

# THE *August, 2004* STANDARD BEARER

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Volume 80 ♦ Number 19



# The Gift of Peace

*"Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ."*

Romans 5:1

**P**ace with God! Wonderful gift!

Peace in the midst of great wrath and hot indignation! For, the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all the ungodliness and unrighteousness of men.

The child of God lives in the midst of a world that is at war against God. He lives among the workers of iniquity. He dwells among the rebellious. He works among those that blaspheme and reproach the living God.

Is there any peace?

The child of God also lives in a world against which God is at war. He sees and knows the judgments of God. He knows it from the Scriptures: the wrath of God is revealed. He sees the judgments of

that Word of God executed in the world about him.

He sees that war in the catastrophes in the world. He sees it in the devastations of floods and famines. He sees it in the diseases that visit the bodies of men. They bear witness that God is angry with the wicked.

In the present he sees God's anger in the removing of peace from among men. He observes God's judgment in the horror and brutality of war. The bodies not only of men but also of women and children are torn apart by violence. Screams and groaning rise up loudly from the dying and from them that mourn their dead. Both sides inflict great pain and anguish. Both sides commit great atrocities. The depravity that lurks in the heart reveals itself in conflict.

Is there any peace?

The child of God knows that warfare within himself. He seeks to be pleasing to God, the blessed result of God's grace within Him. He strives to do the will of God, delighting in that will in his inmost heart. At the same time, he knows the lust within him. The flesh wars against the spirit, and the spirit

against the flesh, so that he cannot do the things that he would. This he knows to be his deepest wretchedness: he is unable to be wholly pleasing to God.

Is there any peace?

The absence of peace is the result of sin and of the guilt of sin. As long as the sinner remains in the state of guilt, it is impossible that he should have any peace with God. God is righteous! He cannot deny Himself. In His righteousness He is against the guilty sinner. According to His justice He must pour out upon that sinner His wrath. There is no peace of God to the wicked.

Is there any peace?

There is peace! Even peace with the living God!

This peace overcomes the warfare, the hostility and the enmity, even between men and God. Peace is reconciliation with God. It is the turning away of His wrath. Peace is the end of all warfare between God and man. Peace puts all of those things in the past.

Peace is far more than the ending of all hostility. God shows to man the peace that He has made with him. He brings man into har-

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mony and fellowship with Himself. In peace He comes to men. To them He declares peace and seals it upon their hearts. By sovereign grace He gives His elect a desire for peace. That desire He fills, giving peace. Man enjoys, in his heart and soul, that peace with God. No longer man's avowed enemy, God is now his sovereign Friend.

What things that peace brings! It brings health and strength to the bones. Possessing this peace, man has everlasting comfort and security. He has joy and good cheer. Peace is the countenance of God shining upon him with everlasting, unbroken light.

So great is that peace that it stands firm against all the trouble and warfare of the world. The man that enjoys this peace is of the party of the living God. His former friends, the world, the devil, and his own flesh, now conspire against the peace that God's reconciliation brings. These new enemies seek at every turn to rob God's child of his peace. They would drive him to despair. They would receive him back into their rebellion, disobedience, and blasphemy. Yet he remains in that peace, let the enemies attack with all their power!

That peace is strong. It cannot be broken. For it is peace both with God and from God.

The establishment of that peace is wholly secure. That peace is not grounded in the work or effort of man. It does not depend in any way upon the child of God. Peace with God is the result of justification. The cause of enmity between God and man, the revelation of God's wrath from heaven, is guilt. Justification clears away that guilt. In that great work of God, He declares the ungodly sinner free from that guilt. God also declares the sinner righteous. Righteous just as God Himself is righteous! His declaration is mighty and sovereign. It is the judgment of the living God in the courtroom of His justice.

Righteous God and righteous man, by God's justification. There is agreement and harmony.

There is peace!

Justification is rooted in God's eternal decree of election. All those He predestinated He also justified. From eternity the living God beheld His elect in Christ, His righteous, only-begotten Son. In that decree He determined to give them peace, even through the dark night of sin and guilt.

Justification is grounded in the righteousness of God, given through our Lord Jesus Christ. In the fullness of time He sent into the world His righteous Son. By His obedient, consecrated suffering and death on the cross, He purchased that peace by His precious blood. By that blood we are justified! By that sacrifice God brought an end to all enmity, bringing about a lasting peace between Himself and all His elect.

But justification is also given to us, for us to receive and be assured of. According to the decree of God's election, and grounded upon the blood of His Son, He causes us to hear that righteous sentence. He causes that judgment to live in our hearts.

The mighty way of our justification is by faith. Faith is also the gift of God, wholly antithetical to the works of man. Faith is the means by which God seals it upon the hearts of His individual elect. By that marvelous gift they are brought into communion with the righteousness of Christ. They know His righteousness to be their everlasting possession. On the ground of that blessed possession, they have true, everlasting peace.

We have peace! Peace with the living God.

Because that peace is through justification by faith, that peace ever abides. That peace cannot be broken any more than election can be changed or annulled. That peace cannot be broken any more than the sacrifice of Christ on the cross might be revoked.

*That peace cannot be broken any more than the sacrifice of Christ on the cross might be revoked.*

Therefore, being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.

Peace remains the believer's ever present possession because he remains in fellowship with Jesus Christ. Joined to the Son of God, having His righteousness imputed, all by faith, that peace continues. It is never withdrawn. It is never broken because the believer should forget or neglect some important work. He cannot appear before God's throne of judgment on the last day, only to find that God's sentence has been revoked, and that he is no longer justified.


We have been justified by faith! Therefore we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ!

We have peace now, though we live in the midst of the great conflict of the ages. We have peace in the future, come what may. For the God who has given this peace is the same God that rules all, even through our Lord Jesus Christ. We have peace into the

endless ages of eternal life. All warfare, all bitterness, all strife will come to its end. It must all yield before this peace. The peace we have with God is everlasting!

We have peace, though we still sin against God. Daily we sin, committing the same sins over and over. Our sins trouble us, for they cloud up that peace. Yet, as we humble ourselves before God, casting ourselves upon His mercy alone, we receive the same sentence in our hearts. We are justified by faith. We have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. A peace greater than all our sins!

Blessed peace! Everlasting peace! Cause for joy before God, our sovereign Friend! Cause for thanksgiving and praise to Him alone who has given us this most precious treasure!

Peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ! 



# Faith Is Assurance:

## Q. 21 of the Heidelberg Catechism

**F**aith is assurance.

Faith is assurance of personal salvation.

Faith is assurance that the one who, from the heart, believes the gospel is saved now, has been saved from eternity in the decree of election, and will be preserved unto everlasting salvation.

Faith is *absolute* certainty of personal salvation, the only kind of certainty that is certain. A certainty that is not absolutely certain is, in fact, uncertainty, that is, doubt. Such “certainty” is worthless.

Assurance belongs to the essence, or very nature, of faith. Assurance is what faith is.

That assurance belongs to faith’s nature is the fundamental truth about assurance. Where this is preached, as an important aspect of the gospel, the congregation will be blessed with assurance, young and old, weak and strong.

Where preachers deny that faith is assurance, congregations will be full of doubters—doubters *who profess to believe the gospel*. Many who profess to believe the gospel will live and die in the terror that they may be lost and damned. This is both a dreadful condition and an insult to the gospel.

In addition, the worship, the preaching, the doctrine, and the Christian life of the members will be adapted to the prevailing doubt in the congregation. Worship will become a merely formal seeking after God, for doubters can neither pray, nor sing, nor read Scripture rightly, nor hear preaching properly, nor use the sacraments, nor, for that matter, even give in a God-glorifying way. Preaching *in the*

*church of Christ* will become an offering of Christ to the doubters, who are regarded, with some right, as unconverted. Or it will be a beating down of the miserable doubters even further. The church’s doctrine will emphasize the doubting sinner and his experience, rather than God and His glorious salvation. The life of the many doubting members of the congregation will be an anxious introspection, whether they may find some sign of salvation, and a strenuous exertion to perform good works, to prove to themselves that they are saved.

Make no mistake: that faith is assurance is a fundamental truth. It is fundamental, not only for the certainty of salvation of all God’s believing people, but also for the gospel, the church, and the Christian life. This stands in the nature of the case. The truth that assurance belongs to the nature of faith is the truth about *faith*. And faith is the bond of union with Christ, the means of salvation, and the source of all Christian life, activity, and experience.

To go wrong with regard to faith is to ruin everything.

The issue is not whether a believer can doubt. The issue is not whether the odd believer can doubt for a long time. The issue is not even whether all believers struggle with doubt on occasion.

But the issue is whether faith is assurance and, with this, whether assurance is normal in every believer from the moment he first believes and whether the heavenly Father wills the assurance of all His children.

In previous editorials, I demonstrated that Scripture teaches that faith is assurance and that the Reformation confessed that faith is assurance (*Standard Bearer*, March 15 and May 1, 2004).

### An Assured Confidence

On the basis of Scripture and as the expression of the truth of the gospel recovered by the Reformation, the “Three Forms of Unity”—our Reformed confessions—teach that faith is assurance. The outstanding passage is Q. 21 of the Heidelberg Catechism:

What is true faith? True faith is not only a certain knowledge, whereby I hold for truth all that God has revealed to us in His Word, but also an assured confidence, which the Holy Ghost works by the gospel in my heart, that not only to others, but to me also, remission of sin, everlasting righteousness, and salvation are freely given by God, merely of grace, only for the sake of Christ’s merits.

According to the Catechism, faith is an “assured confidence.”

Faith is an assured confidence in every believer.

Faith is an assured confidence in every believer that remission of sin, everlasting righteousness, and salvation are freely given to him by God. This is an assured confidence that he is saved now, has been elected from eternity, and will be saved everlastingly.

Assurance is what faith *is*. Faith is knowledge, and faith is confidence of personal salvation. Indeed, the emphasis of the Catechism falls on faith’s being confidence: “*not*



only certain knowledge . . . but also an assured confidence." The reason for the emphasis is that the Catechism intends to ward off the error that faith is merely objective, that is, that faith is merely knowledge of the truth of the Bible and the facts of salvation. The Catechism, with Rome in its sights, is intent on repudiating the error that denies that assurance is of the essence of faith. Glorious voice of the Reformation that it is, the Catechism is the enemy of doubt. It will not have a congregation filled with members professing to believe the gospel, but paralyzed with doubt.

### Binding Doctrine

Q. 21 of the Heidelberg Catechism is the definitive statement on the issue, whether assurance belongs to the essence of faith or is merely the well-being of faith.

On all who subscribe the "Three Forms of Unity" as their creeds, Q. 21 is binding. No Reformed preacher may deny that assurance belongs to the nature of faith. No Reformed member may challenge this, perhaps because he is attracted, foolishly, to the Puritan teaching denying that assurance is of the essence of faith. No Reformed church may countenance any teaching to the contrary.

No one who has the Catechism as his confession may explain Q. 21 away by saying that its teaching is theoretical and ideal (that is, that assurance belongs to the faith only of God's favored few, and then only after many years of doubt). Q. 21 describes the actual, living, breathing, knowing, trusting faith of every one to whom God gives faith.

