



**A Reformed
Semi-Monthly
Magazine**

The Standard Bearer

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Jehovah, Our Shepherd

"The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want." Psalm 23:1

What pathetic creatures sheep are in so many respects. Sheep are weak: they are very susceptible to sickness, disease, parasites, and injury. Sheep are helpless: they are unable to care for themselves. Sheep are defenseless: they are easy prey for the lion or the bear, the wolf or the coyote, even stray dogs. Sheep are stubborn: it is almost impossible to make them go where they do not want to go; far better to lead sheep than to try to drive them. Sheep are foolish: they will gorge themselves on rich hay or grain, and do not hesitate to endanger themselves in various ways.

Sheep are wayward: they will

repeatedly get themselves into a predicament. What pathetic creatures, indeed! That is the picture the Scriptures draw of sheep. And the picture is accurate, as I can testify from having raised sheep for several years of my youth on my father's farm.

"All we like sheep...." Yes, it is true, these pathetic creatures are pictures of us as God's people. God created the sheep to be a picture of His people. It is very humbling, is it not? Who of us would choose to be compared to a sheep? A lion, perhaps, or maybe a bear or an eagle. But a sheep? Never! But, an accurate picture it is. For by nature we are such pathetic creatures. From this point of view, what unspeakable comfort Psalm 23 affords us. How simple it is, yet so very profound.

What a proper and beautiful figure is that of the shepherd and his sheep. The inspired psalmist David is given to speak God's word here as it flows from his own pas-

toral experience as a shepherd. And the opening verse says it all. The following verses are but the development of what is really implied in the statement: "The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want."

A shepherd

What characterizes a shepherd, one who cares properly for sheep? In the first place, a good shepherd knows his sheep. The shepherd does not have an indefinite number of sheep. He is able to identify his sheep. Here in the West, where many flocks graze in the lush mountain foothills during the summer, each shepherd has his own distinctive ear-mark, which he cuts into the ears of his sheep. Or, sometimes, a particular brand is placed upon the back of the sheep by means of a colored dye.

A good shepherd knows his sheep.

In the second place, a good shepherd knows the proper pasture for his sheep. He chooses that pas-

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ture with great care. A barren, over-grazed pasture will not do, for the sheep will go hungry. Sheep which have been grazing on the dry mountain grass will not be permitted to graze in a cornfield or even a field of rich alfalfa, for they would surely gorge themselves. Many would overeat and die. The good shepherd leads his sheep with care to green pastures where the sheep can safely eat to their hearts' content. If the sheep are fed grain, the shepherd will carefully mix and measure their ration so that they might safely eat their fill.

Thirdly, a shepherd knows the enemies of the sheep, and he has the power and willingness to defend his sheep. His rod and staff will be in hand to protect them. Often a sheep dog is employed to protect the sheep and to keep them together. A good shepherd will be on guard against predators.

Finally, let it be emphasized, a shepherd must be very patient, longsuffering with his sheep. From this viewpoint, not just anyone can be a good shepherd. Many farmers and ranchers will have nothing to do with sheep. Sheep are very labor intensive. They require almost constant attention and faithful, loving care. If that kind of care is not provided, the sheep wander away; they are devoured by their enemies; they get sick and die. Patience and longsuffering are necessary virtues of a good shepherd.

Jehovah, our Shepherd

All these characteristics of a shepherd we find in the highest degree in Jehovah! Jehovah is the name of our God par excellence. This is the name by which our God is distinguished forever from the idols of the heathen. He is Jehovah, the I AM THAT I AM, the perfectly independent and self-sufficient God, who has no need of any creature outside of Himself. Jehovah is the sovereign Creator and Lord of all. Jehovah is the eternal, omnipotent, unchangeable God.

But the name Jehovah empha-

sizes especially the fact that our God is a covenant God. It emphasizes His perfect faithfulness. Jehovah's word is: "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee" (Heb. 13:5). Do we understand the implications of this word of God in Psalm 23:1?

As the all-knowing Jehovah, He knows all His sheep by name. Not one escapes His omniscient sight. He knows His sheep in sovereign love from before the foundation of the world. He speaks to Jeremiah: "Before I formed thee in the belly I knew thee" (Jer. 1:5). The all-knowing Jehovah is revealed to us in the highest degree in Jesus, Jehovah Salvation. Jesus speaks in John 10:14: "I am the good shepherd, and know my sheep...." He has known us from eternity, when the Father gave unto Him our names. Jesus Christ knows His sheep by name, and all the love of Jehovah for His sheep is manifested in Him who laid down His life for His sheep!

