



**A Reformed
Semi-Monthly
Magazine**

The Standard Bearer

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The Blessedness of Christ's Glorification

"And there were certain Greeks among them that came up to worship at the feast. The same came therefore to Philip, which was of Bethsaida of Galilee, and desired him, saying, Sir, we would see Jesus."

John 12:20, 23

"We would see Jesus."

As Jesus' public ministry drew to a close, certain Greeks came to Jerusalem to keep the Passover feast. There they approached Philip with a significant request.

Actually we know very little about them. The fact that they are called Greeks might mean that they came from Greece. How many there were we do not know. But we do know that they were proselytes, who had been converted to the Jewish religion, since they came with thousands of other pilgrims to keep the Passover in Jerusalem. They knew Moses and the prophets, and they embraced in faith the

hope of Israel for the coming of the Messiah. They had heard about Jesus, evidently in their visits to Jerusalem to attend the various feasts.

What is of special importance is the fact that they represent the Gentiles, the church of the new dispensation.

Whatever made them aware of Jesus, or however they had learned to know about Him, their curiosity was sufficiently aroused that they wanted to meet Him. Or was it more than curiosity? Was God working the wonder of grace in them, so that there was in them the beginning of faith in Jesus. We do not know, but the latter seems the more likely. Was it respect, awe, or reverence that kept them from approaching Jesus in person? Why did they feel that they needed an

intermediary to present them to Jesus? We have no way of knowing. But they evidently had become aware of the fact that Philip was one of Jesus' Galilean disciples, so they approach him with the request, "Sir, we would see Jesus."

For some reason this makes a strong impression upon Philip. He seems to be in a quandary, not knowing whether he should inform Jesus of their wishes, or possibly even introduce Jesus to them. He consults Andrew, another of Jesus' disciples, who also seems to wonder what to do with this request. Together they agree to approach Jesus and to inform Him of the desire of these Greeks.

Whether the Greeks actually saw Jesus is evidently of no importance. What makes this request significant is the fact that Jesus is

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deeply impressed by it and gives a remarkable response. He says to Philip and Andrew: "The hour is come that the Son of man should be glorified."



The hour. Repeatedly Jesus had spoken of that hour during the three and a half years of His public ministry. That hour held great importance for Him. He was always deeply aware of it. But He had always emphasized that this hour was not yet. It was coming, it certainly would come in due time, but was not yet come. Now it had come.

Most amazing it is that He speaks of it as the hour of His glorification. Previously, when He spoke of that hour He was often sad, burdened, troubled, as if He dreaded the very thought of it. He warned His disciples that the Son of man must be delivered into the hands of wicked men to be mocked, spit upon, condemned, and crucified, only to rise again on the third day. But now He speaks in eager anticipation of the future. He speaks of triumph, of being glorified by the Father. He looks beyond all the agony, about which He had to warn His disciples, to the glory that had been promised Him before the world was, the glory that would follow and for which He had come into the world as the suffering Servant of God. He knew the Scriptures. He knew that the Scriptures had to be fulfilled in obedience to the Father's will.



The Son of man glorified.

The promised victory over the powers of darkness, already announced immediately after the Fall in Paradise, will be realized. The church will be delivered from the narrow bonds of national Israel to become universal, gathered out of every nation, tribe, and tongue over the whole world.

For Christ this includes His resurrection, His ascension, His exaltation at the Father's right hand, the gift of the Spirit that would be given Him, and the outpouring of that Spirit on Pentecost, whereby the church will be gathered in the new dispensation. Jesus had said not long before this: "Other sheep I have, which are not of this fold: them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice; and there shall be one fold and one shepherd" (John 10:16). It is these sheep, represented by the inquiring Greeks, that Jesus now has in mind. Beyond that He even sees the glorious heavenly perfection in the new creation.



But on His pathway to glory stood the cross. He could attain that glory for Himself and for those given to Him only by going over Golgotha, only by dying on the cross. He says, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone; but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit" (John 12:24).

The hour is come! The Son of man had to be given over into the hands of sinners to be crucified and to arise again on the third day. He must be taken prisoner and condemned as a criminal even by His own people and the Roman authorities. He would be openly rejected, mocked, scourged, condemned to suffer the painful, shameful, accursed death of crucifixion, because He testified that He was indeed the Christ, the Son of the living God. The whole world would unite to cast Him out as one who was not worthy to have a place in human society.

But still worse, deep darkness would settle upon Him, a loneliness would grip His soul as God turned against Him in consuming wrath. All the waves and billows of divine judgment for the sins of all His people would bring Him

into isolation such as He only, the Son of God in the flesh, could experience.

Willful suffering, complete self-surrender, absolute obedience would be required of Him in all His agony, for He was called to pay the ransom for our horrible sin, deliver us from death, and merit for us eternal life.

Only in the way of perfect obedience would He attain to the glory that was promised Him before the foundations of the earth, a glory at the right hand of the Father in the heavens, a glory shared by all His own in a new, perfect, heavenly creation!



It was time for the Seed to be sown into the ground and die before it would bring forth much fruit. There is haste. The time had come for the Gentiles to be gathered into the kingdom!

As the Son of God in our flesh He alone had the power to conquer sin, Satan, hell, death, and the grave to save His own and to bring them with Him to glory.

Our Redeemer is greatly aware of that. He says, "Now is my soul troubled; and what shall I say? Father, save me from this hour." That is, Father, save Me by raising Me from the dead. Even as He came for that purpose unto this hour. Then He adds: "Father, glorify thy name." To which the voice from heaven responds, "I have both glorified it, and will glorify it again."

That, after all, is of chief importance. Father's name must be glorified through the glory of His Son, the Christ. It is for that very purpose that Christ is exalted at the Father's right hand and given a name above all names. All power is entrusted to Him as Head of the church. He is our King, with power to carry out God's counsel for the ingathering of the saints. He is our great High Priest, who intercedes for us before the Father, so that we may join Him in His

glory. And He is our great Prophet, who reveals to us the truth of the Scriptures, in order to bring us into intimate fellowship with the Father now and finally in perfection to the glory of the Father.



The significant hour has come and gone.

Christ died and rose again on the third day. Forty days later He ascended to heaven. The church waited another ten days. The day of Pentecost had come and gone. And then, in the early morning hours of the first day of the week, the Spirit was poured out into the church.

The one hundred and twenty there present now understood the mysteries of the kingdom. For the first time they fully understood the necessity of the cross, the power of the resurrection, and the blessedness of having Christ in heaven,

from whence He blesses His church with every spiritual blessing for time and eternity.

The church now becomes universal. The gospel must go forth to the ends of the earth, for the time has come for the elect Gentiles to be gathered in. The apostles are instructed: "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned."



Christ is glorified. He is busily engaged in gathering His church, of which we are privileged to be members. He is carrying out the counsel of God both in heaven and on earth, causing all things to work together unto the day of His return with the clouds to take His own unto Himself.

The Spirit of the glorified Lord

now works mightily among us. He is the Spirit that draws us, renews us as born from above, blesses us with every spiritual blessing in Christ Jesus. To us are made known the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven. We see those things that eye cannot see, we hear those things that ear cannot hear, but that are revealed to us by Christ through the ministry of the Word and by His indwelling Spirit within us.

But a still greater glory awaits Him. When the entire multitude that no man can number have been gathered in and have cast their crowns before the Father, then all of us His people shall live only unto the glory of the Father.

That will be the culmination of the glory of Christ. Also for us. But, primarily, God will be glorified in all His marvelous perfections in a new creation, world without end! Inexpressibly glorious is our God in all His works in Christ Jesus! □

Editorial

The Reformed Worldview

Very much on the foreground in Reformed circles in North America of late is the subject of the "Reformed Worldview." The reason is that 1998 is the 100th anniversary of Abraham Kuyper's influential lectures at Princeton Theological Seminary on Calvinism as a worldview. Recently, a conference was held at Princeton on the theme, "Religion, Pluralism and Public Justice: Abraham Kuyper's Legacy for the 21st Century." The sponsors were Princeton Seminary, the Free University of Amsterdam

(founded by Kuyper), Calvin College, and the Center for Public Justice.

At this conference, theological pygmies and apostates from Harvard, Princeton, and Amsterdam contented themselves with lambasting Kuyper for his now politically incorrect views on women and race. The Protestant Reformed Churches (PRC) regard certain teachings of Kuyper as grievous errors. These errors have caused, and still do cause, the PRC real suffering. Worse still, they have corrupted the Reformed churches. But

the shallow, narrow modernists at the Princeton conference who concentrated on taking Kuyper to task for alleged patriarchy and racism are not worthy to stand in Kuyper's shadow whether as a Reformed theologian or as a world-class thinker.

On March 6 and 7 of this year, the Calvin Center for Christian Scholarship held a conference at Calvin College in Grand Rapids on the theme, "Abraham Kuyper Revisited: The Stone Lectures Centennial." The keynote lecture was an intriguing speech by premier

Christian Reformed thinker Nicholas P. Wolterstorff on "Kuyper's Significance for the 21st Century." The subject of the speech was the Reformed worldview in light of Kuyper's lectures on Calvinism at Princeton, the "Stone Lectures."

Two exceptionally fine books have already been published in commemoration of the centennial of Kuyper's Princeton lectures. One is *Abraham Kuyper: A Centennial Reader*, edited by James D. Bratt, professor at Calvin College (Eerdmans, 1998). This consists of many of Kuyper's shorter writings on topics related to his conception of the Reformed worldview. Most of them appear in English translation for the first time. Among them are the important articles, "Common Grace" (excerpts from Kuyper's three volumes on *Gemeene Gratie*); "Calvinism: Source and Stronghold of Our Constitutional Liberties"; "Common Grace in Science"; and "Sphere Sovereignty" (Kuyper's famed inaugural address at the Free University in 1880).

The other volume is a brilliant, thorough analysis of Kuyper's six lectures on Calvinism by the British scholar, Peter S. Heslam. The title makes plain that the subject is worldview: *Creating a Christian Worldview: Abraham Kuyper's Lectures on Calvinism* (Eerdmans, 1998).

In this subject of worldview, particularly the *Reformed* worldview, and more particularly still the Reformed worldview proposed by Abraham Kuyper, the Protestant Reformed Churches have a special interest. They have rejected the worldview put forward by Kuyper in his "Stone Lectures," root and branch. Because of their rejection of the Kuyperian worldview, they are charged with espousing "world-flight."

How, after 100 years, the Reformed community evaluates the worldview that Abraham Kuyper taught in 1898 demands the closest attention of the Protestant Reformed Churches.

The Meaning of "Worldview"

Several terms are commonly used to refer to the same reality. "Worldview" is one. Others are "world-and-life-view," "life-view," and the German word, "*weltanschauung*." James Sire describes a "worldview," or "world-and-life-view," this way: "A worldview is a set of presuppositions (or assumptions) which we hold (consciously or subconsciously) about the basic make up of our world" (*The Universe Next Door*, InterVarsity Press, 1976). In his study of the worldview advocated by Abraham Kuyper in his lectures on Calvinism, Peter S. Heslam defines "worldview" as "a set of beliefs that underlie and shape all human thought and action."