Neither may anyone cleverly evade the plain force of the clear teaching of Q. 21 by grudgingly admitting that assurance belongs to faith "in a measure." What is intended by this "in a measure," of course, is that faith is, perhaps, 10% assurance, but 90% lack of assurance,

that is, doubt. Since faith is less than 100% assurance, faith is doubt. Thus, the "in a measure" contradicts Q. 21 of the Catechism, which affirms that faith is "an assured confidence" of personal salvation.

Faith is not lack of assurance, that is, doubt. It is not 90% lack of assurance, that is, doubt. It is not 1/100<sup>th</sup>% lack of assurance, that is, doubt. Faith is certainty. It is absolute certainty. It is as certain as is the promise of God upon which faith depends. It is as certain as is the Holy Spirit who works the assurance.

The certainty of faith is the truth and faithfulness of the gracious God revealed in the gospel of the cross of Jesus Christ. Therefore, great sinners, with vile natures, utterly unworthy of the least of God's blessings, who believe are absolutely certain of their justification and salvation. Therefore also, it is no mark of piety to doubt one's salvation, "because I am such a great sinner." On the contrary, such doubt is wicked unbelief and sinful discounting of the infinite worth and value of the death of the Son of God.

Every other description of faith in the "Three Forms of Unity" agrees with Q. 21, that faith is assurance. There are innumerable other descriptions of faith, implicit as well as explicit. Among the explicit descriptions of faith as assurance is the well-known Q. 1 of the Catechism, explained earlier in this series on assurance; Article 20 of the Belgic Confession, which has every believer confidently declaring that God laid "our" iniquities upon

Christ, poured forth His mercy and goodness on "us," gave His Son unto death for "us," and raised Christ for "our" justification, so that "we" might obtain immortality and life eternal; and the Canons, 5/11, which confesses "the full assurance of faith" with reference to perseverance. The Canons acknowledge here that the believer is not "always sensible" of this full assur-

ance. But "full assurance" belongs to faith.

### Assurance in the Westminster Standards

It is hardly possible, in a treatment of the doctrine of assurance in the "Three Forms of Unity," to avoid taking note of certain statements on assurance in the Westminster Standards. These statements are commonly appealed to in opposition to the teaching that faith is assurance. There are especially three controversial statements in the Presbyterian creeds: the Westminster Confession of Faith (WCF), 14.3; WCF, 18.3; and the Westminster Larger Catechism (WLC), Q. 81.

WCF, 14.3 states that faith "[grows] up in many to the attainment of a full assurance through Christ." The article suggests that assurance is rather the fruit of faith than the essence of faith; that assurance can be expected only after the passing of some time in the believer's life; and that, even then, some believers, perhaps even *many* believers, never enjoy assurance. This is ominous.

WCF, 18.3 is ambiguous: "This infallible assurance [of salvation] doth not so belong to the essence of faith, but that a true believer may wait long, and conflict with many difficulties before he be partaker of it," etc. The wording of the article leaves the Presbyterian wondering: "Does, or does not, assurance belong to the essence of faith?" The statement might be understood as teaching that "infallible assurance" (there is no other kind of assurance) belongs to the essence of faith alright, but not in such a way that occasionally the rare believer might not have to wait long for it.

One could say the same thing about the knowledge of faith. Knowledge does not *so* belong to the essence of faith that occasionally a believer might wait long for pure knowledge, or even fall away from the truth temporarily into heresy. This would be like saying that

*Glorious voice of the Reformation that it is, the Catechism is the enemy of doubt.*

sight belongs to the eye, but not in such a way that it cannot occasionally be hindered or lost.

Or, WCF, 18.3 denies that assurance is of the essence of faith. In this case, it goes on to assert that, therefore, it is common and perfectly normal that true believers "wait long" to obtain assurance.

Q. 81 of the WLC seemingly denies outright that assurance belongs to the essence of faith.

Are all true believers at all times assured of their present being in the estate of grace, and that they shall be saved? Assurance of grace and salvation not being of the essence of faith, true believers may wait long before they obtain it, etc.

Presbyterian commentators on these statements acknowledge that the Westminster Standards teach that assurance belongs to the well-being of faith, rather than to faith's being. They admit, as well, that in this point of doctrine Westminster departs from the teaching of the Reformation. Usually, they frankly attribute this departure from the teaching of the Reformation to the influence of the Puritans (see A. A. Hodge, Robert Shaw, William Cunningham, and Barry H. Howson).

Curiously, at the same time, these Presbyterian theologians strive mightily to get assurance back into the essence of faith in some respect. They make strange distinctions, for example, between assurance of faith (supposedly of the essence of faith after all, but not experienced) and assurance of sense (experienced assurance, which is what assurance is by definition); or between absolute, unwavering assurance and doubtful, wavering assurance (which is no assurance), or between an objective assurance (of which a believer is supposed to be unconscious) and a conscious assurance (which is what assurance is by definition). Thus, these Presbyterians indicate deep unease with their and their creeds' denial that faith is assurance, as well they might. The Bible is over-

whelmingly clear and powerful, that faith is confidence, not doubt.

If the Westminster Standards deny that assurance belongs to the very nature of true faith, in this important point they contradict Q. 21 of the Heidelberg Catechism, depart radically from the entire Reformation, and are in conflict with Scripture.

But the Westminster Standards are not the binding creeds of most of the readers of the *Standard Bearer*. The "Three Forms of Unity" are. For most of us, Q. 21 of the Catechism is authoritative.

### Spontaneous Assurance

Faith is assurance.

Blessed assurance! Without it, life is intolerable.

Since assurance belongs to faith—God-given, Spirit-worked faith—blessed *faith*! Thank God for faith. Thank God for faith that knows and trusts in Jesus Christ, crucified and risen, and in this very activity assures the believer: "This Christ is mine, and I am His."

The practical implications of the truth that faith is assurance are precious. God wants all His believing children to enjoy assurance. Assurance is normal for all believers. Those united to Christ by a true faith have assurance, as the rule, from the very first moment of their conscious exercise of faith. Covenant children have assurance, as well as their gray headed, covenant grandparents.

The believer has assurance, as the gift of the Spirit of Christ, mainly in the very activity of his knowing and trusting in Christ as presented in the gospel. Looking away in trust to Christ crucified as set forth in the gospel, the repentant sinner has forgiveness and assurance of salvation. He has assurance spontaneously.

There is some place in faith's assurance for what is known as the "practical syllogism." The "practical syllogism" refers to a certain confirming of assurance by the believer's notice of the evidences of salvation in his life, for example,

sorrow over sin, love for God, and good works. A syllogism is an argument. The "practical syllogism" is an argument on behalf of assurance of salvation. It goes like this: 1) All who perform good works are saved; 2) I perform good works; 3) Therefore, I must be saved.

The Puritans made far too much of the "practical syllogism" in the matter of assurance, to say nothing of the "mystical syllogism," which argued for assurance on the basis of mysterious spiritual experiences. And the more they argued with themselves, the less assured they were.

The believer does not ordinarily, and certainly not chiefly, argue himself into assurance. "Let me see—am I saved? All who are sorry for their sins are saved; I am sorry for my sins; therefore, I may conclude that I am saved."

This is not how life is. This is not how earthly life is. I do not argue myself into certainty that I am alive physically. In the course of thinking, moving, and doing, spontaneously and naturally I am sure that I am alive. Neither does a child usually argue himself into the conviction that he is the son of his parents and that they are his parents. In the normal course of good family life, he is spontaneously certain of his place in the family.

So it is in the spiritual realm. By the working of the Spirit through the gospel of grace, in the believer's knowing, trusting in, and embracing Jesus Christ the believer is certain of his salvation. His holy life (which is imperfect, indeed polluted with sin) and his experience of sorrow over sin and love for God (which is often very weak) are a secondary confirmation of the witness of the Spirit by the promise of the gospel.

The promise of the gospel is, "Believe, and you shall be saved."

An essential aspect of the promised salvation, which is by faith alone, is assurance of salvation.

"Believe, and you shall be assured of your salvation."

— DJE 



## ■ Criticism of "an Excellent Translation"

The June, 2004 issue of the *Standard Bearer* continues the dialogue regarding the alleged superiority of the King James Bible (KJV) over all the other "corrupt" translations. Among other things, we are informed that "The constant drumbeat about the archaic language of the KJV is exaggerated and overblown."

While the translators are no longer with us, they have not left us without a witness to the process and the philosophy that guided their efforts. A preface, "The Translators to the Reader," was included in the 1611 edition, but is seldom heard of today. Those who know of it attempt to keep it from the faithful, as it is devastating to the KJOnly position.

As to the alleged perspicuity of the Authorized Version (AV), there are any number of passages that will drive the serious reader to his commentary (or to a modern version!).

In Acts 28:13 Paul, during his voyage to Rome, informs us that they "fetched a compass," and sailed to Rhegium. Fetched a compass? All he meant was that they turned the ship around and sailed in another direction. Do we wonder why the modern versions are popular?

We are told that "the love of money is the root of all evil," but was the love of money the cause of Adam's great sin? Few would so argue, as Adam didn't know what money was. He had no need for it; had not God provided everything for them? The AV is simply wrong at this point: sins like murder, adultery, and idol worship are often unrelated to the love of money.

We are told repeatedly that the AV is derived from the Textus

Receptus, but history records that the translators also relied heavily on the Bishops Bible, as well as the Geneva, the Matthews, and those attributed to Tyndale, Whitchurch, and Coverdale.

They also referred to the Hebrew Old Testament and the Greek New Testament, "neither did they think it wrong to consult translations [in] Aramaic, Hebrew, Syriac, Greek, Latin, no, nor Spanish, French, Italian, or Dutch." Good scholars that they were, they used every reputable source they could get their hands on, in addition to the Textus Receptus. Should we not do the same?

Those who fret about the disparity between the words used in the AV and those used in modern translations should know that the translators felt at liberty about the words they chose. They asked, rhetorically,

Has the Kingdom of God become words or syllables? Then why should we be in bondage to them, or use one word precisely when another would be no less appropriate? Squeamishness in words has always been counted the next step to trifling.

If God used different words for the same thing in nature, then we, if we are not superstitious, may take the same liberty in our English translations from Hebrew and Greek.

And this:

Rather than deny, we claim that the poorest translation of the Bible into English ... contains the Word of God, no, is the Word of God.

There is no reason, therefore, why one should deny that a translation is the Word of God or forbid its circulation because some imperfections or blemishes are noticeable in the renderings. What is perfect under the sun?

The KJV is an excellent translation, and has served the English-speaking world to the glory of God and the salvation of millions of His elect. That it alone was preserved by God as His Word would be denied by its own translators.

Ralph W. Hahn  
Boise, ID

## Response:

The thinking of the Protestant Reformed Churches (PRC) is that the AV is still the best translation of the Bible available in English. Most of the modern versions are seriously deficient in that they are not faithful translations into English of the original Hebrew and Greek text. Many are unacceptable because they weaken or corrupt sound doctrine.

It is also the judgment of the PRC, or should be, that they will not subject themselves to a new and different version of the Bible every few years.

What modern version do you recommend in place of the AV as superior to the AV, not only in clarity and beauty, but also, and decisively, in faithfulness to the very words of the inspired Scripture as we have it in the Hebrew and Greek text?

It is not our opinion that there are no archaic and difficult words and phrases, or that believers may not have recourse to other versions, as also to commentaries, to help in their understanding of the Bible.

