homosexual couple claiming to be a man and a woman. And if a clergyman is under the impression he is marrying a man and woman, but finds out after the ceremony that the couple is really of the same sex, it is against the law for him to tell anyone. If he does, he faces a hefty fine.

You may think this will never happen in America, but if we continue down the destructive path towards redefining marriage, it won't be long before our churches will be handcuffed and silenced....

So what can we, as individuals, do to counter this dangerous trend? There is currently a statewide petition to collect 400,000 signatures from registered Michigan voters to safeguard the traditional definition of marriage in our state. If we can reach this goal ... the people — not politicians, judges or mayors — will decide how we as a society define marriage, and whether marriage, as we know it, will be redefined out of existence within the lifetime of our children and grandchildren.

Such is the request and the proposal. I reiterate, the amendment suggested is something that needs to get into various state constitutions these days. If we do not

make it our business with others to get it there, the pro-gay crowd will get their abominations approved. And behind their move is the Evil One taking dead aim

at the freedom of our pulpits, witness, and the right to teach our children what God's Word teaches about sin. We must do what we can to keep that from happening as long as we can. Even if we fail, a witness must be made. Here is an opportunity. My judgment is that we as churches and Christian citizens must throw our weight behind this drive. It is not enough to let others fight this battle in the political arena for us. 

It is not enough to let others fight this battle in the political arena for us.

The Organic Unity of the Church

The unity of the church is an organic unity. It is not the mechanical unity of a machine, but the organic unity of a body, in which the many members together live one life. It is not the external, hierarchical unity of the Romish church, but the internal, spiritual union of those who are of like faith. It is a spiritual unity, a unity of faith, in which the Spirit of Christ unites together the various members of the body, so that they together live one life, having the same mind and the same will.

This very profound doctrine is also eminently practical. The doctrine of the unity of the church appears often in connection with our calling to use our gifts for the advantage and salvation of the other members of the body (cf. I Cor. 12; Eph. 4). When reciting the Apostles' Creed, after confessing that we believe a holy catholic church, we immediately go on and confess the communion of saints. In Lord's Day 21, we explain the communion of saints to mean that every member of the body knows it to be his duty to use his gifts for the advantage and salvation of the other members of the body. We experience more of this covenant communion, the more we understand and meditate upon the truth concerning the organic unity of the body of Christ.

The Forming of this Body

It should go without saying

that this body is formed solely by God. This is true of our physical bodies; it is also true of the body of Christ. There are many couples who, when they have a child, refer to this as their act of "making a baby." But the reality is that only God can and does perform the wondrous work of forming a body in a mother's womb. We are fearfully and wonderfully made; fashioned by the very hands of God (Ps. 119:73). The same is true also of the body of Christ. God alone is the one who forms the church. He alone is the one who mixes the body together (I Cor. 12:24), and forms her into the perfect body and bride of Christ.

This is actually denied by all those who maintain that God wants to save everyone, but only saves those who fulfill the condition of believing in Christ. Such people are saying that God wants everyone to be in the body of Christ, but that He leaves it up to each person to decide whether or not he wants to be a member of this body. This is really the same as saying that God has a place for each person in the body of Christ. But since many people do not fulfill the condition, many of these places are left vacant. If such was the case, then many parts of the beautiful body that God desired to form would be missing, and man would be the one who would determine the final form of this incomplete and thus deformed body of Christ. By such a view, sinful man tries to exalt himself and to rob God of His glory.

Over against this, we confess that God alone determines and

forms the body of Christ. He does this in and through Christ Himself, who does this in and by His Spirit. The Spirit of Christ baptizes into Christ's body, joining us to Him in a spiritual union. He washes us in Christ's blood, and causes us to partake of all the blessings that Christ earned for us on the cross. The Spirit Himself is the Water of Life, that all the members drink (I Cor. 12:13). He feeds us with Christ's body and blood, unites us more to Christ's heavenly body, and causes us consciously and cheerfully to submit to His will.