By "worldview," I understand a comprehensive, unified view of the whole of creation and its history, including creation's origin, meaning, and goal and including my own life, in light of the triune, true, living God.

Every worldview, at bottom, is religious, that is, it either takes the true God into account or finds it impossible to ignore Him. It is not merely the case that every worldview has its god and is shaped by this god. The fact is that every worldview reckons with the true God. Either the worldview is formed in submission to Him (by the regenerated believer), or it is formed as rebellion against Him (by the unregenerated unbeliever). This is the teaching of Romans 1:18ff.

The particular, comprehensive view of creation that people hold, and that holds them, demands a certain *life* in the whole of creation. A worldview moves those who hold it to live in accordance with the worldview. Inasmuch as it is a *worldview*, it warrants and requires life of a certain kind *in the wide world*. The whole of earthly life, work as well as worship, is determined by the worldview.

When we speak (as I do) of a

"Reformed" worldview, we maintain that the Reformed faith taught by John Calvin, developed by orthodox Calvinistic theologians, and authoritatively set forth in the Reformed creeds calls believers and their children to live distinctively *in all the spheres of earthly life*, and shows them how to do so.

The Reformed faith is not only a body of doctrines to be believed and confessed, although it certainly is such a body of doctrines. It does not only command a certain worship on the Lord's Day, although it certainly does command this. The Reformed faith is a view of the whole, wide world. It is an outlook on all of life. It opens up to Reformed believers all of creation and impels them to live enthusiastically in all of creation's ordinances.

The Reigning Worldview in Reformed Christendom

The reigning worldview among Reformed Christians, especially (though not exclusively) in the Netherlands and North America, is that proposed by Abraham Kuyper in his lectures on Calvinism at Princeton in 1898. These lectures have been published many times in several languages. They are in print still today. The English title is *Lectures on Calvinism*.

The worldview of the *Lectures on Calvinism*, and therefore the reigning worldview in Reformed Christendom, may be called, "the worldview of common grace."

Kuyper's purpose with the lectures was to put forward Calvinism as a worldview that would successfully challenge the threatening worldview of modernism. That doctrine which serves as the basis of Kuyper's Calvinistic worldview is common grace. The doctrine of common grace, according to Kuyper, is not only genuinely Reformed but also one of the main pillars in the Reformed temple, a veritable Jachin or Boaz. In the opening lecture, "Calvinism a Life-System," when he comes to explain

the Christian's attitude toward the world, Kuyper says:

(Calvinism) has at once placed to the front the great principle that there is a *particular grace* which works Salvation, and also a *common grace* by which God, maintaining the life of the world, relaxes the curse which rests upon it, arrests its process of corruption, and thus allows the untrammelled development of our life in which to glorify Himself as Creator (*Lectures on Calvinism*, Eerdmans, 1953, p. 30).

That the worldview advocated by Kuyper is basically a worldview of common grace is recognized by all. In his exposition of Kuyper's lectures on Calvinism, Heslam writes:

Kuyper's idea that *common grace* allowed for the development of the powers God had invested in human culture provided the foundation for his discussion of the vocation of the Christian in the world outside the church (p. 119, emphasis added).

Summing up, in the section headed "Conclusion," Heslam states that for Kuyper Calvinism

was the very means by which culture could be transformed according to God's ordinances. *Common grace* served as the theological justification for this argument, providing as it did the necessary bridge across the gap created by the antithesis between the world

corrupted by sin and Christ's work of re-creation (pp. 268, 269, emphasis added).

According to Abraham Kuyper, common grace is the basis of the Calvinistic worldview inasmuch as this alleged grace of God, supposedly shared by all men and women, regenerate and unregenerate alike, does several things. First, it restrains sin in the ungodly, so that they are not totally depraved. Second, it enables the ungodly to see and approve the truth made known by general revelation and to do what is good and right in natural life. Thus, by common grace they can develop the creation positively, that is, according to God's standard and toward God the Creator. The ungodly, whether helped by the saints or by themselves, are able to create a good culture. And, third, common grace permits Christians, indeed *calls* them, to join hearts and hands with the ungodly in this positive development of culture.

Kuyper did not hesitate to claim that the effect of common grace is the positive development of the world of ungodly men and women and their system of life *to the glory of God the Creator*. Common grace realizes the carrying out by unbelievers of God's mandate to Adam in Paradise to have dominion over the earth. In his lecture, "Calvinism and Art," having asserted (apparently without embarrassment) that the Renaissance was not a "sinful effort," but "a divinely ordered movement,"

Kuyper denies that humanity is an "aimless mass of people which only serves the purpose of giving birth to the elect." He then states:

On the contrary, the world now, as well as in the beginning, is the theater for the mighty works of God, and humanity remains a creation of His hand, which, apart from salvation, completes under this present dispensation, here on earth, a mighty process, and in its historical development is to glorify the name of Almighty God (*Lectures on Calvinism*, p. 162; see also p. 30).

This is the glorification of God by a "development" that is ethically good, a "development" that is praiseworthy, a "development" that has its source and impetus in *grace, a grace of God*.

Kuyper's worldview of common grace prevails in Reformed circles today. It has captured much of the mind also of non-Reformed, evangelical Christianity in North America, especially in the strategic educational centers, the colleges and the universities.

The PRC, however, repudiates this worldview.

Why?

And does this imply that they reject the very idea of a Reformed worldview, a Calvinistic "world-and-life-view"?

These questions we will take up in a subsequent issue of the *Standard Bearer*, God willing. □

— DJE

Letters

Filling Needs

I am gratified to have the *Standard Bearer* coming steadily. In particular, I was blessed by the editorial, "Where Are the

Theologians of the Cross?" (*SB*, April 1, 1998). From Luther's words you gleaned and arranged an interesting, cogent reminder on a very crucial is-

sue. The *SB* does things like this with regularity. It fills needs.

Lewis Price
Batesville, AR

Why “Covenant Children”?

God’s covenant is established with believers and their children. This truth is not only the heart of Reformed doctrine and a great comfort to believing parents, it is also the basis of Reformed, Christian education.

That God establishes His covenant with believers and their seed means that children are in God’s covenant. Reformed believers confess with the Heidelberg Catechism in Lord’s Day 27 that infants, “as well as the adult, are included in the covenant and church of God.”

This promise of God profoundly affects the view that a believing father and mother have of the children God has given them. They do not consider their children to be as unbelieving pagans. Nor do they see them as unbelievers, albeit unbelievers having a better chance of being saved because they are given some knowledge of God. No, they are covenant children. It necessarily follows that the Christian schoolteacher must have the same view of the students in the classroom—their students are covenant children.

This presents the Reformed believer with a problem of sorts. On the one hand, the Reformed faith confesses the doctrine of sovereign, free, double predestination as set forth in the Canons of Dordt. God sovereignly chooses His people

unto everlasting life. He sovereignly reprobates the rest unto their damnation. This sovereign determination of God cuts through families of believers. God chose Isaac; He rejected Ishmael. God chose Jacob; He rejected Esau. (Cf. Rom. 9.)

At the same time, God promised Abraham and believing parents everywhere, “I will establish my covenant between thee and thy seed after thee for an everlasting covenant” (Gen. 17:7). And the Holy Spirit moved Peter to say to the believers on Pentecost, “For the promise is unto you and to your children...” (Acts 2:39). On the basis of such promises of God, believing parents baptize their children—all their children.

The problem is obvious. Since God is not obligated to save all children of believers—in fact, often He does not—how can believing parents confidently affirm at baptism, “This child must have the sign and seal of the covenant”? How can a Christian schoolteacher look over his classroom and maintain, “These are covenant children”? Must they simply confess these two seemingly contradictory doctrines (predestination and the covenant) and conclude helplessly, this is a mystery? They need not. They may confidently hold to both sovereign, free, double predestination and the covenant of grace with believers and their seed. Parents, with the teachers who stand in their place, must view their children as covenant children.

Thus far, almost all Reformed parents would agree. But then, there stands that conflict which

must be resolved, and the theological explanation is not agreed upon by all. Nor are the differences insignificant.

One solution is known as “presupposed regeneration.” Pro pounded by Abraham Kuyper, it is the teaching that believing parents baptize on the basis of a presumed regeneration of the child. Kuyper recognized that not all children of believers were necessarily regenerated, nor were they even necessarily elect. Yet his particular view of the sacrament of baptism made him insist that baptism could be a sacrament only if the recipient had already received regenerating grace. Since children of believers are not all necessarily elect and regenerated, parents must simply presuppose it of each child, and proceed to baptism.

However, presupposed regeneration is neither biblical nor confessional. Parents must not simply assume that all their children are believers, on the basis that they presuppose that all baptized children are regenerated. They recognize that God makes no promise to save all their children. Both Scripture and their experience testify that the lines of election and reprobation cut through the families of believers. They understand from Romans 9 that not all children of the flesh are the “seed” with whom God continues His covenant. They may not *presuppose* what God has clearly revealed in Scripture to be false.

Another solution proffered is that all children of believers are members of the covenant *objectively* by reason of the covenant promise

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given to each child of believers at baptism. This view entails a conditional view of the covenant. According to this, God comes to each child at baptism with the personal promise of salvation. The promise may be likened to a check made out to the individual child and signed by God. The check promises salvation from sin and eternal life—if the child endorses the check. If he only frames it, it is worth nothing. If he tears it up, he perishes as a covenant breaker.

According to this covenant doctrine, the baptism promise of God is not that the child *is* saved and *has* eternal life. Rather it is that God *wants to save* and *wants to give eternal life*. On the basis of this promise, all children of believers are considered covenant children. This conditional covenant was promoted by William Heyns and by Klaas Schilder, although they had differences in their covenant views. The conditional covenant, far from solving the problem, rather creates more problems. First of all, because this view teaches that the child must *believe* in order to receive the benefits of the promise (endorse the check), it leaves the impression that faith is a condition that the child must fulfill in order to get saved. Even if it is maintained, as it often is, that God fulfills the condition, this still leaves salvation in the hands of the sinful (dead in sin) child. It also separates faith from the work of salvation, as a condition unto salvation.

Thirdly, such a conditional covenant logically demands that the atonement of Christ on the cross be for all children of believers. If God promises salvation and eternal life to each child, salvation and eternal life must be available. But that would mean that Christ atoned for the sins of some (the covenant breakers, for example) who ultimately perish. This is contrary to the Reformed (and thus biblical and confessional) doctrine of the atonement. Christ's atonement is effectual. He died for the elect, and

the elect only, not all the children of believers.