I have read, long ago, the preface by the translators to which you refer. I cannot see that it in any way nullifies the reasonable position of the PRC outlined above.

Regarding several of your particular assertions, I have the following comments. First, your criticism of the AV's rendering of I Timothy 6:10, "The love of money is the root of all evil," is, in fact, not a criti-

cism of the translation, but of the text itself in the Greek original. The text used by the AV and the critical text used by modern versions have the same reading in I Timothy 6:10. Even if one prefers to translate more literally than the AV does, doing justice to the plural, "The love of money is (the) root of *all evils*," a critic could, if he were so minded, make the same objection you raise against the translation of the AV.

Second, it is true that the translators of the AV used the Geneva Bible and other English translations in their own translation. But this certainly does not call into question the fact that in the translation of the New Testament the AV is based on the Textus Receptus ("Received Text"), or Traditional Text. For the earlier English translations, going back to the marvelous Tyndale, also based the New Testament on the Textus Receptus.

There is an issue here of great consequence as regards replacing the AV with most modern versions. This issue is the Greek text of the New Testament. The Greek text used by most modern versions differs significantly from the Textus Receptus in important, doctrinal respects. I give one example. Basing I Timothy 3:16 on the critical Greek text, the modern versions no longer have "God was manifest in the flesh," but "He" (NIV). Aggravating the corruption of the passage is the NIV's arbitrary, erroneous translation of the rest of the phrase: "appeared in a *body*." That "He" (Jesus?) was manifest is not without controversy the great mystery of godliness. The great mystery of godliness is that *God* was manifest. And God was not manifest "in a *body*." Nor does the Greek text say so. But God was manifest in the "*flesh*," that is, a complete human nature.

Third, I note your disparagement of our "fret[ting]" about the disparity between the words used in the AV and those used in mod-

ern translations" in connection with your appeal to the translators' defense of their right to use one "word precisely when another would be no less appropriate."

Your disparagement of our "fretting" over the words used in the translation happily brings to the foreground a fundamental issue in the matter of the church's English version of Holy Scripture. We demand an English Bible translated with scrupulous faithfulness to the very words of the original Hebrew and Greek text. As the translators of the AV expressed it, we must have a Bible using "one word precisely" or "another ... no less appropriate."

The translators of most modern versions have employed a theory of translation that allows them to depart widely and often from the very words of the Hebrew and Greek text. At no point can the reader of these versions be sure that what he is reading is the Word of God, and not the word of the translators. This is a denial, in the Bibles that Protestants actually use, of the doctrine of the infallible, verbal inspiration of Scripture (II Tim. 3:16; Gal. 3:16). And this is fatal, not alone to particular churches, but to Christianity itself.

The people of God (which is not the same as every unconverted, illiterate Tom, Dick, and Harry) must have the Bible in their own, understandable language. If ever the English changes so drastically from that used in 1611 that the AV is virtually, or even significantly, unintelligible to the educated saints, the churches must launch the huge project of translating Holy Scripture into English anew. But this darkness of the AV must be demonstrated. "Fetched a compass" for "going about in the sea" falls somewhat short of the required demonstration.

With your concluding judgment of the King James Bible, that it is "an excellent translation, and has served the English-speaking world to the glory of God and the

salvation of millions of His elect," we are in hearty agreement.

— Ed.

## ■ Upholding the KJV

This is in response to the contribution, "In Favor of the Vernacular" (*Standard Bearer*, April 1, 2004).

There are pamphlets written by Protestant Reformed ministers that uphold the KJV as the most faithful Bible translation, and rightly so. Granted, it is always necessary to examine our positions to see if we are standing on the faithful principles (the traditions of God) or if we are standing on the mere, useless, and destructive traditions of men.

If we as churches or as church members hold to any tradition without being able faithfully to defend our position, belief, and faith we are in a dilemma. A full study of the issue at hand should reveal to all involved that the Protestant Reformed Churches have stood on faithful ground and, Lord willing, will continue to stand on faithful ground by rejecting modern Bible translations.

Those who are in favor of using modern Bible translations present shallow proof of any need to use such translations. It is said that the archaic words and language of the KJV are stumbling blocks to the believer living in the twenty-first century. It is said that the spirit of the Reformation would be better carried out by having the Scriptures in updated language. If we are to consider using a translation other than the Authorized Version (or KJV), it would leave us with two choices, one of which would be to use an existing translation, and the other would be to produce another translation.

Modern Bible translations have corrupted God's Word. A very large book could be written on all the places in Scripture that this has been done. Those interested in each place this has been done can contact the Trinitarian Bible Soci-



ety at 1600 Leonard NW, Grand Rapids, MI (Phone: 616 735-3695). They have an abundance of material on the errors of modern Bible translations.

Let us look briefly at the NIV. The problems with the NIV begin at its very core, the philosophy of translation held by its translators, which led to the dynamic equivalence method of translation. This is really no translation at all, but a practice which leaves to the translators to determine the meaning of the text in relation to the present society. This would imply that God's Word means something different to the twenty-first century believer than it did to the Old Testament or apostolic believer. This obscures the direct word of God to man. This puts scales back on the eyes of the believer. This is what the Romish church wanted — the common people deprived of God's Word in its pure form. The result of this modern dynamic view of translation is a Bible that reads like a newspaper, with short, choppy sentences, implying that the modern reader of English is incapable of understanding more than a few words at a time. One example of this is the NIV rendering of Ephesians 1:3-14. The NIV breaks it down into eight simple sentences, broken at verses 3 and 4, thus changing the normal interpretation.

Some of the footnotes in the NIV do not even agree with its own translation. Some of the renderings are based on only one text, and that one text not being the Masoretic text. Most translations use the Masoretic text as a basis in the Old Testament.

The NIV's rendering of Judges 1:18 contradicts its footnote on that passage. Also the NIV's footnote for Numbers 11:25 reverses its own translation of that verse. The result is that the NIV casts doubt upon God's Word.

The consistent faithful poetry of the KJV is also changed in the NIV. One example of this is found

in Psalm 23, where the word "mercy" is changed to "love," for the sake of the unlearned reader. The word "mercy" has a profound theological significance that any child of God can understand. Think of the knowledge of mercy David had when he penned this Psalm. Think of its relation to the mercy seat of the tabernacle. There are many omissions, additions, unacceptable words, synonym problems, and unusual renderings in the NIV.

Let us take a brief look at the NKJV. There are those who think that they can have the accuracy and fidelity of the KJV with updated language by using the NKJV. Such do not realize that the NKJV is not an updated Authorized Version. The NKJV is a highly edited new translation which is theologically and philosophically inconsistent with the AV. The NKJV does not omit hundreds of verses, phrases, and words as is done in other modern Bible translations. It is not a loose translation or paraphrase. However, the problems of the NKJV are significant in the light of its proclamation of accurate improvements of the AV. For a number of years, the text has been revised, and thousands of changes have been made. There are numerous changes of editions, with the same copyright, and thus there are many NKJV Bibles that are different. One would hope that a Bible that is proclaimed to be as faithful as the AV would have the same consistency.

There were nine men who worked on both the NKJV and the NIV. It is interesting and puzzling that men who supported the dynamic equivalence method would be able to submit to the historical method of translation. It makes one wonder what kind of convictions, if any, they had. Most men who are committed to the use of the *Textus Receptus* are so because of their strong convictions regarding the true text of Scripture. Such men were persecuted, abused in

print, or ridiculed by scholars who support the critical text. So it is difficult to understand how these men could work on both translations. It is also interesting that in the advertising of the NKJV, the translators are referred to as "revisers"; however, the 1990 American edition states that it is a new translation.

The real character of the AV does not reside in its archaic pronouns, or verbs, or other grammatical forms of the seventeenth century, but rather in the care taken by its scholars to impart the letter and spirit of the original text in a majestic and reverent style.

The NKJV does not differentiate between "you" singular and "you" plural. This distinction, which is made in the biblical languages, was recognized by the AV translators. They used "thee," "thou," and "thine" to designate the singular and plural forms of "you." Consider I Corinthians 3:17.

The NKJV replaces pronouns with nouns. In Genesis 29:30 and Genesis 30:29, "he" is replaced with "Jacob," and in II Kings 6:18 "they" is replaced with "the Syrians." Although this reduces the ambiguity of the passages, it is not consistent with the Hebrew. If words need to be added to enhance clarity they must be printed in italics.

There are headings in most editions of the NKJV that do not accurately render the meaning of the text. A couple of examples: 1) Romans 8:1 — "Free from indwelling sin" suggests that the believer has no problem with sin any longer; 2) in II Corinthians 13:7, Paul prefers "gentleness." This is a problem because gentleness is not mentioned there and is not the topic of the passage.

There are also unnecessary changes from the AV. One example is as follows: "sodomite" in Deuteronomy 23:17 becomes "perverted one" in the NKJV. This change not only downplays the in-



tent of the word, but also removes it from its historical context of Sodom and Gomorrah. The NKJV also contains several readings that are simply incorrect. An example of this is in Isaiah 53:9, where the Hebrew reading is, "and he made his grave with the wicked," and the NKJV reading is, "And they made his grave with the wicked."

There is also a different theological and philosophical bias in the NKJV when compared to the AV. The NKJV is the product primarily of a late twentieth century American Fundamental Baptist-Evangelical (in its broadest terms) perspective. An example of this theological bias is found in II Thessalonians 2:7. Here the NKJV has, "He who now restrains." The capitalization of "He" indicates that it is the Holy Spirit who restrains and who will be "taken out of the way." This lends encouragement to the dispensational interpretation of this passage and will then confirm the dispensationalist's supposition that the Holy Spirit is being mentioned here.

Another example of theological bias is found in the subject/chapter headings in the NKJV. The AV translators desired to draw attention to Christ, as seen in its subject chapter headings. The NKJV translators removed the title Christ from their version's Old Testament headings. All other modern Bible translations are as faulty as the NKJV, some much more so. Some may not be as faulty as the NIV.

Now to address the possibility of producing another translation. To think that we could produce a translation that would be equal to the AV seems absurd. The AV is a product of the great Reformation, which was a defining event in the post-apostolic church, when men, women, and children were burned at the stake and brutally martyred for the truth of God's Word. The AV was born at a time when the post-apostolic church was as strong and vibrant

as ever it was. It took seven years to produce the AV. Fifty-four men were chosen for this work. Some died and some withdrew before the translation was started. Seven years later the list of men numbered forty-seven. They were men of such scholarship and ability that I doubt if such men are available today. These men approached the task of translation with a reverent regard for the divine inspiration, authority, and inerrancy of the Holy Scriptures. The most learned men of the land were chosen for this work. They all had profound knowledge of the languages in which the Bible was written. The translators' preface to the Authorized Version reads as follows: "We recommend thee to God and to the Spirit of His grace, which is able to build further than we can ask or think. He removeth the scales from our eyes, the veil from our hearts, opening our wits that we may understand His Word, enlarging our hearts, yea correcting our affections, that we may love it above gold and silver, yea, that we may love it to the end."

The AV is a word-for-word translation of the original. The words that have been added in order to make sense in the English language are in italics. When we pick up the AV we may be sure we have God's infallible Word in our hands. We may be confident, and are confident, that when we read it, we hear "thus saith the Lord."