This Unity Manifested in the Church Institute

As was mentioned in the previous article, the perfections of the universal body of Christ are also evident in the church institute. We consider now how this applies specifically to the unity of the church. The universal body, of course, is an organic whole. God in eternity chose all the members of the body of Christ, and determined the precise position that each one of these members would occupy in that body. Together all the members live one life, the life of Christ, and are united under Him as their one Head.

But this truth also applies to the instituted church. God said to the instituted church in Corinth that they were the body of Christ and members in particular (I Cor. 12:27). He did not tell them that they were part of the body of Christ, but that they were the body of Christ. This indicates that an instituted church is a complete

manifestation of the body of Christ, and that the truth concerning the unity of the body of Christ also applies to the instituted church.

It is easy to forget this. We, as members of a certain instituted church, are united together as a body with the other members of our congregation. This means, according to Lord's Day 21, that we are called to use our gifts for the advantage and salvation, not only of other believers in general, but specifically of the members of the instituted church where we have our membership.

One People of God, Not Two

It is commonly held among the Baptists, that Israel and the church are two different peoples of God. The explanation of a typical dispensational Baptist goes something like this: Israel was the original people of God. When Christ came, He offered to Israel the kingdom that God had promised to them, especially in the writings of the Old Testament prophets. But Israel refused God's well-meant offer. So God then turned to build another people, which is called the church. He began building the church especially when the Spirit was poured out at Pentecost, and He will complete it right before the coming Great Tribulation. At that time, the members of the church who are still on this earth will be raptured (i.e., taken up) into heaven. Then God will return to His original people, Israel, and will offer them the kingdom again. This time the Israelites will have learned their lesson and will accept God's offer. Then God will grant Israel the millennial kingdom (Rev. 20) that He has promised to them. While the church, as the body of Christ, is enjoying life together in heaven, God's millennial kingdom people will be reigning on this earth for a thousand years. After this, there will be the final judgment, and both Israel and the church will live

together forever in the New Jerusalem. Yet even then, though they will be living together in the same heavenly city, they will continue to be two distinct peoples of God.

Now, not all dispensationalists explain this scheme in precisely the same way. But fundamental to dispensationalism is the position that Israel and the church are two distinct peoples of God. Thus, they deny the organic unity of God's people.

Over against this error we point out how Scripture and our creeds speak of the unity of the church in both dispensations. When we confess our belief that there is a holy, catholic church, we explain this to mean,

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; and that I am, and for ever shall remain, a living member thereof (Heid. Cat., Q. 54).

One church gathered, not from Pentecost until a pre-tribulation rapture, but "from the beginning to the end of the world."

Our creedal position is clearly that of Scripture. The Jews and Gentiles together constitute one building, not two. The saints at Ephesus, who were largely Gentiles, were told that they and the saints in the old dispensation constituted one people of God (Eph. 2:19-21).

19) Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints, and of the household of God;

20) And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone;

21) In whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord.

The Gentile converts were told that they were fellow citizens with the Jewish saints, and that they and the Jews together were growing into one holy temple, built upon one foundation. This is clearly expressed also in I Corinthians 12:13, which says,

For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit.

The church is the body of Christ, and both the Jews and the Gentiles are said to be united in this one organism by the work of the one Spirit of Christ.

One may wonder how the dispensational Baptists explain passages such as these. Obviously they are aware of the fact that we frequently cite these passages, and many others like them, to refute their position. They try to get rid of all of these passages by arguing that although the church does consist of both Jews and Gentiles, the Jews in Old Testament Israel and the Jews that will one day reign in the earthly millennium constitute a different people of God. In other words, they claim that all the passages that speak of the Jews and the Gentiles being part of the same body are referring only to the Jews and Gentiles that are saved during the age in which we now live. But such is not the case.