But even aside from the theological conflicts, as was pointed out earlier, the conditional covenant does not truly reconcile the view of all children being covenant children with the reality that God reprobates some children of believers. The unavoidable implication of a covenant that is conditional is that some of those with whom God establishes His covenant are in fact reprobate. Call it only a covenant objectively—it does not change the fact that God established His covenant with reprobate children who later spend an eternity in hell.

This might not appear to be so bad, if the covenant be only a promise to save on the condition of faith. But this neither defines nor describes God's covenant. The covenant is a relationship of friendship that God establishes with man. Yes, the covenant is *based* on God's promises. The covenant *contains* promises from God. But the covenant does not *consist* merely of this: God promises salvation and eternal life on fulfillment of the condition of faith. This makes the covenant to be merely the means to the end—salvation. The covenant is in effect for this earth and disposed of after Christ returns. That all by itself ought to give the believer pause. Surely the covenant is more important to God than that.

Since the covenant is so crucial for Christian education, it is not surprising that a right conception of the covenant is crucial for the right view of covenant children. It is worth our while, therefore, briefly to set forth the true nature of God's covenant.

God's covenant is a relationship of friendship. This is the teaching of Scripture taken in its entirety. The very creation of man indicates this—man was created above all creatures in order to know God (having true knowledge, a requisite for fellowship) and live with Him (being righteous and holy). Fellowship began immedi-

ately in Eden. The very trees in the midst of the garden pointed to this—fellowship with God was only possible through antithetical obedience—every day saying "Yes" to God by partaking of the Tree of Life, and by rejecting the forbidden fruit. There God came *to speak* with Adam. It is evident from Genesis 3:8 that God had done this before the Fall, and Adam had not hid from God.

After the Fall, God promised to put enmity between the seed of the woman and the seed of the serpent. How would this be done? Subsequent history demonstrates that God puts hatred between the two seeds by making the seed of the woman to be His friend-servants, and immediately the wicked hate the godly seed because they are friends of God.

God describes His relationship to His people in terms of friendship. Enoch walked with God, as did Noah. This is what friends do.

Besides that, Abraham, to whom God spoke such beautiful covenant promises, is called the *friend* of God (James 2:23).

Israel is God's covenant people in the Old Testament. God saved them from the bondage of Egypt, not by means of the covenant, but for the sake of His covenant! He established them as His covenant people at Sinai, and commanded them to make Him a "sanctuary, that [He] might dwell among them" (Ex. 25:8). The tabernacle and later the temple symbolized God dwelling with and fellowshiping with His people in one house.

Psalms 25:14 teaches the nature of the covenant when it proclaims: "The secret of the LORD is with them that fear him; and he will show them his covenant." To whom do you tell your secrets but to your closest friends? To His friends, Jehovah speaks His secrets of salvation and love, as He shows them His covenant.

The Scriptures reveal this covenant relationship through the pic-

tures of friendship, as well as a family—Israel was His son (Ex. 4:22); we are adopted sons (Gal. 4:4-5).

The ultimate picture of God's covenant is that of marriage. In the Old Testament, Jehovah betrothed Himself to Israel. In the New Testament, the bridegroom came—Christ, the Mediator of the covenant. He came to redeem His bride and establish the covenant, which He did on the cross. He must be gone for some time, but He promised to comfort His bride in His absence with His Spirit, by whom He dwells in her. When He returns physically He will lead His bride into the wedding feast, the marriage (covenant) will be consummated, and the eternal relationship of love and fellowship will be the perfect possession of the church.

God's goal is fellowship with His covenant people, as Revelation 21:3-4 demonstrates. "And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of

heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God."

The resplendent and delightful covenant of God is a relationship of intimate, glorious friendship between God and His people in Christ. Once that is established, it determines everything about the covenant people.

Then the question must be faced: How, indeed, could God establish a relationship of friendship with any reprobate? It is impossible, and even a flat contradiction of Scripture. God never had a covenant relationship of friendship with Esau, nor did He promise one. The testimony of the unchangeable Jehovah concerning him is that He hated him (Rom. 9).

It is not right, therefore, to call all baptized children "covenant

children" on the basis of a conditional promise that God ostensibly gives to each child at baptism.

Thus, when considering their children, believing parents are to avoid the error of denying that their children are covenant children by considering all to be unbelievers until they show signs of faith. At the same time they must not call all children of believers "covenant children" for the *wrong reasons*—presupposed regeneration on the one hand, or a conditional covenant with every baptized child on the other.

Is there any position left that would allow the believer to maintain the doctrines of sovereign grace consistently (including the total depravity of man, the particular and effectual atonement of Christ, and sovereign, double predestination), and yet maintain that children of believers are indeed covenant children? There certainly is. It is the organic view of the covenant seed. To this we turn next. □

Decency and Order

Rev. Ronald Cammenga

Religious Holidays

"The churches shall observe, in addition to the Sunday, also Christmas, Good Friday, Easter, Ascension Day, Pentecost, the Day of Prayer, the National Thanksgiving Day, and Old and New Year's Day."

Church Order, Article 67.

Rev. Cammenga is pastor of Southwest Protestant Reformed Church in Grandville, Michigan.

History of Article 67

The content of Article 67 does not express the early opinion of the Reformers with respect to the observance of the religious holidays. Well known is the opposition of men like Calvin, Farel, Zwingli, and Knox to the celebration of the myriad of festal days counted sacred by Roman Catholicism. They all did what they could to abolish the celebration of the religious holidays.

The sentiment of the Reformers was shared, by and large, by the Dutch Reformed. For this rea-

son the synod of Dordt, 1574, ruled: "As to the church holidays aside from Sunday, it is decided that people shall be content with Sunday only."

VanDellen and Monsma give three reasons that explain the Reformers' opposition to the observance of special days.

1. The festival days are not ordained by God, but are of human invention.
2. The observance of the festival days tends to minimize Sunday, the God-ordained weekly day of rest.

3. The observance of the festival days leads to pagan celebration and promotes licentiousness.¹

Notwithstanding this early opposition, the observance of the religious holidays gradually began to find acceptance among the Reformed in the Netherlands. This was due largely to the fact that these days were set aside as holidays by the state. Rather than to have the people spend the days in idleness or frivolous recreation, it was deemed preferable that the saints gather for worship.

Already the synod of Dordt, 1578, decided:

It would be desirable that freedom to work six days as allowed by God be maintained by the church and only Sunday be kept holy. Nevertheless, since some other festive days are observed by authority of the government, such as Christmas with the day following, the second Easter Day and the second Pentecost Day and in some places New Year's Day and Ascension Day, the ministers shall show diligence to have sermons in which they shall especially teach the congregation concerning the birth and resurrection of Christ, the sending of the Holy Spirit and other articles of faith and how to change the unprofitable exercise.²

Even then, the synod of 1578 added:

Meanwhile all churches shall work to the end that the ordinary use of all holidays except Christmas (since Easter and Pentecost are on Sunday) be abolished as much as possible and as early as possible.

The synod of Middelburg, 1581, added the observance of Ascension Day to Christmas.

The congregations shall continue to work with the authorities so that the holidays, with the exception of Sunday, Christmas and Ascension Day, may be abolished.

But in places where more holidays are observed by order of the government, the ministers shall put forth effort to change by preaching the useless and harmful idleness into a sacred and beneficial exercise.

The synod of the Hague, 1586 expanded the observance of the special days.

The congregations shall observe in addition to Sunday two Christmas days, Easter Monday and two Pentecost days, but in places where more holidays are held by order of the government in commemoration of the benefits of Christ (as the circumcision of Christ [New Years' Day] and Ascension Day) the ministers shall put forth effort to change by preaching the idleness of the people into sacred and beneficial observance.

Our present article is based on the decision of Dordt, 1618-19.

The congregations shall observe, in addition to Sunday, also Christmas, Easter and Pentecost, with the following day; and since in most cities and provinces of the Netherlands, besides these there are also observed the day of Circumcision and Ascension of Christ, the ministers everywhere, where this is still not the custom, shall put forth effort with the authorities that they may conform with the others.

The synod of the Reformed Churches of the Netherlands, 1905, adopted the following revision of Article 67:

The congregations shall keep, besides Sunday, also Christmas, Easter, Pentecost and Ascension Day. The observation of the second festival days is left to the freedom of the churches.

The revision of the Church Order by the Christian Reformed Church in 1914 added several more religious holidays: Good Friday, the Annual Day of Prayer for Crops

(traditionally the second Wednesday of March), the National Thanksgiving Day, and Old and New Year's Day. Article 67 in our Protestant Reformed Church Order is essentially a redaction of that of the Christian Reformed Church in 1914.

Regard for the Days

A couple of things ought to be said about the regard that we Reformed Christians have for the special days designated in Article 67.

First, it ought to be plain that the special days are not on a par with the weekly Lord's Day. The language of Article 67 makes this plain, for these days are to be observed "... in addition to the Sunday." They are added to Sunday. That implies that Sunday is pre-eminent and that Sunday stands as a day in distinction from the special religious holidays that are added to it. The history, too, of the addition of the religious holidays to Article 67 indicates the priority placed on the weekly celebration of the Lord's Day. Never was the observance of the religious holidays defended on the grounds that they were mandated by Scripture, whereas this was the basis for the weekly observance of Sunday.

In the second place, it was largely for practical reasons that the fathers supported the observance of the religious holidays. Most of these days were, and still are, set aside by the authority of the state as national holidays. Fearing the temptation to turn the days into reckless celebration or wicked idleness, it was thought far preferable to call the members of the church together for prayer and worship. Knowing the tendency of human nature and fearing the impact of the worldly celebration of the days, our fathers took preventive steps. Their concern was not to curry the favor of the government, but to promote the edification of the churches.

In the third place, regard for the religious holidays rests in the

liberty that is ours in Christ. For this reason, observance of the days has never been equated with the New Testament Sabbath. For this reason the days that do not happen to fall on a Sunday are not observed, and are not required to be observed, as if they were Sabbath Days. Our men, for example, are permitted to work on Old and New Year's Day without any fear of being charged with desecration of the day. For this reason, also, we take no issue with our Presbyterian brothers and sisters who prefer not to observe the days. Well and good; we do not bind their consciences by Article 67 of our Church Order.

It having been said that our observance of the days belongs to our liberty in Christ, we must add that this liberty is circumscribed by the decision of the majority and the lawful rule of the church. Decency and good order in the church demand this. Because the mind of the majority is that the edification of the churches is best served by gathering for worship on the special days, the members of the church, even those members who might not agree entirely, acquiesce.

The Days Designated in Article 67

All of the days designated in Article 67 are not alike. The days are basically of two kinds.

First, there are those days which mark significant events connected to the wonder of salvation, days celebrating the work of our Lord Jesus Christ: Christmas, Good Friday, Easter, Ascension, and Pentecost. Among these days, too, there is distinction. Easter and Pentecost always fall on a Sunday; Christmas only rarely; Good Friday and Ascension Day never.