Modern Bible translations are a product of their time. A time of me, me, me, I, I, I, and self, self, self. To address someone personally and intimately does not flow with our modern times. A time when girls and women are often referred to as "you guys"; a time when two or more people may be referred to as "yous"; a time when many men don't know what they are supposed to do. A time when very few want to be defined as singular or plural. A time when very few want to accept personal re-

sponsibility or obligation to anyone. Indeed, the language of our egocentric, gender neutral times does not match the language of the AV. The language of our times stands to be condemned, rather than that the language that has faithfully served God's church since the time of the Great Reformation be changed.

As members of the true and living church of Jesus Christ, we should compare the AV with modern Bible translations and thereby clearly see that the devil still presents the ancient lie, "Yea, hath God said?"

Paul Starrett  
Zeeland, MI

## ■ A Rock Against the Storm

"We're gonna miss you when you're gone!" Thank you, brother, for the many years of great and faithful articles and editorials by your hand in the *Standard Bearer*.

I appreciate as well your critiques of other denominations, including my own Orthodox Presbyterian Church (OPC). So often it takes an outsider to see us as we really are. The OPC, while still relatively faithful, is unaware of its being "a falling church" as you described her. With reluctance to censure false brethren within her own ranks, tolerance is elevated above truth. We often pray that we would return to a love of the heritage and history that is ours.

I have read with interest also the late discussion on the Authorized Version's continued use in the Protestant Reformed Churches. Most do not realize that there is no apostate church which has not first thrown away the old KJV. Most people don't even know that there is any difference in the underlying texts of the KJV (and New KJV), they just want an English Bible that is easy to read! We pride ourselves on having an "infallible" Bible, yet the Greek used to translate from is in its 26<sup>th</sup> edition



(Nestles)! How can that which is "infallible" be always in flux.

Many of those who desire new Bible versions claim that the old English can not be understood by our youth. However, in truth, these same youth can master in a matter of minutes the most mind-boggling video and computer games! And they can't grasp as fast the meaning of words like thee, thou, doth, hast, dung, or conversation?

The AV is the faithful church text, it brings the difficulties of the original with it, to be sure, but it needs to be studied and taught; to throw it away is to place ourselves in theological peril. For example,

in our OPC the Westminster Standards are held in high regard (and many insist upon strict subscription to them), yet they are filled with many of the same old words: doth, begotten, Holy Ghost, hath, taketh, etc. It is nonsense to say either they or the Bible cannot be understood today. What we need is a standard church text (KJV) in pulpit and pew, and let preachers give explanation and fuller meanings, and bring the people up to a higher level of sound doctrine. The dumbing down of Bibles for a hundred years has hurt the church at large in understanding and commitment. This shows up in our contemporary worship services and


shallow publications of most Christian denominations.

Thank God for the PRC, the *Standard Bearer*, and the Reformed Free Publishing Association! You are like a rock standing against the storm of modernism and liberalism of the past and present. May God grant that you will all remain so for many, many years to come.

Keep up the good work.

"And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will (and word) of God (Rom. 12:2).

Al Salmon

Moorestown, NJ 

*When Thou Sittest In Thine House*

*Mrs. Connie Meyer*

## The Unity (2)

**O**ur children need to see that true, real unity is found only when there is true, real unity in the truth. The Spirit that makes us one is the Spirit of truth. And that unity and fellowship in the truth will be blessed indeed! But there is another aspect of this glorious principle of unity that our children need to see and understand. Not only is there unity *in* truth, there is also unity *of* truth. The truth itself is a unified, glorious, harmonious whole.

This is uniquely Reformed. Our creeds themselves attest to this unity as they, from all of Scripture, both Old Testament and New, bring the truth together for us into

one concise and consistent system. The Heidelberg Catechism, the Belgic Confession, the Canons of Dordt — all of our creeds speak in unison of the sovereign glory of God and the salvation that He alone has wrought. The message of the Word (singular, not plural) is one. Our Reformed doctrines reflect this.

It is because the truth of Scripture constitutes one thorough and complete unity that all of Scripture may, and must, be explained only in light of itself. "Scripture interprets Scripture." This, too, is uniquely Reformed. Not by authority of church tradition or mystical tongue, not by authority of higher critic or pope, but only in light of the infallible Word of God itself is Scripture to be understood. Thus we see the tremendous import of our creeds. They interpret the truth for us in light of the whole Word of God.

By such illumination our spiritual fathers were guided into ever richer and deeper veins of the truth. One deposit of gold led to another. An example is Calvin's development of the five points of doctrine, which we call TULIP. They are five points that hang together, or, if just one be denied or misconstrued, fall together. They constitute a whole.

Rev. Herman Hoeksema appealed to the principle of unity when he developed the concept of the place of reprobation in the preaching of the gospel:

God is One. There must therefore be unity in His revelation, unity of thought and purpose in all His works. And therefore a child of God, especially a Reformed child of God, cannot rest until he has learned to see and understand this unity of thought and purpose. It is from this point of view that we wish to consider the

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*(Preceding article can be found in the December 15, 2003 issue, p. 137.)*



place of reprobation in the preaching of the Gospel.<sup>1</sup>

It is from this point of view that we should consider all of doctrine! To see how one truth stands in relation to another and to the truth as a whole — that is how we grow in our understanding of these things. When a question arises about a certain word or verse, our concordance must be at the ready. Other texts must be consulted. When our children have a question about a Bible or Sunday School lesson, we will examine the context of the story to see if we can help them better understand what is being taught. We will try to explain to them how one truth is connected to another. That is how we help our children grow, too.

From a positive point of view, the truth is founded upon the whole, unified body of Scripture. Negatively, every heresy and error can be exposed on this same basis. Even as an ear trained in all the finesse of musical harmony is able to detect one dissonant note among a full and accomplished orchestra, so does a lover of the truth hear the slight and subtle sound of that which does not ring true with all of Scripture. Our spiritual fathers made a point of emphasizing the unity of the truth when they judged the teachings of their heretical foes in light of Scripture and the creeds. They would allow no discrepancies or contradictions, no discordant doctrines that may have been held as a matter of some strange, blind faith. Such, however, is the sound of all heresy. Arminianism must pit God's justice against His love and mercy, corrupting beyond recognition the precious truth of both. Dispensationalism must drive a wedge between Old Testament and New, denying the one universal body of Christ gathered from all nations and history. Evolutionism must regard Genesis 1-11 as mere legend or myth, separating the headship of the first Adam from the Second,

and ultimately denying the reality of both. In all these instances and untold more the unity of Scripture is destroyed. Such destruction proclaims loudly the falsehood of those contradictions. May our children's ears be so trained to hear the noise.

The unity of the truth is uniquely Reformed, and it is also uniquely beautiful. This, too, our children must see. The beauty of one aspect of the truth cannot be elevated above another, but each aspect possess its own glory. And the glory of this facet is profound. From Moses to the Prophets, to the Gospels, to the Epistles — all parts of Scripture together comprise an exquisitely cohesive, harmonious whole, infallibly so. The law in all its various applications may be summarized in one grand command — love God with all thy heart, soul, mind, and strength. Such oneness is most glorious and lovely, even as brethren dwelling together in unity is a most good and pleasant sight — like dew on Mt. Zion descended (Ps. 133).

This can be illustrated in a work of art. A painting that does not in some way exhibit the principle of unity is deemed ugly and disjointed. In fact, it will not meet the definition of "composition" at all. To lack unity is a fatal flaw in design. To the extent that a piece of artwork is harmoniously composed, however, its beauty is enhanced.

Rev. Hoeksema also drew from the illustration of art to speak of the unity of the truth:

It is obvious that in the preaching or instruction of the truth the various aspects of the truth must be placed in their proper light and in their relation to one another. If I should describe a masterpiece of an artist, and if I should attempt to describe the individual parts which are on the canvas without relating them to the whole, that masterpiece would be ruined by my description. Or if I should attempt to por-

tray my impression of the whole and lay so much stress on the background that the background becomes the foreground, I do not do justice to the work of the artist. So it is also in respect to the work of salvation.<sup>2</sup>

God's work of salvation is one. His counsel is one. There are no plans A and B. Just one. Marvelous it is to see how each individual doctrine stands in relation to each other one and to the whole. Understanding this, we begin to see the full beauty. It is when we fail to consult all of the Word that we are in danger of seeing a less than accurate picture, or even of seeing a perversion of it. This is the strength and beauty of the Reformed faith, that it sees the truth as one. It all fits. This is not merely academic. It is gloriously fair and comely. It is supremely magnificent and fine. Out of Zion, the perfection of beauty, God hath shined! (Ps. 50:2). Our children need to appreciate this aspect of the truth as well.

This is uniquely Reformed. This is uniquely beautiful. And in the providence and wisdom of God, this is uniquely teachable. Scripture provides us with many figures to help us better understand the truth. There is one figure in particular that shows us how important it is that we see the unity of that truth. Jesus told His disciples to beware of the "leaven" of the doctrine of the Pharisees. We as parents (and particularly mothers, for it is a homey illustration) can look for an opportunity to speak of this figure to our children. We might speak to them of bread, the process involved in making it, and yeast, or leaven. In Bible times, a small piece of leavened dough was added to a large lump of new dough in order to accomplish the certain, steady work of fermentation. Because that large lump was one, a little leaven would affect the whole lump. Thus we can show our children what hap-



pens when heresy is introduced into our thinking. One little error will affect all that we believe. A current example of this that we might point out to our children is how the doctrine of common grace, in a mere three small points, has worked itself out in the whole theology, life, and practice of those churches that have embraced it. Uncritical contact with such leaven is certainly something of which we need to be warned.

The unity of the truth and of Scripture is indeed a profound theological concept, but it must not be left on such a high shelf that little eyes are unable to gaze thereon. Though deep and profound, it is also basic. We live in a day when the foundations may not be taken for granted. As one attempts to un-

derstand the difference between the mind that is bent on Arminianism and the mind that is seeking to be thoroughly Reformed, this is one of the underlying principles that will inevitably come to the surface. The Arminian is willing to accept, on the one hand, that God is sovereign, and, on the other, that salvation depends on the will of a puny, dependent man. A contradiction? Perhaps. But so be it. These are mysteries. These are things we must simply accept in blind faith. That is his view. And with that view he distorts all doctrine until it finally fits together too — in falsehood.

There are mysteries, to be sure, but not that kind. The Reformed man, woman, or child has eyes of faith wide open, searching, seeing, and understanding more and more.

One truth fits with another. One text joins with other texts. It is imperative that our children have this mind instilled within them. It is imperative, not only for their own spiritual growth, but for their defense of the truth as well.

Unity in the truth — with God and with one another. Unity of the truth — in Scripture and the creeds. Let us show these wondrous things to our children. Let us grow in this blessed endeavor.



1 Herman Hoeksema, *The Place of Reprobation in the Preaching of the Gospel*, pamphlet printed by Southwest Protestant Reformed Church Evangelism Committee, 4875 Ivanrest Ave., Wyoming, MI 49418, 1993, p. 1.

2 *Ibid.*, p. 2.

*In His Fear*

*Rev. Daniel Kleyn*

## God's Love and Hatred Toward Men (2)

**T**he Scriptures teach and we firmly believe that God's attitudes of love and hatred toward men are particular and unchanging. God always and only loves the elect. God always and only hates the reprobate.