It is, of course, especially now after Pentecost that the gospel is going to the nations and gathering the Jews and Gentiles into the one body of Christ. But the Gentile converts are not said to be united only with those Jews gathered into the church in the days of the new dispensation. They are said to be united to the believing Jews gathered throughout history. Ephesians 2:19-21, quoted above, uses the Old Testament symbol of the temple, and says that we and the believing Jews, whether living today or in the days of the Old


Testament, are built into one holy temple. Another passage that sets this forth emphatically is Matthew 8:10,11. The context speaks of the great faith of a Roman centurion, who was a Gentile. He believed that Christ did not need to come to his house to heal his servant. All He needed to do was to say the word, and the centurion's servant would be healed. Then we read,

10) When Jesus heard it, he marvelled, and said to them that followed, Verily I say unto you, I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel.

11) And I say unto you, That many shall come from the east and west, and shall sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven.

It is undeniable that Jesus is teaching here that the believing Gentiles are united, not only with the Jews that were then living, but with

Abraham, with Isaac, with Jacob, and with all the other believing Jews in the days of the Old Testament.

There is one people of God. There is one everlasting covenant of grace made with God's people in both dispensations. God's one people are united in one faith, believing one covenant promise. Lord willing, that subject will be one of those addressed in the next article. 

When Thou Sittest In Thine House

Abraham Kuyper

And He Buildded a City

Country- and City-life

From of old it was a point of interest that, in Holy Scripture, city-life is first mentioned among the descendants of Cain.

With the report that Cain buildded a city, we need not think of a city in the sense which this world has now. In our eye it would scarcely have deserved the name of a village. But this much may be inferred from this remarkable report, agreeable to the ancient significance of the word, that he had fixed dwellings built for his rapidly increasing family, and that he surrounded these simple structures by some sort of moat to defend himself against wild beasts or against enemies. The Dutch marginal reading is that Cain "sought defenses for himself."

From fear, from anxiety, from unrest, from a feeling of unsafety the first city was born, and not without reason it is ascribed to Cain's *evil conscience*, that he was the first to take refuge behind moats and walls.

Yet, the second mention of a city in Holy Writ shows that the idea of a city implies something else. With the building of Babel's tower the idea appears far more in the foreground, of dwelling together in one place, rather than scattering across the length and the breadth of the land.

But also that second time this building of a city is mentioned in a *less favorable* sense, even such that the plan of settling down in Babel was foiled.

Also later on there cleaves to Babylon the continuous idea of a power that makes itself great against God, while on the other hand Paradise provided country-life, the patriarchs wandered about in tents, Israel dwelt in Goshen,

David was called from behind the flock, and in the days of our Lord's sojourn on earth the country people hail Him with Hosannas, while the city people of Jerusalem, at the instigation of the priests, call for Jesus' blood.

The country-people, as we would say, have adhered to Jesus; in Jerusalem they have killed Him.



This somber shadow has rested upon city-life till our own times, and it can even be said that only in our days has that shadow become really dark.

Cities like Paris and London contained most of human misery and extremest human wickedness. The scenes described not so long ago by General Booth in his "Darkest England" are truly repulsive. And though it must gratefully be acknowledged that in our smaller cities it has not gone such lengths, still one would have to be a stranger to our own conditions if

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he had no eye for the profound difference which, both from the religious and the moral standpoint, exists among us between city- and country-life.

We are not blind, therefore, to the many sorts of sin which disgrace country-life; though we grant that frequently it is mere absence of temptation which renders country-life more uneventful, more restful; but in almost all lands the rule still holds that the faith once delivered held its ground most firmly among country people, and that peaceful home-life there still develops all its power.

The constant touch of nature, as well as the more regular habits of life which every stay in the country brings with it, operates refreshingly and thereby purifies.

You see this in the ardent longing of city people to get away to the country.

There overstrained nerves become calm, health becomes stronger; and after the rule that health of body works beneficially upon the health of the life of the soul, presently invigorated after soul and body they come back within their city walls.

Winter bleakness repels; only in spring and summer we enjoy life to the full, and in connection herewith the cities are sought in winter, but in summer, everyone who is able goes to the country.