The other days mentioned in Article 67 are purely artificial: The Annual Day of Prayer for Crops, the National Thanksgiving Day, and Old and New Year's Day. They have no value whatsoever as days, nor is the time of their celebration of any significance. As

days they are no different from any other days. Nevertheless, the occasion of the observance of the days provides the church with a fitting opportunity for celebration before God and instruction from the Word of God.

At the service on the Annual Day of Prayer for Crops the blessing of God is besought at the beginning of another growing season. The saints are reminded that not only our soul's salvation but also our daily bread comes from the hand of our heavenly Father. Thanksgiving Day provides the opportunity for the congregation to come together in order corporately to give thanks to God for His provision and care. The Old Year's evening service ought to be used to remind the saints of the end of all things, that time marches on towards the God-ordained purpose of the coming of Christ and the final judgment. The New Year's morning service ought to be a call to the saints to live uprightly in the year that is to come, committing all their way to the Lord who promises to care for us.

Observance of the Days of Article 67

Article 67 calls the churches to "observe" the religious holidays. By observing the days the article means that the churches shall gather for public worship. In harmony with Article 67, the consistory shall summon the congregation to worship. Notice of this summons is ordinarily placed in the church bulletin the Sunday preceding the special day. All of the elements of public worship ought to be a part of the observance. The minister ought to preach from an appropriate text of Scripture so that the special significance of the day is not lost on the congregation.

Although the religious holidays are not on a par with the weekly Sabbath, the members of the church ought to take seriously the provision of Article 67 that calls for their

observance. It is to be feared that there is a certain laxity in regard to the observance of the special days. This is especially the case with the days that are observed by mid-week services. These services can, at times, be rather sparsely attended. God's people ought to be of the mind that since our Church Order calls for the observance of these days, and since the consistory summons us for worship on these days, we ought to attend these special services faithfully.

We ought to gather joyfully! Ah, we have the opportunity to hear the gospel set forth! We have the opportunity to sing the praises of our God! We have the opportunity to call upon God's name in prayer! We have the opportunity to fellowship with beloved brothers and sisters in Christ!

Given the opportunity, where would the child of God rather be? What would he rather be doing?

□

1 VanDellen and Monsma, *The Church Order Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1941), p. 273.

2 The reference to the "second" Christmas, the "second" Easter, etc. relates to the custom of the Dutch to celebrate as holidays the special day itself as well as the day following.

Absolvo Te

One Priest alone can pardon
me,
Or bid me "Go in peace";
Can breathe that word *Absolvo*
te,
And make these heart-
throbs cease:
My soul has heard His priestly
voice;
I said, "I bore thy sin—Re-
joice!"

Standard Bearer,
1929

Preaching the Gospel to the Nations

Rev. Allen Brummel

"There are so many people who don't have access to the gospel. I would like to find ways to bring the gospel and the Word of God to them. There are many new ideas that can be developed and refined to spread the good news of the gospel. There are countless ways to develop our mission program and utilize the talent we have available to us worldwide. We must figure out the best ways to use our limited resources of people and money to have the greatest reach and the greatest impact on the maximum number of people."

These are the words of one of our volunteers who is standing ready with his wife to assist our churches in mission work. Although we are not able to send these volunteers without a missionary, some of them are busy reading, researching, and preparing themselves for the possibility of serving overseas in a supportive role with respect to our missionary. Some of these volunteers have been moved by God to consider giving their lives for this important work. For this we as a committee give thanks, and although there are many difficult decisions to be made, and the labor seems at times to proceed more slowly than we

would like, with renewed enthusiasm we press on, knowing that God's timing is always perfect.

Ghana

Rev. Jai Mahtani, from our Trinity Protestant Reformed Church in Houston, Texas, visited Ghana this past July while considering a call to serve as missionary to that field. While visiting with an immigration official in Ghana he was made aware of the necessity of obtaining a sponsoring body before we could enter Ghana. This was different from what we had been told previously, and therefore prompted the committee to contact various officials for confirmation. The Foreign Mission Committee (FMC) gave approval to Hull Protestant Reformed Church, the calling church, to discontinue calling a missionary until we could get concrete details concerning the immigration procedure.

This past year has involved the FMC in extensive correspondence with Ghanaian officials regarding the proper procedure to enter into the country of Ghana for our mission labor. This correspondence has been going slowly, mostly due to the nature of working with the government agencies. We believe that we are finally making good progress in learning precisely what is involved in beginning a labor in Ghana. We now have a statement in writing, both from the Ministry of Interior and the National Com-

mission on Culture, regarding the procedure to be followed to become established as a recognized mission church in their land. Both have encouraged us to press on in this labor.

It is apparent that, although it is not required, the government strongly prefers that we enter their country with sponsorship. The Ministry of Interior writes, "It would be preferable to enter Ghana with a sponsoring body which can guarantee its presence in Ghana.... It would not be advisable to enter Ghana independently without any sponsoring body. ... It would also not be advisable to visit Ghana with a view to finding an existing group or establishing a group who could sponsor it for its work."

It appears that this sponsorship is intended to enable the government to maintain a certain amount of control over who is allowed to come into their country to labor in missions. The government officials directed us to a number of non-profit organizations who are involved in sponsoring religious missions to Ghana. These are not churches, but religious organizations which are recognized by the government and able to take care of the necessary paperwork for a foreign mission agency. We are currently investigating the details associated with this sponsorship so as to determine whether we can proceed in a way that is in harmony with our constitution and

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will not compromise our preaching the Reformed faith in all its distinctiveness.

Specifically, the National Commission of Culture encouraged us, "Be assured that the constitution of the Republic of Ghana guarantees religious freedom, and we at the Commission would give you every necessary assistance to enable you to have a fruitful missionary work." One of the officers of this national agency heads a private, non-profit organization that is "dedicated to the development of mankind and society on the principles of the Word of God." He states that this organization, the Action for Morals, Health, and Development Committee, is willing to serve as our sponsor and to help us to become established as a mission in Ghana. He states that he has been involved "in assisting several foreign missionaries to establish churches in Ghana." We have written letters to this committee and to the Ministry of the Interior investigating what is involved with such a sponsorship in the eyes of the private organization and in the eyes of the government. At this time we do not have sufficient information concerning sponsorship, but we hope to have answers to our questions within a month or two. We are proposing that synod give the FMC the authority to proceed with this sponsorship as long as it does not involve us in an ungodly union or bind us with respect to our teaching and preaching. Should synod grant that approval, the FMC would advise Hull PRC to resume calling a missionary for the field.

Our committee is encouraged with regard to the calling of a missionary to this field by the fact that our Lord has given to our churches an abundance of men for the ministry of the Word. There are laborers available for the various fields in which our churches have determined to labor.

With respect to the particular work in Ghana we have volunteers

who have recently reassured us and even encouraged us to press forward. As evident from the above quote, these volunteers are committed to supporting the missionary and the mission program of our churches and are willing to give a year or more of their lives to this labor. This is very encouraging to us as a committee and ought to be great encouragement to those ministers who consider the call to be missionary.

We continue to have contact with our friends in Ghana, and they too are willing to help us in any way that is within their capacity. We are maintaining correspondence with and continue to send literature and books to certain individuals. We do believe that, if the Lord wills and we have the opportunity and are given a man to labor in Ghana, we will have plenty of work to do there.

Philippines

The FMC was privileged to send Rev. denHartog from Hope Protestant Reformed Church, Redlands, California, along with the undersigned to the Philippines for two weeks in early December. An extensive report of this trip appeared in the March 1, 1998 issue of the *Standard Bearer*. The Foreign Mission Committee, as well as many of our local evangelism committees, has had increasing correspondence with individuals in the Philippines. Our churches have sent thousands of dollars worth of books and pamphlets to various contacts, but found it difficult to determine the sincerity of the contacts without a personal visit. Rev. Kortering and his wife visited the country last spring on their way back to the United States. Encouraged by their visit and report, synod approved that the FMC send a delegation to the Philippines to preach and teach, with a view to investigating the possibility of further work in this country.

Our delegation was kept extremely busy visiting the two main

islands and four different cities in the Philippines: Manila, Daet, and Labo on Luzon; and Cagayan de Oro and Davao City on Mindanao. The preaching and teaching of the delegation centered on simple instruction in the basic, fundamental doctrines of Calvinism. Rev. denHartog and I were able to speak in each of the individual locations and also held a five-day conference in Labo, Camarines Norte to which contacts from throughout the Philippines were invited. During the daytime we provided instruction to approximately 40 church leaders in various doctrinal and practical subjects of interest, including the doctrine of the Holy Spirit, the church, the end times, and what it means to be a pastor. The evenings, when between 50 and 60 people were able to attend, were spent with lectures on the five points of Calvinism. Even though an hour or more was allowed for discussion, the discussion periods often had to be cut short. For some of the individuals this was the first time they were hearing lectures on election, limited atonement, and the preservation of the saints; therefore, we were peppered with questions. The people were eager to listen and willing to be instructed.

The FMC was encouraged by the keen interest shown by these contacts in the Philippines in the doctrines which were being presented and by their desire for more instruction. The books, pamphlets, and letters sent to this country have, by the grace of God, begun to work fruit in the hearts of God's people there. For this we give thanks to God and pray that the seeds planted will continue to be watered and nurtured by His Spirit. May this be an encouragement to our individual evangelism committees, as well as individuals who have sent books, pamphlets, and letters to our contacts in the Philippines.

The FMC believes that contact must be maintained with the people, in order to determine God's

direction for our churches with respect to the Philippines. In accordance with this the FMC has approved a visit of Rev. and Mrs. Kortering to Bacolod City on the island of Negros in May. While on their way back to the United States for their furlough, the Korterings intend to spend May 20-25 in the Philippines, giving instruction especially in the doctrine of the covenant. The contacts in Bacolod City are more familiar with the Reformed faith than most of our other contacts, some coming out of Reformed denominations in the Philippines. Because of the influence of Pentecostalism and Arminianism in their respective denominations, they were searching for a more faithful group with whom to affiliate. Providentially they were led to the Protestant Reformed Churches, and through correspondence, pamphlets, and books they have come to appreciate our emphasis on the inspiration of Holy Scripture and God's sovereign grace, and they desire more instruction in our distinctives. We pray that God will bless Rev. and Mrs. Kortering's visit and that our ties to these saints might be made stronger through it.

The FMC is proposing to synod that, if possible, two more preaching and teaching delegations be sent to the Philippines before synod 1999 to prepare the way for estab-

lishing a mission field in the Philippines. These delegations will be providing more instruction and will try to determine how and where to begin a labor in the Philippines, should God provide the means. We have contact with organized churches, Bible study fellowships, and many sincere individuals. Determining how and where to begin a labor will demand much wisdom and prayer. We covet your prayers that God will continue to guide us by His Spirit. The delegations will investigate the immigration requirements associated with beginning a mission work in the Philippines. Concerns about political unrest, safety, and the economy of the country will also have to be dealt with before we can consider beginning a labor in the Philippines.