Some object to this. The main objection comes from those who hold to the theory of common grace. Various passages are immediately mentioned and appealed to by those who defend this theory, such as Psalm 145:9 and Matthew 5:45. The argument presented is that God shows favor to all men in this life when He gives

them good things. Indiscriminately God sends rain, sunshine, plentiful harvests, prosperity, and health. Not only do the elect receive these things, the reprobate do as well. Therefore, it is argued, God shows favor also to the reprobate. The fact that He gives good things to them is proof of His love for them.



The theory of common grace is a serious error. It is so for various reasons. Here we mention two of those reasons.

It is a serious error first of all because it is an attack upon God Himself. It is a theory that denies God's immutability. For while God hated the reprobate in eternity (when He determined that they

would be sent to hell), and while God will again hate the reprobate at the end of time (when He actually sends them to hell), in time itself He supposedly loves and is gracious toward them. That makes God a changing God.

The truth of the matter is that the attitude of hatred that God has toward the reprobate is constant. It began in eternity. It is the same throughout all time and history. It will be the same on the judgment day when God sends the wicked to hell. And it will be the same to all eternity. God is the same yesterday, today, and forever. God always hates the reprobate wicked.

The other serious error of the theory of common grace is that it confuses grace with things. It is

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argued by the proponents of common grace that the fact that God gives good things to the wicked means God has an attitude of favor toward them. That is not so. And the reason is that grace is not in things. Grace is an attitude. Grace is an attitude that God shows regardless of the things He gives or sends.

If this were not true, the child of God would be thrown often into despair. For if grace is in things, that would mean God's grace and love are present only when we are receiving good things from Him. God's attitude would change according to the things He sends. But the truth of the matter is that God's attitude is not determined by things. God's attitudes of love and hatred are shown to the elect and reprobate respectively regardless of the actual things God gives or sends them.

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In this connection, we certainly do not deny that God gives "good gifts" to the reprobate wicked. Everything comes from God, and all that comes from Him is good. The wicked also receive good things from the hand of God, such as rain and sunshine (Matt. 5:45). But it simply is not true that these good things are evidences of God's grace toward them. Rather, the good gifts that God gives the wicked are given in hatred and are therefore evidences of God's unchanging attitude of hatred toward them.

This is very clearly set forth in Psalm 73. In that Psalm it is mentioned, first of all, that the wicked do indeed receive many good things. In fact, as the psalmist points out, the ungodly often receive more good things than the elect do. But the Psalm also makes clear that these things are not given in favor, for the wicked are on a slippery slope that leads to eternal destruction in hell. When God sends rain and sunshine on the farm of your ungodly neighbor,

and when that man, as a result, has a bumper crop, that rain and that sunshine are really just an extra coating of ice on that slippery slope to hell.

Proverbs 3:33 makes this clear too. God's curse is always in the house of the wicked. Even though the wicked may be enjoying health and luxury, still the curse of God is upon him.

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There is only one way to understand properly the things that happen in time. They must be understood in the light of eternity.

How God deals with men during their earthly lives is directly related to the truth of sovereign predestination. The truth of predestination means that God eternally determined who are the elect and who are the reprobate, who will go to heaven and who will go to hell. That truth determines not only how God will deal with each man on the judgment day and to all eternity thereafter, but it also determines how God deals with men now in time and history.

God in time is carrying out His eternal decree of predestination. This means that all He does, sends, and gives serves the goal He has to bring the elect to glory and to send the reprobate to hell. If God has determined that one will spend eternity in hell, everything in that person's life is a means to that end, hell. If, however, God has determined that one will spend eternity in heaven, everything in that person's life is a means to that end, heaven. And that is true even when the elect child of God experiences the greatest misery and trouble in this life, and the wicked the greatest prosperity and ease.

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That God's attitude toward men is particular has certain implications, first of all, for the reprobate. We have seen that God is never loving or kind toward them.

All the things that God sends or gives to the reprobate add, therefore, to their condemnation. Whether those things be viewed as "good" or "bad," through them God sets the wicked on the slippery slope that speeds them on their way to eternal destruction and desolation.

Why is that? Why do these things add to their condemnation? For at least three reasons. First, because the reprobate do not acknowledge God as the Giver. Secondly, because they do not thank God for the things He gives them. And thirdly, because they use whatever God gives them, not for God's glory, but for their own selfish and sinful ends. God is perfectly just, therefore, in sending them eternally to hell.

On the other hand, the particularity of God's attitude toward men is a truth that gives untold comfort to the elect. God is always gracious to us. God never has, towards us, an attitude of hatred or wrath. Even when God sends adversities, God does it in love. Cancer and sickness, pain and death are evidences of His love and grace. All things work together for our eternal good.

It is true that we do not always (or even often) see how all things are for our good. But that makes no difference. For nothing can separate us from God's great love toward us in Christ Jesus. Not even our sins can do that. Constant and unchanging is His love. And constant and unchanging is His glorious purpose to work all things for our salvation.

We ought to be humbled when we think of God's love for us, for we deserve it no more than the reprobate wicked who will spend eternity in hell. We all deserve to be hated by God. We all deserve to experience to all eternity His wrath. It is alone by the wonder of His grace that we will not. May we be always thankful for God's amazing love. 



## ■ Reflections on Synodical Decisions

By the time this report appears in the *Standard Bearer*, it will be old news. Yet several items have appeared in magazines and newspapers that should be of interest to our readers.

The first is the action of the Synod of the Reformed Church in America. Synod took note of the fact that this year marks the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the first ordination of a woman to the ministry within that denomination. That was 1979. In 1980 the RCA Synod took a decision establishing in its bylaws a "conscience clause." Ministers, elders, and deacons, for conscience sake, were exempt from participating in any way in the ordination of women. The Word of God that did not allow women to speak in the church bound their conscience. At its last synod two years ago, an attempt was made to remove this "conscience clause." The synod approved, but the proposal failed to receive the necessary 2/3's vote of the classes (it fell three votes short). This year the proposal was again on the floor of synod—and again it was approved. The 2/3 vote of the classes is again required—and the expectation is that this time it will succeed.

The *Grand Rapids Press*, June 5, 2004, reports sympathetically about the plight of women ministers and "wannabes" in that denomination.

Angie Mabry-Nauta moved to Holland from Texas nearly three years ago because she felt God called her to be a minister.

She was shocked and angered, then, when people—including a classmate at Western Theological Seminary—told her God did not allow women to be ministers.

"It was very painful," Mabry-Nauta recalled, sitting in her snug apartment surrounded by Bibles and baby blankets for her newborn daughter.

"I felt like I had to legitimize myself everywhere I went and defend my call.

"It is God who called me. Who are you, as a human being, to question that?"

Now, a month after completing a master's of divinity degree, Mabry-Nauta waits for a church to affirm her calling by offering her a pastoral position.

But, for women in the Reformed Church in America, that can be a long wait.

Twenty-five years after the RCA officially opened its pulpits to women, the frustrations of women such as Mabry-Nauta remain common.

More than 200 women are ordained as ministers in the RCA, about 10 percent of the pool of 2,000 ministers.

But it is difficult for many female clergy to land posts in many churches—particularly in conservative West Michigan.

In this area, only four out of more than 50 ordained women are senior or solo pastors.

After 2000 years of church history, and hundreds of years of history of Protestantism and of the Reformed segment thereof, women obtained the "right" to be ordained into the ministry in the Reformed Church of America. But it was a "mixed celebration" at the synod meeting in Wheaton, IL. There was the bone of contention: the "conscience" of those opposed to such ordination. So the synod had to decide: was it right to have a conscience which insisted it was not biblical to ordain women into the ministry?

"It's a mixed celebration," said the Rev. Evelyn Diephouse, moderator of the RCA's Commission

for Women. "We're going to honor the conflict that women experience, not deny that that's the reality."

The reality will hit home during the weeklong General Synod that began Thursday and wraps up Wednesday.

On the agenda is a proposal to do away with the "conscience clauses"—provisions that allow church officers to abstain from sponsoring female seminarians or approving their ordinations.

Though the more conservative Reformed Churches remain somewhat more opposed to women serving in office, especially in the ministry, that is evidently not true of the leaders.

But denominational leaders stand squarely in favor of women clergy as part of God's salvation plan.

"It's God's intention when his kingdom fully comes that people of every language, tribe, nation and gender serve as priests of God," said Mathew Floding, dean of students at Western Theological Seminary. "If these are going to be brothers and sisters in the kingdom when it fully comes, how can we treat them any differently now?"

The article continues by explaining the "conscience clause":

Fearing a major schism, synod delegates in 1980 approved the conscience clauses—language intended to prevent officials from obstructing women's ordination and protect them from violating their consciences by participating in a practice they find un-Scriptural.

Opponents of female ministers often cite I Timothy 2:12: "I do not permit a woman to teach or to have authority over a man."

However, opponents say the clauses have undermined female clergy's authority....

Some of the reasons that few women have been ordained into the ministry, or have been installed into the office in a local church, are given also in the article:

In this region, only four women are head pastors or the sole minister, according to RCA figures. Nine are co-pastors or associates.

Several are chaplains or specialized ministers.

A few women serve churches of other denominations such as Evangelical Lutheran or Congregational.

The Rev. Barbara Wright this month became minister of First Congregational United Church of Christ in Chelsea, after a year of fruitless searching for an RCA pulpit in West Michigan.

Wright was pastor of Grand Rapids' Hope Reformed Church for five years before stepping down in March 2003, feeling her divorce made it difficult to lead the congregation....

...While frustrated women have not made more progress in the RCA, she [Rev. Kathryn Davelaar] sees the problem in larger terms.

"The world is just plain not a just place when it comes to gender equality. I can't fault the church any more than I can all of humanity."

But Angie Mabry-Nauta finds fault with a church that allows discrimination that is illegal in the secular world. She notes that churches may specify preferences of gender, age or race when seeking ministerial candidates.

"We're supposed to be living in this reality of what it means to be moving toward the new heaven and the new Earth, where things are just not like this anymore," said the 33-year-old Texas native.

...Calling the conscience clauses "sanctioned sexism," she nevertheless sees pain on both sides of the issue and calls for loving understanding. But she strongly rejects biblical arguments against women's ordination....

The *Grand Rapids Press*, June 9, 2004, reports the decision of the RCA Synod approving the removal of the "conscience clause" from its

by-laws. That decision had some delegates concerned about the action taken.

The Rev. Barbara Fillette, a Pennsylvania pastor who recommended removal of the clauses, said they "served a worthy purpose in their time," but they are "now being used at times to undermine authority of women who are ordained." Without them, women ministers will get more respect from their male colleagues, she said.

"We can learn from each other. We can work side by side. We can talk to each other openly and honestly," Fillette said. "Nobody can hide behind the Book of the Church Order."

The Rev. Scott VanOostendorp, pastor of First Reformed Church in Zeeland, voted to keep the conscience clauses. Even though his congregation approves of women pastors and has sent five women on to the seminary, he said "there is a significant number of churches in our denomination that are not at that place."

The clauses maintained unity in diversity, with both views having a biblical basis. Deleting the clauses sends a message that opposition to women in church office is an invalid viewpoint, he said.

This sort of action reminds of the story of the frog. It is claimed that a frog when placed directly into boiling water will immediately leap out. But if the frog is placed in cool water that is then gradually heated, it will remain in until dead.