City-life, however, by itself should not on this account be considered sinful.

Though the idea to build a city was first original with Cain, do not forget that in the vision of Patmos the glory that is to come appears with the descent of the New Jerusalem out of heaven, and that what was shown John to give him the highest idea of that glory was not a paradise but the city with its foundations and precious stones and gates of pearl.

Already under the figurative dispensation of the old covenant,

the Tabernacle, the habitation of God, first goes through the wilderness, and to the days of Solomon the holiness of the Lord dwells in a tent; but the course of Revelation ever points forward to the time when the Lord shall find His rest in Jerusalem, and that the place which He had chosen for Himself was upon Zion's mount.

Not in the country, but in the city of David, the majesty of Jehovah revealed itself in the holy of holies. There were the thrones of judgment set. There God appeared shining in His beauty.

So one can say that, in Scripture, the idea of a *city* is not lower, but rather of higher standing.

As the glory of Eden pales before the glory of the New Jerusalem, so far stands country-life beneath life in the city. But on account of sin, we are not able to enjoy this richer life without falling into all sorts of temptations, and therefore life amidst nature holds us nearer unto God than life within city walls.

It is noteworthy that the first Christian churches were not organized in the country but, as in Palestine so elsewhere, in cities. All the apostolic epistles are addressed to Christians dwelling in those cities. To those in Rome, in Corinth, etc., and only afterward was the blessing of the gospel carried out to outlying villages and hamlets.



The strong tendency of our times to move into the cities and to make the population of great cities number millions is readily understood, but from the side of Christians should not be encouraged.

For that which feeds this tendency is not the desire to enjoy the higher standard of life, but rather the urge to lose oneself in the masses, and so to be freer in one's movements and have the chance to indulge in pleasures of every description.

Not to live after the *higher* standard, but to enjoy oneself more broadly, they who have the means move into the great cities, and so the smaller towns are more and more emptied of the old-time families that ennobled the town life, and the country is more and more robbed of those old-time lairds who, by the act of their living in the midst of their people, were in so many ways a blessing to them.

And this tendency from our side should not be encouraged. He who free and independent has to choose his own place of residence, escapes oh so much temptation and distraction and fosters so much more easily the sense of piety among his own when he shuns the sinful commotion of the city and holds himself united with the more substantial folk, which you find in the country.

If on the other hand you are not free in your choice, and He who disposes the place of our habitation has appointed you a work in a city, then let that city-life quicken God's children, in their own and in their children's behalf, to double watchfulness and greater frequency of prayer.

The suction of the stream of city-life is so strong, and woe be unto us when for ourselves or for our family we deem that temptation can have no hold on us.

In every city the confessor of Christ must be in all his manner of life a protest against the unholy spirit which for the most part poisons our city-life. Christian life also in our cities can be at higher levels than in our villages. It is richer, it is more intense, it develops greater power. But this finer result is only obtained when the children of God are clearly conscious of their position, of the danger that threatens, and of their higher calling.

They must not allow themselves to be poisoned by city-life, but by their example and that of their family must be as a leaven in

the midst of the masses, salt that prevents corruption.


A fixed rule, that holds good for every one, is not here given either.

In the midst of city commotion God's child can come to higher

spiritual life than in our quiet villages, and in the country God's child can be spared many a temptation.

Here, too, it can be said: *All things are yours*, life in our cities and life in our villages.

Provided it is not forgotten that upon this "All things are yours" there ever follows: "And ye are Christ's."

His property and in His service. 

News From Our Churches

Mr. Benjamin Wigger

Evangelism Activities

The Men's Book Reading Club and the Evangelism Committee of the Bethel PRC in Roselle, IL hosted a conference on critical issues in covenant marriage on April 30 and May 1 at their church. Featured speakers were Rev. W. Bruinsma and Rev. R. VanOverloop on the topics of biblical principles of marriage, resolving marital conflict, and the roles of husband and wife. Friday evening Rev. Bruinsma spoke on Principles of Marriage and Resolving Conflict, and Saturday morning Rev. VanOverloop addressed the group on the Roles of Husband and Wife.