Should God bless our labors and provide the means, we believe that there will be the possibility of sending a missionary to the Philippines within a couple of years. The people with whom we have contact desire more training and a missionary. The FMC is busy sending books and pamphlets, and we continue to provide as much instruction and assistance through correspondence as possible. Besides providing Reformed teaching and preaching in this predominantly Roman Catholic country, a missionary would also be necessary to teach the churches how to admin-

ister benevolent need and to determine which men might be able to benefit from further instruction in either Singapore or the United States.

Our prayer is that God will continue to use us as churches to bring the gospel of grace to Ghana, the Philippines, Singapore, Myanmar, and wherever He in His good pleasure sends it, in order that His saints might be gathered and brought to the joy of their salvation. May He bless the labors of the FMC toward this end.

The FMC continues to pursue correspondence with individuals from various parts of the world. We seek God's guidance, not only with respect to the areas of labor He has already given us, but also with respect to other parts of the world. If you our readers have promising correspondence from various parts of the world, we encourage you to share it with us. God is blessing our churches with laborers and we are confident that He will also continue to open fields of labor for us. May we labor diligently while it is yet day, seeking to use our limited resources to reach as many nations and people as we are able. We give thanks to God that He will not allow His Word to go forth void, but will use us to hasten the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ on the clouds of glory. □

Following Where He Leads

Mr. Don Doezema

"There is a danger, of course, that we begin to think that our efforts, our program, our machinery,

Mr. Doezema is secretary of the Domestic Mission Committee.

and our funds accomplish the work [of missions]. This is absolutely not the case. The work is the Lord's, and He alone can and will gather His church. But as surely as we are called to be busy in this work, it is our responsibility to expend

our very best efforts in this area of the churches' calling, in harmony with the means which the Lord has given us. Only then can we expect the Lord's blessing upon our labors."

That was a concluding "word

of caution" expressed by the authors of a policy for missions which was adopted by the 1965 synod of the PRC. The policy dealt for the most part with the mechanics of missions—how to make effective use of literature and radio, for example. It has been a useful guide in the developing of programs and machinery for labor in the various fields in which our churches have been involved over the years. Rev. Miersma's extensive use of printed matter and advertising in the San Luis Valley, and the Domestic Mission Committee's recent introduction of radio broadcasting in the Pittsburgh area are cases in point. This is as it should be. Seriousness of purpose in missions demands that the "machinery" of it not be taken lightly. And regular reports of the missionaries to their respective calling churches and to the DMC illustrate clearly that they do indeed "expend [their] very best efforts in this area of the churches' calling, in harmony with the means which the Lord has given us."

Equally clear it is, from those same reports, that our missionaries attribute the fruit of their labors not first of all to their own activity but to the will of the King of the church. And that makes the work of the DMC, though sometimes difficult, never tedious, never simply a once-a-month job to be done, but a great privilege. The work of missions, after all, is the work of the great Sender, who determines the where and the when and the who in the gathering of His church. "The work is the Lord's, and He alone can and will gather the church." Our calling is to follow—where He leads.



The British Isles

Hardly does that mean that the church's doing of missions is an easy thing—just follow. Macedonian calls do not come to armchair Christians. The truth is that the direction of the Lord is revealed

only in the way of hard work on the part of the church. Hard work on the part of the DMC and the calling church who must together determine "a field of labor, the time of labor, and the method of labor" (cf. Constitution of the Domestic Mission Committee). Hard work on the part of God's people generally, who must not only support missions with dollars or pounds, but, more importantly, must pray for missions fervently and specifically. And hard work especially on the part of the missionary who must, according to the 1965 policy for missions, "in a sense create his own field of labor"—as opposed to "sitting back and waiting for assignment to a specific field."

Further, the fact that both Rev. Hanko and Rev. Miersma have been called to labor in specific places does not mean we have now passed that hurdle, that the matter of places of labor is, for the present at least, settled. For the fact is that in both instances their "assignment" was not simply to labor with a mission group. Rev. Hanko, it is true, was positioned in the Larne/Ballymena area and was expected to work primarily with the Covenant Reformed Fellowship ... but also to "pursue other contacts in the British Isles" (cf. Acts 1990, Art. 46). Rev. Miersma was sent to labor initially in the San Luis Valley ... but also "to work elsewhere for longer or shorter periods of time" in order to cultivate and develop contacts "in different areas of home missions" (cf. Acts 1994, Art. 15). For our current home missionaries, therefore, the work of "creating their own fields" goes on.

For Rev. Hanko, that means working outside of Ballymena (elsewhere in Northern Ireland), and outside of Northern Ireland (in other parts of the United Kingdom). He had done that, really, from the beginning. For, though the building up of the Covenant Reformed Fellowship was always the main focus of his attention, he

did not neglect the pursuit of contacts in the broader U.K. After organization of the Covenant Protestant Reformed Church in Northern Ireland, Rev. Hanko has been able to devote a greater amount of time to developing contacts elsewhere. All of which was to the liking of the CPRC; for organization had never been intended by the CRF to be the be-all and end-all of *their* efforts. They made that clear in their request for organization, as submitted to synod 1996, when they spoke of a desire not simply that they become an indigenous congregation, but that the CPRC be the "beginning of an indigenous denomination." Not for a minute therefore did they, so to speak, rest on their laurels after achieving the much-sought-after goal of organization. Vigorous activity in the form of literature distribution and lectures continued unabated as church extension work within the community and mission activity beyond. The work of creating fields goes on.

During the year that followed the organization of the CPRC, Rev. Hanko did what he could to nurture contacts, especially in Wales; but it became increasingly clear that responsibilities in Ballymena, including those to this family, made it difficult for Rev. Hanko to do justice to work outside of Northern Ireland. Synod 1997 therefore instructed the Mission Committee "to attempt to send someone to the UK periodically to help in this work." The DMC arranged to have Candidate Daniel Kleyn take up the work in the CPRC last September, to free Rev. Hanko to spend most of that month in Wales. Then, in December and January, Prof. Hanko spent several busy weeks lecturing and preaching in North and South Wales. Missionary Hanko returned to Wales again in March and planned to go again in early May. We are hoping, too, that, when Prof. Hanko travels to the U.K. this summer for the BRF Family Conference, he will be able

to extend his visit by a couple of weeks for additional work in Wales.

Prof. Hanko spoke at the last three of the biennial BRF Family Conferences. So he had already come to know and to appreciate the people who each time made their way, from various parts of the U.K., to the site of that week-long affair. He was therefore quick to agree to give up a well-deserved between-semesters' break at the seminary to work in Wales at the turn of the year. He readily admits that his "heart has been in the British Isles for some years," and acknowledges that "it is difficult not to permit one's great sorrow that these few sheep have no shepherds to bias one's thinking." Attempting nonetheless to make an objective judgment, he offered this to the DMC, that "there is no question about it that there is a field of work there."

The sentiments of Prof. Hanko are echoed by others who at one time or another have had opportunity to associate with these "scattered sheep." The DMC agrees. It was only the lack of a "concentration of contacts" where a missionary could establish a base that led us to advise synod '97 that more preparatory work needed to be done before a second full-time missionary to the U.K. be called by the PRC. The work of Missionary Hanko and Prof. Hanko in the past months has been useful to that end. And we hope to be able to arrange for work of longer duration (several months, if possible) later this year, and are advising synod accordingly. We cannot know at this point what more the King of the church has in store for us in the British Isles. For now, we can only thank Him for the blessed fruit He has given on our labors there thus far, and continue to press ahead where He leads.



For Rev. Miersma, the cultivat-

ing of contacts in different areas of home missions brought him during the past year to Houston, Texas; Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania; and Spokane, Washington.

Houston

Early in July of 1997 Rev. Miersma and Rev. Mahtani (pastor of Trinity PRC) spoke at the SWAMI (Sindhis with a Mission International) Conference in Houston. (SWAMI is a national organization of newly converted Indian Christians who desire to evangelize others of their ethnic group.) Rev. Miersma was convinced that he and Rev. Mahtani were able to leave "a clear and strong witness" with the young Christians of SWAMI, many of whom were hearing the distinctives of the Reformed faith for the first time. A good part of the 4th of July Rev. Miersma spent talking to Hindus, Muslims, and Sikhs in Houston's Indian community. A valuable experience he considered it all to be, in that it gave him "opportunity to speak to those who have never heard the gospel and to learn how to do this work across cultural boundaries." He returned to Houston one more time in October, to give a Reformation Day lecture there, and to give further assistance to Trinity's evangelism work.

Pittsburgh

The work in Pittsburgh was considerably more extensive. Synod 1997 decided against the calling of a missionary to the Eastern States, believing that the work should be further developed by our present home missionary and the DMC in order to determine whether it warranted "the commitment of a second missionary." Rev. Miersma therefore went to work with a will. He arranged to make bi-monthly visits to Pittsburgh. And minister-members of the DMC spent at least a weekend in Pittsburgh during the months when Rev. Miersma was not there. The testimony of Rev. Miersma, cor-

roborated by all others who have worked there, is that the little group in Pittsburgh "eagerly receives the Word and instruction both in preaching and catechism at all age levels."

The key word here, in the opinion of our home missionary, is "instruction." The group in Pittsburgh is largely of Roman Catholic background with "little practical knowledge of Reformed practice and church life." It goes without saying, perhaps, that the distinctives of the Reformed faith and the principles of Reformed practice are such that they must be *learned*, they must be *assimilated*, if they are to be *lived by*. And this in turn requires patient and consistent *instruction*. There is no question that the group has made progress under the kind of instruction they have so far received. And, too, they have grown in number—which is a testimony to the zeal of the members of the group to witness to others. And their witnessing in turn is a measure of the appreciation which they have for Reformed truth. But there can be no question either that, as Rev. Miersma puts it, we are "reaching a limit in what can be done there on a part-time basis." In view of Rev. Miersma's responsibilities elsewhere, therefore, we believe that the time has come to call a second home missionary, stationed in Pittsburgh as a base for work in the Eastern States.

Such is the work of creating new fields.

Spokane

The other area that came into the scope of our home missionary's activities is Spokane. Several years ago the Sovereign Grace Reformed Church, of which Rev. Robert Hargrove is pastor, applied for membership in the PRC. They withdrew their request when the Mission Committee made it clear that divorced and remarried persons cannot be received as members in our churches. In the years

that followed, Rev. Miersma maintained contact with Rev. Hargrove, and in so doing learned that the SGRC had come to see that their looking elsewhere for church affiliation was a mistake. A visit to Spokane by Rev. Miersma in September of last year was followed soon after by a letter from the SGRC to the Mission Committee. "Through the process of examination and observation," they declared, "God brought us back again to the Protestant Reformed Churches. We, as a congregation, stand in agreement with your strong doctrinal positions and distinctives." They stated forthrightly that they knew that there were a "few areas of difficulty," but indicated that they were "open to instruction" and were convinced that the difficulties could be overcome. They then invited the Mission Committee to "come and visit with the church to discuss the course and viability of becoming a PRC mission work and church."