And Jehovah, our shepherd, knows the proper pasture we need. He feeds us in the green pastures by means of the preaching of His inspired, infallible Word and by the use of the sacraments. Though at times our flesh would rebel against the pasture He provides, though by nature we would gorge ourselves upon the lusts and pleasures of this sinful world, Jehovah knows our needs and has provided us with the perfect pasture. We are given to partake of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Bread of Life and the Water of Life. Jesus exhorts His undershepherds: "Feed the flock of God which is among you..." (I Pet. 5:2). In Him we live; in Him we are satisfied; in Him we are most blessed forever!

To be sure, Jehovah knows our enemies. He protects us from them, "for He is able to do it, being Almighty God, and willing, being a faithful Father" (Heid. Cat., Lord's Day 9). He knows the wicked world would like to swallow us up. He knows that "the

devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour" (I Pet. 5:8). He knows He must protect us from our own foolish, wayward, rebellious natures which would certainly lead us into destruction. Jehovah has given His own only-begotten Son even to the death of the cross that we might be delivered from every foe! And our exalted Lord Jesus Christ protects His sheep by His indwelling Word and Spirit. He delivers us from the grievous wolves who would enter in among us, not sparing the flock (Acts 20:29). He leads us safely through every danger, sheltering us in His perfect fold. The good Shepherd says: "And I give unto them eternal life, and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand" (John 10:28).

Finally, Jehovah God is filled with patience and longsuffering with respect to the sheep of His pasture. We confess with the prophet Jeremiah: "It is of the LORD's mercies that we are not consumed, because his compassions fail not. They are new every morning: great is thy faithfulness" (Lam. 3:22, 23). Listen to the inspired testimony of Isaiah: "He shall lead his flock like a shepherd: he shall gather the lambs with his arm, and carry them in His bosom, and shall gently lead those that are with young" (Is. 40:11). "And Jesus, when he came out, saw much people, and was moved with compassion toward them, because they were as sheep not having a shepherd: and he began to teach them many things" (Mark 6:34).

Can you not testify of the patience and longsuffering of our Shepherd within your own life? Have you perhaps strayed from the flock? Have you ever wandered into forbidden, dangerous paths? Have you not known and wept about your sins and miseries? But, without fail, our faithful Shepherd leads us back to the flock, delivers us from danger, comforts with the word, "Thy sins are forgiven thee."

Abundant Provision

What more could we ask? He makes abundant provision for us! "I shall not want." I will not suffer any lack. Oh, want or lack is dreadful! It is misery. Look at a flock without abundant provision. They are ignored, neglected, unknown by their shepherd. They are impoverished—forced to gnaw away at bare, brown fields. They fall prey to predators. They have scant shelter to protect them from the storms. They have only polluted water to drink. They are weak and diseased. Many wander and are lost upon the hills. They suffer want! Their needs are ignored. No one makes proper provision for them. The sheep suffer grievously; they die!

But Jehovah is our Shepherd; we shall not want! For our greatest want is fellowship with our God. Remove our God, separate us from our God, and we die a miserable, eternal death! But, thanks be to God, Jehovah is our Shepherd! As such, He established His covenant of friendship and fellowship with us. He feeds and nourishes us by His grace and Spirit

through His Word. He rules us by His grace so that we willingly submit to His guidance and serve Him in love. He protects us from all our enemies, preserves and sustains us through every trial, every suffering, and through all of our sorrows. Hear His voice: "My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness" (II Cor. 12:9). He is our faithful Shepherd, providing for our every need, even as we walk through the valley of the shadow of death.

We may not possess all that we wish for, but we shall not want. The psalmist testified of that in Psalm 34:10: "The young lions do lack and suffer hunger; but they that seek the LORD shall not want any good thing." Whatever may come—famine, affliction, poverty, persecution, death—I shall not want. Though we cannot always comprehend the Lord's ways, though we may be inclined to ask, "Hath God forgotten to be gracious?" we are given to confess, "Thou leadest thy people like a flock by the hand of Moses and Aaron" (Ps. 77:20).

But understand the implica-

tions. If Jehovah is your shepherd, if you have no want, then you are, indeed, His sheep. Then you know Jesus. He says, "... and am known of mine" (John 10:14). It is the spiritual knowledge of the heart, the knowledge of faith. Then you hear the Shepherd. Jesus says: "My sheep hear my voice" (John 10:27). From Sabbath to Sabbath we hear His Word and recognize our Shepherd's voice in the preaching of the gospel. Then we follow Him. Jesus says, "... and they follow me" (John 10:27). We will not be deceived by wolves in sheep's clothing. We will know that the voice of the hireling is false. We love our Shepherd, trust Him, and follow Him.

We are pathetic creatures no more. For even now we are, in principle, new creatures in Christ! And presently in glory we shall be manifest as perfected, victorious, glorious sheep. May our hearts sing:

The LORD my shepherd holds me, within His tender care,

And with His flock He folds me, no want shall find me there.