Several other thoughts come to mind. First, how can one have a conscientious objection to participate in the ordination of women—but not have the same objection of being part of the organization that allows this activity?

Secondly, how can two diametrically opposite views on woman's ordination both have "a biblical basis"?

Thirdly, what kind of theology is the remark quoted in the *Press*,

"It is God who called me. Who are you, as a human being, to question that?" Homosexuals aspiring to the ministry have made similar claims. Even murderers have made the claim that God called them to commit this evil deed. How can any claim a "call of God" which is contrary to the teachings of Scripture?

One can only be saddened by these results. One wonders: how long before the Christian Reformed Church will also take away the "right" of individual classes to continue to maintain the Church Order, which restricts the ministry to males?

## ■ 258<sup>th</sup> Synod of the RCUS

The Reformed Church US (German Reformed) held its 258<sup>th</sup> synod this year from May 11-13 at Manitowoc, Wisconsin. *Christian Renewal*, May 31, 2004, reports on its decisions. One point of great interest, especially in light of recent editorials in the *Standard Bearer*, was the statement on "Justification by Faith."

A second significant issue before Synod this year was a 56-page report on justification by faith. The report was balanced, thoroughly researched and well written. Discussion began on Wednesday evening and concluded on Thursday morning. The unity of the body was apparent throughout the discussion, with most time spent on fine-tuning wording.

As Rev. Tracy Gruggett presented the report, he spoke of the general perception many people have about Norman Shepherd being "just vague," and the committee's desire to show if Shepherd is simply vague, in error, or heretical. "Justification is, in his mind, the forgiveness of sins only," stated Gruggett. He pointed out that the recommendations, with their resolutions and supporting grounds, follow a pattern. "Essentially they are a syllogism," he said, each building on previous ones.

The report detailed background of the issue, including an exten-



sive section on Shepherd's doctrine, a history of the controversy at Westminster Theological Seminary in Philadelphia that led to Shepherd's eventual dismissal, as well as summaries of teachings found in Shepherd's *Call of Grace*, his article in *Reformation and Revival*, and his recent lecture at the Conference of Covenant Theology. The report then summarizes and critiques Shepherd's teachings and makes four recommendations (the first containing four resolutions).

The first recommendation was most significant and generated a great deal of discussion. It called for the adoption of four resolutions with extensive grounds regarding the teachings of Norman Shepherd. Resolution #1 stated: "we reaffirm the truth of the bib-

lical doctrine of justification by faith alone as it is expressed in the Three Forms of Unity" with a lengthy list of references. Resolution #2 was: "we find that Rev. Norman Shepherd for many years has taught a confused doctrine of justification, contrary to the Heidelberg Catechism, the Belgic Confession and the Canons of Dort" with a supporting list of specifics. Resolution #3 said: "Therefore, we also resolve that the teachings of Norman Shepherd on justification by faith be anathematized and call upon the faithful everywhere to reject these old errors in whatever form they appear." Resolution #4 asked for the RCUS to "recognize these Romish, Arminian, and Socinian errors for what they are and urge our breth-

ren throughout the world to reject them and to refuse those who teach them."

There follows in the report some of the revisions made in the above recommendations. After these changes were made, "the first recommendation, with its extensive resolutions and grounds, carried unanimously. A further motion asked for the record to state that the vote carried 'without dissenting voice.'" While some conservative Reformed denominations appear to be favoring the teachings of Norman Shepherd on justification, at least one has publicly taken a stand against that.



Grace Life

Rev. Mitchell Dick

## "Athens, Here We Come!"

**W**hat has Jerusalem to do with Athens?

This is the question theologians put when considering the matter of how the Church, Jerusalem, is related and relates to the world, Athens.

Put another way, the question is How is the Church, and how are the people of God in that Church a part of or not a part of the culture of a fallen world? And if by "culture" is meant "the ideas, customs, skills, arts, etc. of a given people in a given period; civilization" (*New World Dictionary*), then the question is Are the world's ideas, customs, skills, and arts ours? And, if so, how do we interact with, learn from, cooperate with that culture? If not, if the church and the culture of the

world are distinct, how do we keep ourselves and our children from it? Are we Christians to express, even, opposition to such a world and its cultural products? Are we to develop...our own?

The question comes down to What saith the Lord, what is His Word about a fallen world's art, literature, law, science, technology, government, philosophy? Is it all broken? Is it all or most or part full of hell? What do we say of Roman jurisprudence, Shakespeare, Poe, Bach, Brahms, cloning, transplants, the movie, and The Life of Bill Clinton? And then, how does our view of Athens show up in what we read and hear, in what movies we attend or do not, in what medical procedures we will submit to, and in our thoughts of a certain Monica?

Since "culture" involves the causes of a people in that culture, the question of Jerusalem and its

relation to culture, the culture of Athens, involves, necessarily, this one: Are Christians to make common cause with unbelievers? I have on my desk petitions (which I aim to use) for gathering signatures in order to try to amend the constitution of our fair state of Michigan to protect marriage from the happys. Should I be so concerned and so involved? What kind of a gospel minister am I anyway? Should you, while we are at it, try to save the rain forests and the whales with Green Peace? What kind of a Christian would you be anyway?

Many preach we ought to unite with the culture and causes of the world due to just *how much* Jerusalem and Athens have in common. We share culture, it is observed, and also a common culture mandate. We have a shared image of God, it is claimed, and a grace, too, to praise the Lord in rejoicing to-

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gether in the things we share and in the work we can do as children of our Father in heaven. We cry together, they remind us, over the Holocaust. We rejoice together when the good guy wins, and when the bully, the cheat, and the tyrant are shamed. We wish together that if not Calvin, at least Calvin and Hobbes were back. We all go to the same hospitals. We all pity those who can't. Their answer to the question "What hath Jerusalem to do with Athens?" Everything. Everything on earth. And perhaps, as well, everything of heaven.

Others contend for the same unity and basis for unity, but recognize that significant differences remain between Jerusalem and Athens. Jerusalem may rub shoulders with the world, do science with and learn from God-denying scientists, invite heathen speakers to a January series of lectures, and rap and dance with Athenians...but this in order also to *redeem* their shoulders, their science, their speakers, and their hip-hop.

Other Christians advocate fleeing the culture, never reading Shakespeare, never admitting to reading the Hobbit, reading only Reformed writings, never writing poetry except it contain a verse from the Bible, ever attempting to make Reformed music, sovereign grace notes and all. These take literally Deuteronomy's *Israel shall dwell in safety alone*, and the Lord's call to His people not only to destroy the enemy, but, presumably, also to burn her books. These ask the question "What hath Jerusalem to do with Athens?" and *What hath Jerusalem's culture to do with Athenian culture* as rhetorically as Paul once asked "What fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? And what communion hath light with darkness? And what concord hath Christ with Belial? Or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel?"

What now do we say? How should we then live—as Jerusalem in Athens, and with her totally,

with her partially, with her to redeem her and her culture, or against her emphatically?



We want to consider this fascinating and not altogether easy question of the relationship of Jerusalem and Athens in a short series of articles in *Grace Life*. Understanding the question and the principles involved in this whole matter will be our first objective. Being able to apply these principles, and as young *Grace Life* folks, will be our second objective, like unto the first.

Some things before we leave off for now.

First, I dare say that this "How do we Christians, and Reformed Christians at that, relate to the culture" is one of the most important questions of our day. I am bolder to say that it is even more important than the Dating Thing with which we battled on several campaigns in *Grace Life*. For this question we now face asks more, much more, than what Jerusalem's way of a man with a maid has to do with the backseat of Athenian chariots. It is the broader and more basic question *Just how are we Christians, and we Grace Life Christians, to be in the world and not of it, in the world but not worldly? And how are we who are not of the world nevertheless to enjoy the good gifts the Lord has provided even through unbelievers? And how are we believers to be in Athens in such a way that we might gain some Athenians to Christ?*

Second, you ought to know that much has been written before on this subject. And, I suppose, it is helpful that you know that I know that. I have piled on my desk works with titles such as *Christ and Culture*, *Testament of Vision*, *Culture and the Cross*, *The Calvinistic Concept of Culture*, and *Christ and the Fine Arts*. In the Reformed tradition there has also been much wrestling with and thought given to the subject. Abraham Kuyper, brilliant nineteenth and early twen-

tieth century theologian and statesman in the Netherlands, wrote and spoke widely and forcefully on just this matter of the relationship of Jerusalem and Athens. His six Stone Lectures (delivered at Princeton in 1898), for example, address such subjects as "Calvinism and Politics," "Calvinism and Science," and "Calvinism and Art." Our own churches have produced a pamphlet or two on "Culture" and several particulars of the culture, one recent publication addressing the matter of "Jesus Christ in the Movies." Several articles in the *Standard Bearer* have also spoken to the issue. "Antithesis, Culture, and the Cultural Mandate" is an article located in volume 62 of the *SB*. Another, published in the very first volume of the *SB*, bears the title "*Op Alle Terreinen des Levens*." And there are several articles concerning common grace and culture. Yours truly, in the articles to come, will attempt not to presume to add to but to coalesce and to reflect the wisdom of the fathers and to present it in a readable and practical and twenty-first century and *Grace Life* way.

Third, Scripture, of course, will be our primary guide. Much can be gleaned from Genesis to Revelation about Jerusalem and Athens and their relation to one another. I will take as a primary reference point the book of Acts, chapter 17. There we read of the apostle Paul in Athens. He is taking a vacation there from the labors of his second missionary journey. He has gone downtown to the library there and browsed the writings of the philosophers, enjoyed Greek ice cream, sunned on the beaches of the Aegean, visited the museums, and especially has he enjoyed the Olympic games. Then things really start happening....


Finally, I leave you with this. About those Olympics. Arguably *the* cultural world event of this year, 2004. And now they are back in Athens where they came from. World class athletes from many na-



tions should be running and throwing and swimming and kicking and boxing and shooting there as we read. There may even be some Americans among them, if any have survived the dope screening. Question is: will you be there?

Should a believer train to compete there? Should we watch these games? Did Paul in Athens 2000 years ago *really* (and did he really go to the museums, etc...)? What's there to learn about Jerusalem and Athens from a little man,

a little Christian man, but an Apostle and an inspired man, and his doings among the Athenians long ago?

Methinks much. Let's see. For Grace Life. And Athens, here we come! 

## Book Reviews



G.I. Williamson, *The Westminster Confession of Faith for Study Classes*. Phillipsburg, New Jersey: P&R, 2004. Pp. xii + 409. \$16.99 (paper). [Reviewed by the editor.]

**T**his reprint of the book first published in 1964 is likely the best contemporary commentary on the Westminster Confession of Faith.

It is intended particularly for classes that study the Presbyterian creed. The author calls the book a "study manual." Treatment of each chapter, or section of a chapter, is followed by questions that point the reader or student to the main teachings of the chapter. These questions are briefly answered by the author at the end of the book.

G.I. Williamson is a well-known pastor and theologian in the Orthodox Presbyterian Church.

Overall, the explanation is a faithful exposition of the articles of the Confession by one who is committed to the system of theology it contains. The treatment of predestination in chapter 3, for example, is a clear, uncompromising explanation and defense of the Reformed doctrine of predestination, reprobation as well as election.