In early November two members of the Mission Committee made that visit ... and found that matters were exactly as the SGRC had stated them. The SGRC is a solidly Reformed church. And the road to becoming such was not an easy one. Over the course of 20 years the church progressed from being Arminian Baptist to being Calvinistic Baptist, then to become covenantal and postmillennial Presbyterian, and now fully and consistently Reformed. And they lost members at every step of the way—to the point where now their total membership is only some 30 souls. They no longer have a church building of their own; and Rev. Hargrove tries hard to do the work of the ministry, while holding down also a full-time job elsewhere. His is a tent-making ministry out of sheer necessity.

Clearly, the SGRC needs to grow through evangelism. More work, therefore, for the home missionary. Loveland, the calling church, decided to send Rev.

Miersma to Spokane on a one-week-per-month basis, to preach for the SGRC, and to give instruction in the areas which need strengthening.

Here again, it's too early to see where this will lead. But we are favorably impressed by what we know of Rev. Hargrove and the Sovereign Grace Reformed Church of Spokane, are glad for the opportunity to work with them, and will be pleased if this contact develops into a work which requires more intensive effort on the part of our missionary.

Thus does the Lord point out the field: through the patient and persistent efforts of the missionary.

San Luis Valley

Meanwhile, Rev. Miersma maintains an active presence in the San Luis Valley. Preaching and teaching constitute a large part of his work there, as it would in any other setting where a pastor is responsible for regular proclamation of the gospel to a gathering of believers. And, in spite of the increasingly apparent spiritual lethargy in the Valley, our missionary and the members of the mission group have continued their efforts to make their presence known in the community. They have tried a public Bible study in the local college. They have arranged for the broadcast of the Reformed Witness Hour on a local radio station, using the radio program as a means also to advertise their Bible study and, especially, their worship services. They even developed a series of newspaper ads in both English and Spanish in an attempt to reach the Spanish population in the Valley. The number of visitors to the services, however, has been "minimal," says Rev. Miersma, and all of the advertising has "thus far failed to produce any noticeable results."

That's after more than three years of labor. The members of the group "struggle with what more can be done." And the calling

church begins to wrestle with the question of whether it would be advisable, in light of opportunities elsewhere, to relocate their missionary.



That is, of course, one of the most difficult questions in the church's doing of missions: where should the missionary be based, how long should he concentrate his efforts in a given place, how should his time and effort be divided between the work at the base and the work which beckons elsewhere? The difficulty is illustrated clearly by our attempt to maintain some kind of a balance in Rev. Miersma's involvement in the Valley, in Pittsburgh, and then Spokane. Last year the DMC, concerned that Rev. Miersma was being overextended, advised synod 1997 to call a second home missionary, whose labors would be concentrated in the East, while Rev. Miersma would focus on the West. Synod decided that the contacts in Pittsburgh ought to be developed further, to determine with more certainty that the work warrants the commitment of a second missionary; and after laboring there for another year, we have come to believe that the demonstration of commitment on the part of the group, the evidence of potential work in the area, and the level of activity of Rev. Miersma elsewhere dictate at this time the calling of a missionary in the Eastern States, based in Pittsburgh. We plan to advise synod accordingly.

But that still leaves the Valley and Spokane to be dealt with. The original intention regarding the work of the home missionary was that he "begin his labors in the San Luis Valley in southern Colorado. He will labor there until the will of the Lord is accomplished, although he may also investigate other areas of interest as they arise. When mission work in one area is terminated (because a church is organized or the work is unfruitful)

the missionary will move elsewhere, yet under the jurisdiction of Loveland's consistory" (Acts 1994, p. 81). This is exactly where those difficult questions have to be faced. Loveland has wisely advised that Rev. Miersma "continue his labors from his base in the San Luis Valley through 1998. Before the end of 1998, the Loveland consistory and the Mission Committee would then thoroughly review and evaluate the situation with the missionary to determine if he should remain based in the San Luis Valley or be moved to another mission field."

The DMC concurs. Circum-

stances, we are sure, will be monitored closely during the coming months by the parties involved. And, in the doing of that work, we look for continued good cooperation between the Mission Committee, which supervises the domestic mission activity of the churches in common, and the calling church, which actually perform the work of missions, through their missionary. Laboring together, according to a policy and a constitution laid out for us years ago, is a distinct privilege and pleasure—especially so as we together follow the same Leader. As Herman Hoeksema put

it in an *SB* article on missions 65 years ago (the May 15, 1933 issue), Christ "prepares the field, He points out the field to His church, He prepares and calls and separates the men for the field. And the church must follow Him and go where and when He calls." Please remember the Mission Committee, the calling churches, and the missionaries in your prayers, that they might labor untiringly, in the confidence that in so doing, it will also become clear where and how the King of the church will be pleased to use their efforts, however small they be, to accomplish His good purpose. □

Contribution

Mr. Jimmy Frew, Sr.

Fight the Good Fight

"No lover of the gospel can conceal from himself the fact that the days are evil. We are willing to make a large discount from the apprehensions on the score of timidity, the caution of age, and the weakness produced by pain; but yet our solemn conviction is that things are much worse in many Churches than they seem to be, and are rapidly tending downward. Read those newspapers which represent the broad school of dissent,

and ask yourself, How much farther could they go? What doctrine remains to be abandoned? What other truth to be the object of contempt?"

Thus wrote C.H. Spurgeon in 1887, a man scorned by his contemporaries to the extent he was maligned both in public and in print for his stand for the truth. Is it not less than amazing that those sentiments could almost have been written for this very moment. Who will deny that "the atonement is 'scouted,' the inspiration of Scripture is derided, the Holy Spirit is degraded to an influence, the punishment of sin is turned into fiction." The battle against the onslaught of these errors caused the valiant Spurgeon much heartbreak and ill health. Today those who love the true gospel can in some small way know that of which Mr. Spurgeon speaks, as today those same blatant errors are being pur-

sued in most quarters of the "Christian" church. It is therefore a time to encourage those men in the forefront of the battle, to have them know that there are those who are concerned for the biblical truths, holiness of life, and the cause of Christ. Though of timid conscience, we must see ourselves even as those who "kept the stuff," playing our part in whatever way we can, as those who upheld the arms of the prophet when the battle raged.

The same battle

Heed the warning of Mr. Spurgeon once again when he asserts: "Around us there are influences at work which are directly antagonistic to Christianity, and that anyone may see them who chooses to do so. The babyish game of shutting your eyes, and then crying, 'I cannot see you,' has been played long enough; it is time

Mr. Frew attends the Free Church of Scotland in Ayr. He is a member of the British Reformed Fellowship. The article appeared first in the Autumn 1995 issue of Focus, a quarterly journal committed to the exposition of the Protestant Reformed faith as expressed in the Westminster Standards and published in England. The article is reprinted here with permission.

that the most prejudiced should acknowledge that which everybody sees except themselves." Today the controversy is the same, the battle is the same. If the inspiration and preservation of Scripture is upheld you cause controversy; if these errors are opposed, you are a troubler of Israel; if you deny Universalism you are branded a Hyper-Calvinist by those who do not understand what the term means (I say that concerning the majority of congregations, realizing that there are those who do know, but for their own ends and to ostracize their opponents, deliberately sow falsehood to the less discerning).

This more than any other subject has come under debate, and through the diligence of faithful servants of God the myths surrounding the term "free offer" (by which we understand our opponents to mean God making a gift of His Son in the preaching of the gospel, having a serious intention to save all to whom the gospel is preached) are beginning to be exploded. But in doing so, not only has the lie been exposed, but the enemy has been discovered digging under the walls of the citadel, the proponents of the unbiblical free offer are now beginning to be seen not only as sounding an unclear sound but also leading their people dressed in another garb.

Though they advance their cause in the name of Reformed, claiming support from learned men and biblical authorities, there seems to be more than a hint of universalism in the colour of their flag.

John Owen

Many would perhaps think these statements rather too strong, believing that these battles have already been fought and won. Not so! I urge all those who disagree, to read John Owen's *Death of Death*, and although this is a treatise dealing with the doctrine of Universalism, it will soon become apparent

to the reader, that the proponents of the well-meant but unbiblical "free offer" are traveling the same road.

Let me supply only a few extracts from this great work and let the reader discern that the battle is the same:

"What motive would it be hereunto to tell believers that God would have those saved who neither do, nor ever will or shall believe? That I say nothing how strange it seems that Christ should be the Saviour of them who are never saved, to whom He never gives grace to believe, for whom He denies to intercede, John 17:9" (*Death of Death*, page 79).

"Neither is that other exception that Christ might as well satisfy for them that were eternally damned at the time of His suffering (for whom it could not be useful), as for them that were then actually saved (for whom it was not needful), of any more value. For, first, those that were saved were saved upon this ground, that Christ should certainly suffer for them in due time; which suffering of His was as effectual in the purpose and promise as in the execution and accomplishment. It was in the mind of God accounted for them as accomplished, the compact and covenant with Christ about it being surely ratified upon mutual, unchangeable promises (according to our conception); and so our Saviour was to perform it, and so it was needful for them that were actually saved: but for those that were actually damned, there was no such inducement to it, or ground for it, or issue to be expected out of it. *And when they make proffers and tenders in the name of God to all, they do not say to all, 'It is the purpose and intention of God that ye should believe' (who gave them any such power?), but that it is His command, which makes it their duty to do what is required of them; and they do not declare His mind, what Himself in particular will do. The external offer is*

such as from which every man may conclude his own duty; none, God's purpose, which yet may be known upon performance of his duty. *Their objection, then, is vain, who affirm that God hath given Christ for all to whom he offers Christ in the preaching of the Gospel*" (*Death of Death*, page 136).

"*It is a vain imagination of some, that when the command and promise of believing are made out to any man, though he be of the number of them that shall certainly perish, yet the Lord hath a conditional will of His salvation, and intends that he shall be saved, on condition that he will believe; when the condition lieth not at all in the will of God*" (*Death of Death*, page 199).

"First, if the object be here restrained, so that some only believe and are saved of them for whose sake Christ is sent, then this restriction and determination of the fruits of this love dependeth on the will of God, or on the persons themselves. If on the persons themselves, then they make themselves to differ from others; contrary to I Corinthians 4:7. If on the will of God, then you make the sense of the place, as to this particular, to be, 'God so loved all as that but some of them should partake of the fruits of His love.' To what end, then, I pray, did He love those other some? *Is it not this, 'Out with the sword, and run the dragon through with the spear?'*" (*Objections and Text of Scripture Considered*, page 127).