The Evangelism Society of Covenant PRC in Wyckoff, NJ sponsored a spring lecture on Friday, April 23, at their church. Rev. R. VanOverloop spoke on the "Roles of Husband and Wife in the Covenant Home."

The Reformed Witness Committee of our PR churches in Iowa and Minnesota sponsored a spring lecture on April 30 at First PRC in Edgerton, MN. Prof. H. Hanko spoke on the theme, "The Sovereignty of God and the Second Coming of Christ."

Sunday afternoon, April 18, Rev. D. Overway, pastor of the Covenant PRC in Wyckoff, NJ, was given the opportunity to preach at the Filipino Christian Reformed Church in Wyckoff.

School Activities

In mid-April the Free Christian School Society, Edgerton, MN met in a special meeting to make decisions concerning the future of their school. A decision was made that they would not hold classes this coming school year due to the low number of students and also to preserve their endowment for future use. The society and the board will remain active, and they remain optimistic that they will open the doors again in the future if the Lord blesses them with more covenant children and if it is the desire of the parents to resume classes. The Free Christian School held their last PTA meeting for the foreseeable future on April 29. A supper was served at First PRC in Edgerton by the Ladies' Circle, and afterwards Prof. H. Hanko spoke for the PTA and gave them words of encouragement for the future of their school.

The board of the Society for Midwest PR Secondary Education invited their supporters to a promotional speech on April 23 in the Hull, Iowa PRC. Rev. C. Terpstra spoke on the topic, "ABC's Are Antithetical, Biblical, and Covenantal," or, how our schools teach our children to live as God's children in the world and in the Christian community; how our schools base every aspect of the school on God's holy and infallible Word; and how our schools are founded on family principles, fear of God, parental control, loving discipline, and Christian friendship.

Congregation Activities

The consistory of the Byron Center, MI PRC made arrangements after their morning service on April 25 to thank and bid farewell to Prof. H. Hanko, who for almost three years filled their pulpit on most Sunday mornings with God-centered preaching on the Heidelberg Catechism.

The congregation of the Georgetown PRC in Hudsonville, MI bade farewell to their first and only pastor, Rev. R. VanOverloop, his wife, Sue, and their family with a farewell program Saturday evening, May 1. The following day, Sunday, May 2, Rev. VanOverloop preached his farewell sermon to the Georgetown congregation, a congregation he had served for almost ten years, on the theme, "Conduct Becoming the Gospel," based on Philippians 1:28. The VanOverloop family was scheduled to move from Georgetown to the parsonage of the Byron Center, MI PRC the first week in May, with Rev. VanOverloop being installed as their third pastor on Sunday, May 9.

Friday, April 23, the congregation of our newest PRC, the Wingham, Ontario PRC, invited their congregation, along with any others in their community interested in good Christian music, to a night of music presented by the Trinity Men Singers of the Trinity PRC in Hudsonville, MI. These men, along with their wives, made the trip to Ontario Friday afternoon to sing for the Wingham congregation that evening. The concert was

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

held at the Westfield Church because of the anticipated large turnout. The following morning Wingham also arranged breakfast for the entire group at the Riverboat Restaurant before sending them back to Michigan. The concert was very well received, and the men from Trinity have been invited back for a second concert.

The Martha Society of the Hull, Iowa PRC invited the women of the Doon and Edgerton PRCs to join them for the annual Spring Ladies' League meeting held on April 28. Rev. S. Key, Hull's pastor, spoke on "Women Serving God."

April 27 a combined Adult Bible Study meeting was held for our PR churches in the Chicago, IL area at the South Holland, IL PRC. All interested were invited to hear Rev. Bassam Madany, retired Ara-

bic-language speaker of the Back to God Hour, speak on the subject: "The Global Challenge of Islam."