Among the explanations of particular teachings of the Westminster Confession that are especially interesting to one whose standards are the "Three Forms of Unity" are the following. Although he embraces the doctrine of a covenant of works with Adam, Williamson does not express him-

self whether the creed intends that Adam could have earned, or otherwise obtained, the higher, heavenly life that is ours in the covenant of grace.

Commenting on Westminster's ambiguous statement, "This infallible assurance doth not so belong to the essence of faith," the author ambiguously declares, "Infallible assurance is not of the essence of saving faith" (p. 175; emphasis added). Does *fallible* assurance then belong to the essence of faith? And what might a "fallible" assurance possibly be? Is not a "fallible assurance" an "uncertain certainty"?

Williamson approves the Orthodox Presbyterian Church's revision of the article identifying Antichrist as the pope. Ominously, he grounds his approval partly in a preterist interpretation of II Thessalonians 2 (with appeal to Christian Reconstructionist Gary DeMar!).

According to Williamson's explanation of Westminster's chapter on eschatology, the Westminster Confession of Faith is open to postmillennialism.

Williamson is to be faulted for gratuitously inserting his, and the Orthodox Presbyterian Church's, false doctrine of the offer of salvation as a desire of Christ, in saving grace toward them, for the salvation of reprobate persons. Williamson introduces the doctrine at a point where it clashes violently with the text of the creed itself. The creed is teaching that the grace of Christ in the application of re-

demption is particular, limited, and efficacious, as in the accomplishment of redemption. "To all those for whom Christ hath purchased redemption, he doth certainly and effectually apply and communicate the same; making intercession for them, and revealing unto them, in and by the Word, the mysteries of salvation; effectually persuading them by his Spirit to believe and obey" (WCF, VIII, 8).

Williamson's commentary on the article declares that "Christ freely and sincerely offers salvation to all who hear the gospel, whether they are elect or not" (p. 109). His appeal to Matthew 23:37 makes plain that Williamson has in mind a gracious desire, or will, of Christ to save all men without exception. This is the teaching of universal, resistible, saving grace.

Universal grace is in flat contradiction of the article. Universal grace is destructive of the system of doctrine contained in the Confession as a whole. The system of doctrine contained in the Westminster Confession of Faith is the truth of particular, sovereign (irresistible) grace. ■

*Martin Luther: The Christian Between God and Death*, by Richard Marius. Cambridge, Massachusetts/London, England: Harvard University Press, 1999. Pp. xv + 542 (cloth). [Reviewed by the editor.]

**R**ichard Marius is not a kindred spirit to the subject of this

study. Marius is, by his own admission, an Erasmian—tolerant, skeptical, peace-loving, anti-dogmatical, everything Martin Luther was not, indeed everything Luther hated. Marius deplores Luther's uncompromising stand for the Reformation gospel against Rome and his vehemence in condemning all who attacked that gospel. Marius tells his reader at the outset that he views Luther as a "catastrophe in the history of Western civilization" (p. xii). Marius is not a believer.

But the author knows his man. He has done the reading in Luther's writings and the research in the secondary sources. With a scholar's honesty, helped by a strong attraction to Luther in spite of himself, Marius has written one of the finest books on the early Luther. The work is a splendid combination of biography and analysis of Luther's theology. Although the last chapter contains a brief account of Luther's death, the book ends with Luther's great controversy with Erasmus over the bondage of the will in 1525, some twenty years earlier.

The fascinating story of Luther's early life is told well. It was a life of struggle and warfare. Interwoven with the account of Luther's life are a lively, lucid presentation and examination of Luther's teachings—about the Bible; about justification; about the Roman Catholic Church; about the state and revolution; about marriage; about predestination, and more.

Almost always, Marius gets it right, even when he obviously does not agree. Luther had no sympathy for the revolutionary peasants because his gospel proclaimed a heavenly kingdom, not an earthly one. In the controversy with Erasmus, Luther confessed divine sovereignty as the indispensable requirement for the salvation of sinners. Marius' clear understanding of the place of good works in Luther's theology ex-

poses the confusion of Reformed scholars who accuse Luther of antinomism and correct his supposed weakness by making good works conditions of righteousness and salvation. Marius regards as "one of Luther's most powerful thoughts" that "the ability to do good works seems to be an honor that we gain only because God picks us out to perform them" (p. 166).

The unbelieving Harvard historian expresses Luther's—and the Reformation's—doctrine of the Christian life of good works perfectly.

If I love someone and am assured of that person's love for me, I do not go to a rule book to see what bargain I must strike, what deeds I must perform, what dragons I must slay to provoke a love I already feel. Those human relations where someone says, "Do this, and I will love you," are cold and mechanical. Under conditions of trade and bargain, one can never be certain of love at all. If I know that someone loves me, I can enter a warm human bond and have real freedom. I do not have to prove my love by constant effort. Yet what sort of freedom is it? It is obviously not a freedom to do anything contrary to the nature of love itself. I am not free to slash my beloved's tires, to beat his children, to poison his dog, or to burn his house down. I am bound by love, but it is a bondage that I do not feel as bondage. For Luther, the cross proved for all time how much God loves us. Because they are assured of God's love, true Christians spontaneously act in immeasurable gratitude to the Christ who has redeemed them (pp. 267, 268).

The thesis of the book, stated as the sub-title, is convincing. Luther's great struggle was neither with the pope nor with the devil. He despised the pope as the mere creature of scheming men and the false church. He reveled in the conflict with the devil, mighty foe of Christ and His church. Satan

cannot stand before the Word of God. "One little word shall fell him." But Luther was fiercely tempted to fear death—destructive, inexorable, mysterious, awful death. The death Luther was tempted to fear is the dreadful Word of the holy God against the guilty sinner. Are we not all tempted, our life long, to tremble before this enemy, this "king of terrors"? Against this terror, there is one, and only one, defense: the gospel of righteousness by faith alone that Luther restored to the true church. Putting death out of mind, as Marius proposes, does not work. There are too many cemeteries.

Liberally sprinkled throughout the book are apt, gripping, sometimes hilarious quotations of Luther. There are also many shrewd observations about the Reformer. For example, Luther "never had much talent for apology" (p. 266).

Above all, the book is a study of the man. From this outstanding treatment of the greatest of the Reformers emerges the figure of a mighty man of God, sinner though he was. The viewpoint of the author does not signify. In a measure accorded few others, Christ graced Martin Luther with profound insight into the gospel, a keen sense of the worth of that gospel, and the heroic courage—especially the heroic courage—to stand for the gospel against false church and hostile state, high and low, friends and foes, men and devils. ■

*Tenth Presbyterian Church of Philadelphia*, by Allen C. Guelzo, William S. Barker, Paul S. Jones. Ed. Philip Graham Ryken. Phillipsburg, New Jersey: P&R, 2004. Pp. 239. \$24.99 (cloth). [Reviewed by the editor.]

Those who have benefited from the influential ministry of James Montgomery Boice will en-



joy this history of the prestigious Tenth Presbyterian Church of Philadelphia. So will older readers who remember the radio broadcasts of Donald Grey Barnhouse and *Eternity* magazine. Both men were pastors for many years of Tenth Presbyterian Church. The book devotes long chapters to the life and ministry of both of them.

The book commemorates the 175<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Tenth Presbyterian Church.

The nature of Tenth Presbyterian is intriguing. The church is determined to be Calvinistic. It has always emphasized expository preaching. The church frees capable preachers from many pastoral duties so that they can devote themselves to preaching.

At the same time, the church works aggressively in a big city.

In addition, the church has played a prominent role in evangelical and Calvinistic circles nation-wide, and even worldwide. A contributing factor has been its size and resources. The church numbers about one thousand members.

The book tells Tenth's story well. ■

*Not Reformed at All: Medievalism in "Reformed" Churches*, by John W. Robbins and Sean Gerety. Unicoi, Tennessee: The Trinity Foundation, 2004. 153 pages. \$9.95 (paper). [Reviewed by the editor.]

**N**ot Reformed at All exposes the theology of Douglas Wilson. The book responds to Wilson's *Reformed is Not Enough: Recovering the Objectivity of the Covenant*. Since the theology of Wilson is essentially that of the movement of covenantal universalism now troubling conservative Reformed and Presbyterian churches in North America, *Not Reformed at All* exposes the entire movement in which Wilson is a leading figure.

I use "exposes" advisedly.

Robbins and Gerety show, not only that Wilson's theology is not Reformed according to the Reformed confessions, but also that it is lightweight. It is not rooted in the Reformed tradition. What roots it has in the past are planted in medieval thinking. Hence, the book's subtitle. In addition, Wilson's theology is illogical, contradictory, and incoherent. Much of his teaching is mere assertion—"pontificating"—rather than demonstration from Scripture and the confessions. As if this were not bad enough, Wilson's signature style, unworthy of the gospel, is a "facile glibness and an adolescent smart-aleckness."

Emperor Wilson of Moscow has no clothes.

At its heart, the book is a criticism of the covenant theology of the "federal vision," as its proponents like to call it. What sets this criticism apart from almost all others is its penetration to the root of the heresy: the teaching of universal, conditional, resistible, losable covenant grace. Most other criticisms of the theology of the "federal vision" are content to address the denial of justification by faith alone. For whatever reason, they steer clear of the doctrine of the covenant out of which the teaching of justification by faith and works arises, according to the teachers of the false doctrine themselves.

Robbins and Gerety take hold of the heresy at its root. "It is appalling that at this late date, some glib writer who claims to be Reformed can assert that the Covenant of Grace is made with elect and reprobate alike—and be widely believed" (p. 118).

In the course of their refutation of Wilson's covenant theology, the authors prove from Scripture and the Reformed creeds that the covenant, its promise, its blessings, and its salvation are particular—for the elect in Christ alone.

This is God's sovereign Covenant

of Grace, and it is wholly efficacious; no one and nothing can thwart it. This Covenant is made exclusively with Christ and the elect, to whom alone the promises of life and salvation belong. At this state in his extended argument [in Romans], Paul uses the doctrine of election (individual, of course) to defend God against the charge that he has not kept his covenant promises to the Jews, and his Word is of no effect. Paul's argument is, in summary, that God had made no promises of salvation to all the children of Abraham, nor even to all the circumcised, but to his chosen people only. Just as God's election is of some only, and Christ died for some only, so in the Covenant of Grace the promise of salvation is to some only. The Covenant is not a promise to all men, not even to all those that are circumcised or baptized, but only to those chosen by God in Christ from before the foundation of the world. Paul writes: "But it is not that the Word of God has taken no effect. For they are not all Israel who are of Israel, nor are they all children because they are the seed of Abraham; but, 'In Isaac your seed shall be called'" (Romans 9:6-7) (pp. 92, 93).

There is astute reference to the biblical theology that plays a powerful role at Westminster Seminary in Philadelphia and elsewhere in promoting the covenant doctrine of the men of the "federal vision."

Christian theology is eternally true, firmly settled, and rigorously systematic; and it precedes all events. It is God's thoughts that produce events. Wilson's error, of course, is not unique to him; it is an error at the heart of the Biblical theology/redemptive history movement, which makes the chronological order in which God revealed truth to men more basic and more important than the logical order the truths themselves possess in God's mind (p. 97). ☛

### Evangelism Activities

**C**ornerstone PRC in Saint John, IN once again held its Vacation Bible School program this summer. This year's theme was "All God's Creatures," based on Psalm 96:11, 12.