John Kennedy

We could give other examples from many other godly men, men like John Kennedy of Dingwall, who was hailed as the "Spurgeon of the North." In his book, *Man's Relations to God*, he wrote:

"The doctrine of the double reference is an oil and water mixture; it is opposed to Scripture; no one who has subscribed the Confession of Faith can consistently hold it; it adopts the practical bearing of Arminianism; it endangers the doc-

trine of the atonement, and it is quite unavailing for the purpose to which it is applied" ("Man as Evangelised," pages 104-108).

"Those who hold it are in a transition state, and occupy no fixed dogmatic ground. Sometimes they seem staunch Calvinists, and at other times utter Arminians. They try to move on the boundary line between the two systems, and would fain keep a foot on either side. But the fence is too high to admit of this. They therefore display their agility in leaps from side to side. But this is very fatiguing work; and must soon be given up. They will find that they must walk on either side. As it was an Arminian bias that moved them to these gambols, the most probable finale is, that they shall utterly abandon the Calvinistic side. It is opposed to Scripture, as seen in Bible light" (*ibid.*, page 105).

"No subscriber of the Confession can both intelligently and honestly maintain the doctrine of the double reference of the atonement. It is not in the Confession; it is inconsistent with several of its statements; and a view of the question as to the reference of the atonement was present to the minds of the Westminster divines, utterly incompatible with any such doctrine. *The doctrine of 'the double reference' is not in the Confession of Faith.*¹ The only attempts made to find it there have resulted in utter failure" (*ibid.*, page 107).

"But the doctrine of the double reference is utterly opposed to some statements of the Confession of Faith. There was a view of the question before the minds of the Westminster divines utterly incompatible with the doctrine of the double reference" (emphasis mine) (*ibid.*, pages 108-110).

"The statements in the Confession, bearing on the atonement, were adapted to the state of the question of the extent of the atonement, as discussed between Calvinists and the French universalists. Both parties held, *that Christ re-*

deemed all for whom He died, and neither therefore could hold the double reference" (*ibid.*, page 110).

"The idea of the call being the offer of a gift has driven the scriptural form of it out of the minds of many men altogether. This other was the form it alone assumed in the thinking and teaching of 'the Marrow-men.' To their successors it suggested more than these fathers meant. They began to regard it as necessarily an expression of love to the individual to whom it is addressed. They desiderated some sort of interest of all in Christ before the call is accepted, in order to justify its being given. Extending the idea of the Marrow-men's 'deed of gift and grant,' they reached at last the universal reference of the atonement, while still stretching a long arm to keep a weak hold of the Calvinism of the Confession. They hesitate not to say that without the universal reference they could not preach the gospel at all, in other words, that this is the only basis they find for the call of the gospel. And what do they find there on which to base the offer?" (*ibid.*, page 115).

Jerome Zanchius

Jerome Zanchius is worthy of note for those who assert a double will in God; i.e., "that though God's desire is in the salvation of all men (He, being a God of infinite love) yet He somehow foregoes His own will, or denies Himself in not decreeing what is His desire." Zanchius comments:

"The will of God, respecting the salvation and condemnation of men, is never contrary to itself; He immutably wills the salvation of the elect and vice-versa; nor can He ever deviate from His own will in any instance whatever, so as that *that* should be done, which He willeth not or that not brought to pass which He willeth. 'My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure' (Isaiah 46:10). 'He is of one mind, and who can turn Him? and what His soul desireth,

even that he doeth' (Job 23:13-14)" (*Absolute Predestination*, page 13).

"As God knows nothing now which He did not know from all eternity, so He wills nothing now which He did not will from everlasting, and again, page 23, God is likewise unchangeable with regard to His purposes and promises. 'God is not a man, that he should lie; neither the son of man, that He should repent; hath He said and shall He not do it?'" (p. 26).

"Since this absolute will of God is both immutable and omnipotent, we infer that the salvation of every one of the elect is most infallibly certain and can by no means be prevented. This necessarily follows from what we have already asserted and proved concerning the Divine will, which, *as it cannot be disappointed or made void*, must undoubtedly secure the salvation of all whom God wills should be saved" (page 24).

Every time the true church has taken up the sword against the enemy, fought the good fight and won the day, always there has been a regrouping of the enemy, who gathered strength as the church later slept. The biblical pattern from the time of the church in the Old Testament right up to present time has always been the same.

The Trojan horse

God blessed as the church followed His commandments. As the church became slothful and lazy, the enemy crept in under the banner of friendship, the people were enticed from the truth and left the true paths, God was wrathful, the people lost His blessing. Who can deny these truths are less apparent today? The church is being enticed with treats of universal love: God wants to save all men, say some; we are all God's children, say others. The god of the Muslim, Hindu, and pagan is the same God as the Christian under a different name. The Trojan horse has already been pulled into the camp, the people are rejoicing (literally

laughing in the aisles), and inside lurks the enemy of men's souls, Pelagius, Arminius, Amaraute, and the pope of Rome, all dressed in the new garb of modernism, new Evangelicalism, and enlightened thinking, "the world for Jesus" clearly emblazoned on their breastplate. But we would say they have sold Jesus for the world!

Where is the militant church on earth, that seeks after holiness of living, of glory to God, of the Jesus of the Bible; where is the church of the Reformation?

We hear cries of put aside doctrine, do not major on the minors, for doctrine divides. "This is a heart religion" that needs not doctrine. But what saith the Scripture? I Timothy 4:13: "Till I come, give attendance to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine." I Timothy 4:16: "Take heed unto thyself, and unto the doctrine; continue in them: for in doing this thou shalt both save thyself, and them that hear thee." Matthew 23:27: "Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye are like unto whited sepulchers, which indeed appear beautiful outward, but are within full of dead men's bones, and of all uncleanness."

No great marvel that the church of today is hard to distinguish from the world. They have left the form of sound doctrine, to wander in the wilderness of self gratification, only to fall into the

slough of materialism and crawl out on the side of the city of destruction.

Courage to stand

Oh! Praise God for the valiant of Israel! The Moseses, who led the people out from the onions and garlic of Egypt into the trial of freedom; the Davids who stood against the enemy when more respectable warriors hid in their tents; and the Daniels, with the courage to stand for the truth, willing to obey God rather than men.

It is time for the people to awake from their slumber, cast aside "Mr. Worldly Wiseman" and challenge "Talkative" on the way of salvation. Ah! Christian reader, if you feel sometimes inadequate for the battle, lacking a great love for the truth and a zeal for God's glory, perhaps we should remind ourselves of David, only a youth, who when his God was mocked *ran* toward the giant and slew him. John the Baptist, having nothing, yet having all, and of whom the Lord said there is none greater. Lydia, a seller of purple, used mightily to support God's servant. Onesimus, a runaway slave, who ministered to the needs of the apostle whilst he was in captivity.

What is our calling? To be rich? *Yes*, and given to hospitality. Famous? *Yes*, for holiness. Brave? Indeed, for the truth. Bril-

liant? *Yes*, with Christ's visage. To be faithful unto the end, to be strong in the Lord, and in the power of *His* might. Oh where are the zealots of the Lord's cause willing to spend and be spent? Why, even Judas was commanded, "that thou doest, do quickly." Our Master hates the sluggard, let us not be found among them. As Mr. Spurgeon said, "Gentlemen, let us *do something*."

Some brethren need help and encouragement. When were we last as Paul, helping the Lord's cause? Let us be Protestants of the New Testament mettle.

Finally, let those that love the old paths and the doctrines of the Word put more of their resources to His services, let us bear one another's burdens and rally against all falsehood and error, and the God of truth will establish our hearts and His cause. Let us be faithful unto death and He will give us a crown of life. □

1 The doctrine of "The Double Reference" is referring to the idea that God has two wills (sometimes known as the two lines in Scripture); viz., His secret, eternal will in the which God brings to pass His eternal covenant counsel in the saving of His election of grace (Eph. 1:11) and a revealed will in which God is reputed to love all mankind and thus has a sincere desire to save all mankind.

Book Reviews

God the Almighty: Power, Wisdom, Holiness, Love, by Donald G. Bloesch. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1995. 329 pp., \$24.99 (cloth). [Reviewed by the editor.]

The Reformed theologian will read Donald Bloesch's projected seven-volume set of dogmatics with profit. Bloesch, who describes his stance as "centrist evangelical," intends to develop an

evangelical theology that interacts with contemporary thought without altogether breaking with the theology of the Reformation and the theology of the early, post-apostolic church. Indeed, it is both a strength and a weakness of the book that Bloesch devotes so much space to quoting, referring to, and positioning himself in relation to contemporary theologians. The strength is that the reader learns much about the present theologi-

cal scene and the theologians on this scene. The weakness is that there is not enough positive development of the main topics of the theology. Bloesch's treatment, e.g., of predestination, from every point of view a fundamental part of one's doctrine of God, is woefully scanty. In only four and a half pages, Bloesch deals with "God as Elector and Persuader" (pp. 69-73), although there is the stray reference to predestination elsewhere.

This is the third volume of the projected seven-volume set. The first was theological prolegomena, *A Theology of Word & Spirit: Authority & Method in Theology*. The second was Bloesch's doctrine of Scripture, *Holy Scripture: Revelation, Inspiration & Interpretation*. Both were reviewed in the *Protestant Reformed Theological Journal* (April, 1994, pp. 69, 70; April, 1996, pp. 72-75). The third volume is devoted to theology proper, the doctrine of God. In his preface, the author states that he regards "this particular volume ... as perhaps the most important in this series" (p. 13).

Following an introduction in which Bloesch sets his theology in the contemporary scene, the book treats God's being; God's self-revelation; God's attributes; and the doctrine of the Trinity. In two concluding chapters, Bloesch critiques both "the biblical-classical synthesis" and "the biblical-modern synthesis." He is critical of both these syntheses (about the former, one should say *alleged* synthesis). In a brief epilogue, he opts for a "biblical-prophetic" theology: "I am not interested in returning to an earlier age, nor am I mesmerized by the present age" (p. 261).

There is pointed criticism of contemporary errors, including the feminism that refuses to call God "He"; the panentheistic notion that God needs the creation; and the dissolving of God's holiness into love. In opposition to a strong current in modern theology, Bloesch defends God's simplicity. He is right to relate simplicity inseparably to God's spirituality: "To affirm God's spirituality is also to affirm his simplicity" (p. 90). Bloesch declines to minimize the perfection of holiness in relation to divine love. "Holiness together with love is the quintessential attribute of God" (p. 139). In keeping with his method, Bloesch treats these two attributes together, "Holiness & Love."

There is a succinct, incisive

analysis of the difference between the Roman Catholic doctrine of merit and the Reformation doctrine of grace (pp. 224-28).

Nevertheless, the Reformed theologian must vigorously dissent from important elements of Bloesch's theology. To read the work with profit is by no means to read it with assent.

There is no place in Bloesch's doctrine of an almighty God for predestination. Bloesch dismisses Reformed orthodoxy on this truth as "causal determinism" (p. 58). His brief treatment of election is long enough for him to declare, without a shred of biblical evidence, that "God's predestination is not an irreversible decree made and completed outside time but an electing grace that is realized in time" (p. 72; cf. the remark on Romans 9:13 on pp. 141, 142).