Mission Activities

Rev. R. Kleyn, visiting our denomination's work in Spokane, WA on behalf of the Domestic Mission Committee, gave a lecture there on Monday, May 3, on the subject, "Jesus Christ in the Movies."

April 30, Rev. A. Stewart, our missionary to Northern Ireland, traveled to South Wales to give a lecture on "The Four Horsemen of Revelation 6."

Minister Activities

Rev. C. Haak declined the call to Immanuel PRC of Lacombe, AB, Canada. Immanuel subsequently called Rev. R. Smit, pastor

of Doon PRC, from a trio that included also Revs. A. Brummel and J. Laning.

Sunday morning, May 2, the Georgetown PRC in Hudsonville, MI met and extended a call to Rev. J. Slopsema to become their next pastor. We found it interesting that Georgetown's council, in an effort to have their congregation become better acquainted with the men on their trio, provided a brief biographical sketch of the three men, as well as sermons from each one.

The Faith PRC in Jenison, MI has formed a new trio consisting of the Revs. G. Eriks, D. Kleyn, and C. Terpstra.

The Hudsonville, MI PRC will call a pastor from a trio made up of the Revs. A. Brummel, A. denHartog, and J. Slopsema.

Announcements

WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

With gratitude to our heavenly Father, we rejoice with our parents and grandparents,

PERLIN and AGNES SCHUT, as they celebrate their 50th wedding anniversary on June 18, 2004. We are thankful for the many blessings God has given them in their marriage and pray that His grace will enfold them for many years to come. "That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; and to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God" (Ephesians 3:17-19).

- ✿ Gerry and Kathy Schut
Doug, Todd, Kyle, Ashley
- ✿ Ron and Barb Schut
Brad, Shauna, Leah, Joel, Whitney
- ✿ Scott and Joan Anderson
Melissa, Chad, Jeff, Shana
- ✿ Joe and Pat Reynolds
- ✿ Scott and Pam McNitt
Carli, Hayley

Hudsonville, Michigan

**Have you
checked out
the new
RFPA web page
yet?**

PLEASE NOTE:

The *Standard Bearer*
will be published
only once per month
during June, July, and August.

RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The Senior Adult Bible Study of Byron Center PRC expresses Christian sympathy to members Tom and Lois Knott in the passing away of Lois' father,

MR. HARRY OLTHOUSE, on March 19. May they find comfort in God's Word — "Blessed be God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort" (II Corinthians 1:3).

Leroy DeVries, Leader
Ardith Oomkes, Secretary

Reformed Witness Hour

Topics for June

Date	Topic	Text
June 6	"Prayer: God's Answer for Anxiety"	Philippians 4:6, 7
June 13	"Resolving Conflicts in Marriage"	I Corinthians 13
June 20	"Resolving Conflicts in Marriage"	I Corinthians 13
June 27	"Calling of Husbands and Wives"	Ephesians 5:25ff.

THE STANDARD BEARER

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WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

On June 10, 2004, our parents and grandparents,

JOHN and JO DYKSTRA,

will celebrate their 50th wedding anniversary. We, their children and grandchildren, give humble thanks to God for conferring His covenant blessings upon their marriage. We praise God for His faithfulness to them; and through them, His faithfulness to the generations that follow. We pray that God will continue to bless and encourage them in their life together in the coming years.

"As for me, this is my covenant with them, saith the Lord; My spirit that is upon thee, and my words which I have put in thy mouth, shall not depart out of thy mouth, nor out of the mouth of thy seed, nor out of the mouth of thy seed's seed, saith the Lord, from henceforth and for ever" (Is. 59:21).

- ☼ Don and Cindi DeJong
Daniel, Christiana, Carl, Jeremy,
Aaron, Larisa, Brent, Joel, Benjamin
- ☼ Dan and Lori Pastoor
Brad and Ericka
Nathan and Ellen
Bryan, Jonathan
- ☼ Doug Dykstra

Grand Rapids, Michigan

WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

On June 17, 2004, the Lord will bless our parents and grandparents,

CARL and MARY POTJER,

with 40 years of marriage.