Psalter #55. □

Editorial

The Reformed Worldview

2. The Failure of Common Grace

In the editorial of May 15, 1998, I described the worldview that Abraham Kuyper proposed for Reformed Christians. This is a worldview of common grace. According to the Dutch Reformed theologian, all men and women receive a certain grace from God during this life. This grace restrains the power of sin in the unregenerated so that they are not totally depraved, as otherwise they would be. It enables them to love, seek, and do what is good and right

in natural life. By this grace they can, and often do, create a culture that is good, that is, a culture that glorifies God and that God approves. This common grace permits, indeed requires, Christians to cooperate with unbelievers in their positive development of culture.

Common grace is the foundation and driving force of the life and work of the Reformed Christian in the world. It determines how the Reformed Christian lives in the various ordinances and

spheres of creation and how he relates to the ungodly in everyday life.

Kuyper laid out this common grace worldview in six lectures at Princeton Theological Seminary in 1898. The lectures have been published as *Lectures on Calvinism*.

Through Kuyper's powerful influence, the worldview of common grace dominated in the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands and in the Christian Reformed Church in North America. The Christian

Reformed Church made the worldview of common grace official, binding doctrine in her synodical decisions of 1924 adopting common grace. Conservative Presbyterians also embraced it. Kuyper's lectures were given at Princeton in 1898, then a conservative Presbyterian seminary. B. B. Warfield was in Kuyper's audience and enthusiastically approved the worldview advocated in the lectures. Over the years, many non-Reformed, evangelical schools and theologians also made the worldview of common grace their own.

Kuyper's worldview of common grace prevails in Reformed circles still today. This was evident at a conference commemorating the centennial of Kuyper's Stone Lectures this past March. The conference was held at Calvin College in Grand Rapids. The sponsor was the Calvin Center for Christian Scholarship. The theme of the conference was "Abraham Kuyper Revisited: The Stone Lectures Centennial."

Professor Nicholas Wolterstorff, a leader in the Christian Reformed Church, especially in the area of Christian education, gave the keynote address. His speech was titled, "Kuyper's Significance for the 21st Century." The philosopher and teacher correctly observed that the topic of Kuyper's Stone Lectures was the vital, perennial issue, "How shall the Christian live in the world?" Wolterstorff frankly acknowledged that Abraham Kuyper showed Reformed Christians the way and that Wolterstorff could not improve on Kuyper's instruction in 1898. Common grace remains the foundation of the Reformed worldview and the power of the Reformed life in the world.

Since 1924 the Protestant Reformed Churches (PRC) have taken lonely exception to the worldview proposed by Abraham Kuyper. Kuyper's worldview of common grace was the real subject of the

three points of common grace adopted by the Christian Reformed Church in 1924, points which the PRC repudiate.

Relative to the first point which concerns the favorable attitude of God towards humanity in general and not only towards the elect, synod declares it to be established according to Scripture and the Confession that, apart from the saving grace of God shown only to those that are elect unto eternal life, there is also a certain favor or grace of God which He shows to His creatures in general....

Relative to the second point, which is concerned with the restraint of sin in the life of the individual man and in the community, the Synod declares that there is such a restraint of sin according to Scripture and the Confession.... God by the general operations of His Spirit, without renewing the heart of man, restrains the unimpeded breaking out of sin, by which human life in society remains possible.

Relative to the third point, which is concerned with the question of civil righteousness as performed by the unregenerate, synod declares that according to Scripture and the Confessions the unregenerate, though incapable of doing any saving good, can do civil good.... God without renewing the heart so influences man that he is able to perform civil good.... (cited in Herman Hoeksema, *The Protestant Reformed Churches in America*, 2nd ed. 1947, pp. 317, 354, 377).

In view of the fundamental importance of a church's and individual's worldview and in view of the popularity of the Kuyperian, common grace worldview, it is necessary to remind ourselves why we say no, and *must* say no, to the worldview of common grace. First, of a grace of God that restrains sin in the unregenerate; that enables the ungodly outside of Christ to know, love, seek, and do the good; that empowers the wicked to develop a good culture; and that permits, and even re-

quires, the holy people of God to cooperate with the world that hates God in carrying out the mandate of Genesis 1, Scripture knows nothing.