The denial of predestination as an eternal decree involves Bloesch in other grievous errors. God's omnipotence is compromised by the affirmation that God willingly makes Himself dependent on men, so that they cooperate with Him in carrying out His plan. This requires the loss of immutability. God "can change himself." He does, in fact, change Himself in reaction to our "response to his gracious initiative" (p. 95). Bloesch is a representative of the powerful movement in modern theology that strips God of such attributes as omnipotence and immutability by having Him Himself voluntarily surrender these attributes, supposedly in the interests of His grace. The result is still, however, that God is not truly almighty and that He is changeable. Since He is His attributes, the result is still, in reality, that He is no longer God. The only difference from the older error is that God has voluntarily "ungodded" Himself.

Acknowledging that the alternative would be the "double predestination" of the "older theology," Bloesch opts for universalism: all will be saved in the end.

Divine wrath is only the chastising of sinners in love.

To which the question must be put, "What then of hell?"

The wrath of God is merely provisional, not eternal.

To which the question must be put, "What then of hell?"

Divine love overcomes wrath for everyone, for Christ died for all.

To which the question must be put, "What then of hell?"

"Hell is not the final word." The reason, according to Bloesch, in a strange phrase, is that there will be "the penetration of hell by divine grace" (pp. 142-145).

Bloesch is a disciple of the neo-orthodox theologians, Barth and Brunner. His doctrine of Scripture is not faith's acceptance of an inspired book (see my review of volume two). And he is far too open to the modern theological trends which, in part, he criticizes.

Startling is Bloesch's denunciation, on the opening page, of Reformed theologian Herman Hoeksema: "A work of this kind will necessarily have a polemical thrust. I sternly oppose those who would make God culpable for human misery (such as Herman Hoeksema ...)." From Donald Bloesch, who remarkably maintains his equanimity when dealing with even the most outrageous of heresies, this is severe condemnation indeed. Wherever did he read that Hoeksema made "God culpable for human misery"? There is no quotation from or reference to any of Hoeksema's works in the book. It is apparent that Bloesch knows Hoeksema only through James Daane's *The Freedom of God*. To hold up Hoeksema for condemnation on this basis is unfair. Daane was an avowed critic of Hoeksema. Nor was he a friend of the (decretal) theology of the Canons of Dordt which he, like Hoeksema, was bound by a vow to uphold.

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The Westminster Standards (An Original Facsimile). Audubon, NJ: Old

Paths Publications, 1997. \$49.95 (cloth). [Reviewed by the editor.]

In observance of the 350th anniversary of the publication of the Westminster standards, Old Paths Publications has produced this handsome "limited anniversary edition" of the documents produced by the Westminster Assembly. The book is a facsimile of one of the rare copies of the original 1648 edition of the Westminster standards. Only 600 copies were printed. The original is found in the library of Princeton Seminary.

Inside the original is a handwritten note stating, "This is Warfield's Edition Three, the first with proofs." This note is faithfully reproduced in the Old Paths facsimile edition.

The volume contains the Westminster Larger Catechism; the Westminster Shorter Catechism; the Westminster Confession of Faith; the Directory for the Public Worship of God; and the Proceedings of the Assembly of Divines upon the Thirty-nine Articles of the Church of England. This last was

not completed by the Westminster divines.

In the margins of the Confession of Faith and the Catechisms are all the passages of Scripture on which the instruction is based.

As an anniversary publication containing several of the most important confessional statements of Reformed Christianity, the volume is appropriately attractive. It is a hardcover book. The binding is black with gold lettering on the front and back covers, as well as on the spine.

A valuable, lovely work. □

News From Our Churches

Mr. Benjamin Wigger

School Activities

The Association for Protestant Reformed Secondary Education in Lansing, IL, consisting of members from our Chicago area churches, held its annual meeting on March 31. Besides receiving a reportedly large number of new members, they approved the purchase of a 14.5 acre piece of land immediately behind Peace PRC in Lansing and made the momentous decision to begin a PR high school in the fall of 2000, the Lord willing. Let us pray for God's blessing upon these labors, as the members of this association stand before the tremendous amount of work that needs to be done, and as they continue to work toward the goal of providing their covenant children with a distinctive high school education.

On Sunday, April 5, the auditorium of the Loveland, CO PRC was filled to capacity with the addition of some fifty band members and chaperons from Covenant Christian High School in Grand Rapids, MI. They were in Loveland

to give a concert the following evening in our Loveland school's gym. Loveland's Young People's Society also extended a special invitation to all the visiting band members to a time of fellowship and refreshments in their church basement after the evening service.

Not to be outdone by the band's trip to Colorado, Covenant's choir traveled to Iowa on April 17 to participate in a High School Choir Festival sponsored by Dordt College. While there, they were able also to give a concert for the students of our Hull PR Christian School.

On April 4 the Hope Foundation, of the Hope PRC in Grand Rapids, MI, sponsored their second annual night of ice-skating at Griff's Ice House. Plans called for an organized and officiated hockey game as well as plenty of open skating time.

Evangelism Activities

Rev. S. Key, pastor of the Randolph, WI PRC, by invitation and with the approval of his consistory brought the Word of God recently to the congregation of the Second Christian Reformed Church in Randolph. He preached from Luke 4:16-30 under the theme, "The Rejected Christ: Rejected in His Own City."

The Evangelism Society of the First PRC in Edmonton, Alberta, Canada invited their congregation recently to an evening of fellowship stuffing envelopes with their "Welcome" brochures and magnets in preparation for distribution in mailboxes later this spring.

On April 3, Prof. D. Engelsma spoke at a Spring Lecture sponsored by the Evangelism Society of the Hope PRC in Redlands, CA. He spoke on the subject, "Marriage, an Unbreakable Bond."

Our Byron Center, MI congregation, through their Evangelism Society, sponsored again this year a special service for their community on Easter morning.

Congregational Activities

The Adult Bible Study of the Byron Center, MI PRC made a visit recently to the Scriptorium in Grand Haven, MI.

The Southeast PRC in Grand Rapids, MI continues to make plans for this year's Young People's Convention scheduled for July 20-25. On April 17 they hosted their last fund raiser for that convention when they sponsored a very exciting basketball game between two '93-'94 state championship teams. Covenant Christian's Class D and Calvin Christian's Class C teams (Calvin Christian is a school with

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

an enrollment of 539 located in Grandville, MI) played their game before a good-sized crowd of 1700 at Grandville High School. The game was won by Covenant, 89 to 78.

The Choir of the Peace PRC in Lansing, IL hosted a combined choir program and singspiration on Sunday, April 12. They sang the Easter cantata "Resurrection Alleluia."

On Sunday evening, April 19, the Choral Society of the Faith PRC in Jenison, MI presented their annual Spring Concert.

Faith also hosted this year's annual Mr. & Mrs. Adult and Junior Society League Mass Meeting on April 14. Prof. H. Hanko spoke on "Teaching Our Children Kingdom Service."

Mission Activities

Rev. and Mrs. J. Kortering left April 10 for a three-week trip to India to investigate mission work in that country. Plans called for them to visit another missionary family sent by Cornerstone Church in Hudsonville, MI, the Poelmans, as well as traveling to speak to and preach for many of the contacts that they have made there.

Minister Activities

Our South Holland, IL PRC was scheduled to call a pastor on April 30 from a trio consisting of Candidate D. Kleyn, and Revs. A. Brummel and J. Mahtani.

Food For Thought

"Love toward God is the source of all true love toward one's neighbor, and love to one's neighbor is the test of love toward God."

—Otto Thelemann □

ANNOUNCEMENTS

WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

On June 18, 1998, we celebrate the 50th wedding anniversary of our parents and grandparents,

EDWARD and JENNIE STOUWIE.

We are thankful to God for giving them so many years together. Their faithfulness, love, and humility in marriage and in the church have always been a source of comfort and inspiration to us. We thank God for them and pray that He will continue to bless them according to His promises in Christ Jesus. I will sing of the mercies of the Lord forever: with my mouth will I make known thy faithfulness to all generations (Psalm 89:1).

- * Lenore Dieck
- * Randy and Jan Bode
- * Ed and Mary Stouwie
- * Gys and Joanne VanBaren
- * Craig and Sharon Derks
- 17 grandchildren
- 2 great grandchildren

Lansing, Illinois

WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

The Lord willing, on May 4, 1998, our parents,

MR. and MRS. DAN DE MEESTER,

celebrated their 25th wedding anniversary. We give thanks to our covenant God that He has given us godly parents who continually teach us in the love and fear of His name. It is our prayer that the Lord will continue to guide them in their marriage and bless them together in the years to come.

Blessed is every one that feareth the LORD; that walketh in his ways. 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 128:1, 5, 6).

- * Melinda DeMeester
- * Tamara DeMeester and fiancée
- Dan Kalsbeek
- * Rich DeMeester

Grand Rapids, Michigan

WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

With thanks to our heavenly Father we celebrate on May 27, 1998, the 50th wedding anniversary of our parents and grandparents,

ALBERT and MARIAN KARSEMEYER.

We praise God for the covenant instruction and love they have given us, and pray for His continued blessing in their marriage. Except the Lord build the house, they labor in vain that build it (Psalm 127:1).

- * Jerry and Pat Schipper
- Jason, Jeremy, Emily
- Robb, Becky, Ali VandenHeuvel
- * Ed and Jeanne Karsemeyer
- Shawn, Renae, Todd, Ryan, Kyle
- * Greg and Elaine Engelsma
- Chad and Pam, Shannon, Valerie
- * Al and Carol Karsemeyer
- Clint, Ronda, Kirk, Jessica, A.J., Troy

Jenison, Michigan

RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The Martha Society of the Doon Protestant Reformed Church expresses their sincere sympathy to our fellow member, Mrs. Dick Burgers, in the death of her sister,

NELLIE MIDDENDORP.

May she be comforted from God's Word knowing that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose (Romans 8:28).

Rev. Richard Smit, Pres.
Henrietta VanOort, Sec. y.

CALL TO SYNOD!!

Synod 1997 appointed Hope Protestant Reformed Church, Walker, MI the calling church for the 1998 synod.

The consistory hereby notifies our churches that the 1998 synod of the Protestant Reformed Churches in America will convene, the Lord willing, on Tuesday, June 9, 1998 at 9:00 A.M. in the Hope Protestant Reformed Church, Walker, MI.

The Pre-Synodical Service will be held on Monday evening, June 8, at 7:30 P.M. Rev. Koole, president of the 1997 synod, will preach the sermon. Synodical delegates are requested to meet with the consistory before the service.

Delegates in need of lodging should contact Mr. Harry Langerak, O-356 Begole SW, Grand Rapids, MI, 49544. Phone: (616) 453-7317.

Consistory of Hope PRC
Harry Langerak, Clerk.