We are thankful to our heavenly Father for blessing us with godly parents and giving them the grace to make the sacrifices they made to ensure that we were brought up in the fear of the Lord at home and in a church and schools that taught the true Word.

We thank them, too, for the continued encouragement and support they show to us as we raise our children in the same covenantal way.

"And all thy children shall be taught of the Lord; and great shall be the peace of thy children" (Isaiah 54:13).

- ☼ Mike and Teresa Potjer
4 children in glory
Annika, Cassandra, Zachary
- ☼ Steve and Beth Potjer
Lauren, Bradley, Austin, Brooke,
Charles, Luke
- ☼ Jeff and Sara Potjer
Heidi, Colleen, Caleb
- ☼ Russ and Lisa Potjer

Jenison, Michigan

WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

Our parents and grandparents,
CLARE and GRACE KUIPER,
plan to celebrate their 50th wedding anniversary on June 8, 2004.

We thank our covenant Father for His faithfulness to them these many years and pray for His continued blessing upon them. Through their godly walk we have been greatly blessed.

"For the Lord God is a sun and shield: the Lord will give grace and glory: no good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly. O Lord of hosts, blessed is the man that trusteth in thee" (Psalm 84:11, 12).

- ☼ Dave and Lori Kuiper
Jeremy and Jill Thull
Josh and Sara Lubbers
Joe and fiancée Kathleen
Michelle
- ☼ Dick and Bev Kuiper
Jeff, Dan, Brent, Jon, Katie, Anne
- ☼ Joyce and Gary Noorman
Lisa, Chad, Paul
- ☼ Don and Gail Kuiper
Emily, Michael, Andrew, Abigail,
Leah, Seth
- ☼ Steve and Deb Kuiper
Paula, Mark, David, Holly, Cynthia
- ☼ Judy and Steve Kamps
Stephanie, Luke, Erica, Kelly,
Rachel, Travis, Jamie
- ☼ Joan and Kevin Kooima
Kayla, Matthew, Brandon

Wyoming, Michigan

WEDDING ANNIVERSARY FRED and MARION ONDERSMA

Our parents will celebrate their 65th wedding anniversary on June 21, 2004.

We their children, grandchildren, and great grandchildren give thanks to our God for them. They have given us godly instruction in their home and church. May God bless them in their remaining years serving their King. Great is Thy faithfulness, Lord, unto us.

"For this God is our God for ever and ever: he will be our guide even unto death" (Psalm 48:14).

- ☼ Kaye Moelker (Bob in glory)
Henry & Arlene Westhuis
Russ & Amy Zwak
- ☼ Gary and Rose Moelker
Mike & Jennifer
Scott & Sharla
Todd
James & Tami Boersma
Lynette
- ☼ Larry and Judy Meulenberg
Jeremy & Heidi
Dave & Dawn
Rick & Marianne DeVries
Mark & Candace
Daryl & Jodianne Koole
Curt & Julianne Gritters
Cherianne, Joshua, Caleb, Matthew
32 great grandchildren

Wyoming, Michigan

SEMINAR

Biblical Psychology & Teaching Practices

June 23, 24, 25, 2004

Site: Faith PRC

The Federation of Protestant Reformed Christian Schools announces a Biblical Psychology and Teaching Practices Seminar that will feature Professor Herman Hanko as lecturer. The Seminar will include four sessions that are particularly intended for teachers and prospective teachers and two public sessions. The public sessions are as follows:

- A Symposium Forum on the topic
"An Examination of Modern Media and Its Impact on Students,"
Thursday, June 24, 1:00-3:15 P.M.
- A Symposium Forum on the topic
"Juvenile and Adolescent Depression,"
June 24, 7:00-9:15 P.M.

Although there is no cost to attend the seminar, those wishing to attend the four sessions that are particularly arranged for teachers and prospective teachers are asked to contact Agatha Lubbers, executive director, at 616/458-2057 to register and to obtain additional information.