The Reformed Witness Committee of the Hope PRC in Walker, MI sponsored a series of classes the four Tuesdays in July at their church on "The Doctrine of Holy Scripture." Prof. H. Hanko led these classes.

The Evangelism Committee of the Bethel PRC in Roselle, IL invited their congregation to join them in distributing literature and invitations to their church to homes in their Roselle neighborhood. Members of the congregation simply introduced themselves, left some information on the gospel and their church, and invited them to worship. The committee prepared a packet that contained a tape, church brochure and card, pamphlets, and invitation to their worship services. On June 5 the congregation distributed 200 evangelism packets. Plans called for similar efforts on July 10, August 14, September 11, and October 9.

### Congregation Activities

**A**ll members of the Grace PRC in Standale, MI were invited to a Summer Bible Study and Discussion on "A Study of the Parables." Six meetings were planned for the second and fourth Wednesdays of June, July, and August.

This summer members of the Bethel PRC in Roselle, IL were encouraged to attend a Summer Doctrine Class. Plans called for a study

on the truths of sovereign grace as taught in the Canons of Dordt, Head II, Particular Redemption. The classes began meeting on May 26. Special activities for fellowship were planned for after the class, such as ice cream, volleyball, mini-golf, etc.

Rev. R. VanOverloop, newly installed pastor of the Byron Center, MI PRC, has begun leading an Adult Sunday School class after each Sunday morning service for anyone who would like to attend, weather permitting, on the patio behind the church building. The discussion centers on that morning's sermon, and provides a worthwhile activity for parents waiting for their children to complete their Sunday School.

A summer music program was held on Sunday evening, July 4, at First PRC in Grand Rapids, MI. A special offering was taken for the Christian Fellowship Club.

In a recent bulletin from Hope PRC in Redlands, CA we read that the Psalter boards now installed in the front of their sanctuary were originally built in 1932 for the Redlands PRC on Clay and Lugonia Aves. They were removed recently, before this structure was torn down, and the boards were refinished to match their present sanctuary and put up on the wall.

We extend our congratulations to the First PRC in Holland, MI, which celebrated its 75th anniversary as an instituted congregation on July 3 and 4. Activities for Saturday, July 3, included bus tours to the former meeting places of First, a pig roast at Helder Park next to their church, followed by a short program in the sanctuary. A singspiration followed the evening service on Sunday evening.

The members of First PRC in Edmonton, Ontario, joined in a

farewell evening for Rev. and Mrs. M. DeVries on June 11 at Parkland Immanuel Christian School. Rev. DeVries preached his farewell sermon on Sunday, June 13, and was installed the following Sunday as pastor of the Wingham, Ontario PRC. Rev. R. Cammenga led the service and preached from II Timothy 4: 1, 2 on the theme, "Preach the Word."

### Mission Activities

**R**ev. J. Mahtani was able to preach in Lanham, MD on Sunday, June 27, at the Grace Presbyterian Church (USA). You may remember that Rev. Cammenga and Rev. Mahtani spoke at an Evangelism Conference there in 2001, and the Council of Southwest PRC in Grandville, MI, the calling church for Rev. Mahtani, and our denomination's Domestic Mission Committee have encouraged Rev. Mahtani to keep in contact with the saints in Lanham as well as in the Washington D.C. area. Grace Church has requested of Rev. Mahtani pulpit supply twice a year.

Sunday morning, June 27, Rev. W. Bekkering, one of our denomination's missionaries to Ghana, made a visit to the Sunday School of the Byron Center, MI PRC. Rev. Bekkering showed slides and spoke at the Sunday School about his work in Ghana.

Members of our PR congregations in and around the Grand Rapids, MI area were invited to Hope PRC in Walker, MI on Sunday evening, July 4, to hear Hope's associate pastor, Rev. A. denHartog, give an update of his work in Singapore and our sister churches there.

### School Activities

**T**he Federation of PR Christian Schools sponsored a seminar in late June at the Faith PRC in

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



Jenison, MI under the theme "Biblical Psychology and Teaching Practices," which featured Prof. H. Hanko as speaker. This Seminar included four sessions for teachers and prospective teachers and two public sessions. The first of these was held June 24 from 1:00 - 3:15 P.M. and featured Prof. Quentin Schultze of Calvin College speaking on "Modern Media and Its Impact." The second, that same evening, featured Mr. Tom Karel speaking on "Juvenile and Adolescent Depression."

### Minister Activities


On June 16 our Doon, Iowa PRC extended a call to Rev. G. Eriks, presently serving our Loveland, CO PRC, to serve as their next pastor.

The congregation of the Georgetown PRC in Hudsonville, MI will call a pastor from a trio of the Revs. A. Brummel, C. Haak, and S. Key.

Rev. C. Haak declined the call he had received to serve as the next pastor of the First PRC in Edmonton, AB, Canada.

From a trio that included the Revs. W. Bruinsma, Daniel Kleyn, and James Laning, the First PRC in Edmonton, Alberta, Canada extended a call to Rev. Laning.

Rev. C. Terpstra declined the call he had been considering to serve as the next pastor of the Faith PRC in Jenison, MI.

On Sunday, July 4, Rev. J. Slopsema informed the Hudsonville, MI PRC that he was led by the Lord to decline the call they had extended to him to serve as their next pastor. 

## Announcements

### NOTICE!

Classis West of the Protestant Reformed Churches will be hosted by Randolph PRC in Randolph, Wisconsin on Wednesday, September 1, 2004 at 8:30 A.M. All material for the agenda should be in the hands of the stated clerk by Monday, August 2, 2004. An officebearers' conference will be held on Tuesday, August 31, the Lord willing, on the subject of "Christian Education." Delegates or visitors in need of lodging or transportation should notify Rev. Douglas Kuiper (920-326-5642, or by email at [doug.kuiper@prca.org](mailto:doug.kuiper@prca.org)).

Rev. Daniel Kleyn  
Stated Clerk, Classis West

### RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The council and congregation of the Grandville PRC express their Christian sympathy to Gene and Ruth DeBoer and family and to Mike and Lisa DeBoer in the death of their mother and grandmother,

**MRS. GERT DEBOER.**

May they find comfort in the words of Psalm 62, Trust in him at all times; ye people, pour out your heart before him: God is a refuge for us.

Rev. Kenneth Koole, President  
David Kregel, Asst. Clerk

### NOTICE!!

Classis East will meet in regular session on Wednesday, September 8, 2004 at the First Protestant Reformed Church, Holland, Michigan. Material for this session must be in the hands of the stated clerk no later than August 9, 2004.

Jon J. Huiskens  
Stated Clerk

### RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The council and congregation of the Grandville PRC express their Christian sympathy to fellow members Mrs. Jean Harbach and Mr. David Harbach in the death of their husband and father,

**MR. PAUL HARBACH,**

at the age of 87 years. With them, we rest in the promise of God that "Precious in the sight of the LORD is the death of his saints" (Psalm 116:15).

Rev. Kenneth Koole, President  
Mr. David Kregel, Asst. Clerk

## World and Life View Conference

September 24 & 25 2004

Hull, Iowa

Sponsored by the

Christian Fellowship Society of Hull PRC

**Friday, September 24 at 7:30 P.M.**

Lecture at the chapel  
in Dordt College  
Sioux Center IA  
Speaker:

Prof. David Engelsma  
"Reformed Worldview  
of Particular Grace"

**Saturday, September 25**

Events held at Hull PRC

9:30 A.M.

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

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

Lunch — Provided by the  
Hull Christian Fellowship Society.

Symposium/Debate

EVERYONE IS WELCOME!

Please plan to attend.

If you need lodging,  
contact Kathy Brummel at  
[kbrummel@hickorytech.net](mailto:kbrummel@hickorytech.net) or  
712-439-1114.

We would love to see you there!



# THE STANDARD BEARER

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## WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

On August 13, 2004, our parents,

**MR. and MRS. HARRY  
LANGERAK,**

will celebrate their 40th wedding anniversary.

Thanks be to God for His covenant faithfulness in their marriage. Our hearts rejoice with them as they celebrate 40 years together. Their examples of love, patience, and spiritual guidance have been a continual source of joy in our lives. We pray that God will continue His work in them, keeping them in His tender care.

"For thou, O God, hast heard my vows: thou hast given me the heritage of those that fear thy name" (Psalm 61:5).

- \* Rev. William and Karen Langerak  
Jared, Justin, Katrina, Jason,  
Dorothy, Stephen
- \* Timothy and Brenda Bomers  
Luke, Alexander, Cody, Jesse,  
Samuel, Roseanne, Josiah
- \* Jonathan and Lisa Langerak  
Jonathan, Trevor, Emmet, Titus,  
Lydia
- \* David and Carla Langerak  
Emily, Anna, Sara, Rachel
- \* Joel and Jori Langerak  
Joel, Jacob, Madeline, Evan
- \* James and Sara Geerlings  
James, Levi, Silas
- \* Nathan and Carrie Langerak  
Sadie
- \* Jeremy and Kelly Langerak
- \* Everett Langerak

Grand Rapids, Michigan

## REMINDER

Young people in the PRC who live away from home while attending college may, on request, receive the *SB* free of charge at their college residence. Please notify the *SB* business office as soon as possible.

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## WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

Their children and grandchildren announce, with thanks to our faithful covenant heavenly Father, that July 15, 2004 marked 45 years of marriage for

**GUSTAVO and RAMONA  
STREYLE.**

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

- \* John and LeAnn Streyle  
Katharina, Adam, Grant, Patrick,  
Matthew
- \* Michael and Elaine Rau  
Nathan, Benjamin, Erin, Joel, Leah  
Hull, Iowa

## NOTICE!!!

Each issue of the *Standard Bearer* is available on cassette tape for those who are blind, or who for some other reason would like to be able to listen to a reading of the *SB*. This is an excellent ministry of the Evangelism Society of the Southeast Protestant Reformed Church. The reader is Ken Rietema of Southeast Church. Anyone desiring this service regularly should write:

Southeast PRC  
1535 Cambridge Ave. S.E.  
Grand Rapids, MI 49506.

## Seminary Convocation

September 14, 2004  
in Southwest PRC  
at 7:30 P.M.

## RFPA ANNUAL MEETING

Thursday, September 23  
in Grandville PRC  
Prof. Engelsma will speak on  
"Reflection on That Rare Creature:  
Editor of the *SB*"

## RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The council and congregation of Kalamazoo Protestant Reformed Church express their sincere Christian sympathy to Mr. Henry Kiel and to his children: Kathy Verbeek, Tom Kiel, Sandy Kiel, and Dan Kiel and their families in the passing of their wife, mother, and grandmother,

**MRS. MURIEL J. KIEL.**

May the family be comforted with God's Word found in John 14:1-3, "Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also."

Rev. W. Bruinsma, President  
Tom Kiel, Clerk

## Topics for August

Date	Topic	Text
August 1	"The Woman's Role as Wife and Mother" (2)	I Corinthians 10:31
August 8	"The Better Life to Come"	Ecclesiastes 7:1
August 15	"Homeward Bound"	II Corinthians 5:1
August 22	"The Prevailing Promise"	Isaiah 41:10
August 29	"Youth, Remember!"	Ecclesiastes 12:1