The complete lack of biblical basis for the grace that Kuyper taught in his lectures at Princeton is reflected in the lectures themselves. They are not biblical. The contents of the six lectures are totally lacking in explanation of Scripture. Indeed, they are virtually void of references to Scripture. I urge all to whom this is important to re-read the lectures from this viewpoint. In what admittedly was not a scientific study, I scanned the lectures page by page to note quotations of Scripture, as well as Scriptural exposition. There are only a few quotations of Scripture with exact reference—as few as two or three, perhaps 20 allusions to or quotations of Scripture without reference, and no explanation of Scripture whatever. The lectures are theoretical and philosophical, not biblical. The worldview of common grace of Abraham Kuyper in the *Lectures on Calvinism* is a theory spun out of the magnificent mind of Kuyper. It is not the mind of Jesus Christ as revealed in Scripture.

Scripture teaches the very opposite. Only the elect, renewed, believing saints have learned Christ so that, by grace, they put off the old man and put on the new man and live rightly in every sphere of earthly life. The unregenerated walk in the vanity of their mind, having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, giving themselves over unto lasciviousness, to work all uncleanness with greediness (Eph. 4:17ff.). Those outside of Christ are ignorant of the good (which is God, always and only *God!*), hate the good, despise the good, and are incapable of doing the good (Eph. 4:18; Rom. 1:18-32; 3:11; John 15:5). The culture that the wicked are developing in history, as willing

slaves of Satan, is a culture of the glory, pleasure, and advantage of man; a culture of lawlessness; a culture of death; a culture of the kingdom of the beast (I John 2:15, 16; Matt. 24:12; Rev. 13, 18). Rather than oneness in worldview and cooperation in carrying out the calling implied in worldview, Scripture teaches radical difference, separation, and antithesis (Psalm 147:19, 20; Deut. 33:28; II Cor. 6:14-18; Rev. 18:4).

Second, the Reformed confessions do not so much as mention the common grace that is supposed to be the very foundation of the Christian worldview, much less emphasize and extol it as the vital doctrine that Kuyper made of it. In fact, the only reference to "common grace" in the "Three Forms of Unity" is a condemnation of it as part and parcel of the Arminian heresy:

The Synod rejects the errors of those ... who teach that the corrupt and natural man can so well use the common grace (by which they understand the light of nature), or the gifts still left him after the fall, that he can gradually gain by their good use a greater, viz., the evangelical or saving grace and salvation itself. And that in this way God on His part shows Himself ready to reveal Christ unto all men ... (Canons of Dordt, III, IV, Rejection of Errors/5).

Is it unreasonable that Reformed churches and Christians expect that a truth so basic as to be the foundation of their worldview be found in the creeds? Is it unworthy of Reformed churches and Christians to note with alarm that the proposed foundation of their worldview—common grace—*contradicts* the fundamental doctrines of their faith as set forth in the creeds? Whereas the creeds teach particular grace, the proposed foundation of the Reformed worldview teaches common grace. Whereas confessional Calvinism

teaches the total depravity of the unregenerated, the proposed foundation of the Reformed worldview teaches the restraint of sin in the unregenerated, so that they can do works that are good and thus develop culture to the glory of God. Whereas the confessions teach the radical spiritual separation of the elect church from the reprobate world, a holy people in an unholy world, the proposed foundation of the Reformed worldview teaches a *oneness in divine grace* and a *cooperation in obedience to a divine calling*.

The doctrine of common grace as put forward by Kuyper on behalf of the Reformed worldview conflicts with the confessional Reformed doctrine of predestination. At the very least the theory of common grace rudely shoves the truth of predestination into the background. Let no one dismiss this charge as merely a piece of Protestant Reformed logic-chopping. In his superb analysis of Kuyper's lectures at Princeton, the British scholar, Peter S. Heslam, calls attention to this very thing, namely, that in the interests of common grace Kuyper deliberately downplayed predestination.

Although the doctrine of election, or predestination as Kuyper preferred to call it, is often considered to be the most characteristic element of Calvinistic theology, Kuyper gave no special attention to it in his exposition of Calvinism in the Stone Lectures. This doctrine did not in fact feature as prominently in his writings as might be expected, not only because of his commitment to Calvinist theology, but also because he considered it to be the *cor ecclesiae* ("heart of the church"—DJE), and central to the Reformed confession. His *De gemeene gratie* (Kuyper's three-volume work, *Common Grace*—DJE) provides an indication as to why this was the case. There he criticized Reformed theologians for having made predestination the chief focus of their attention, paying only scant re-

gard to the workings of God's grace in the world outside the church, expressed in the doctrine of common grace (*Creating a Christian Worldview: Abraham Kuyper's Lectures on Calvinism*, Eerdmans, 1998, p. 116).

This is implicit admission by Kuyper himself that his theory of common grace conflicts with Reformed predestination. Predestination threatens Kuyper's common grace. Therefore the only thing to do when proclaiming common grace is to ignore predestination.

This is a damning indictment of common grace.

Predestination may never be ignored, that is, really, denied by silence.

Predestination may not be ignored in the matter of the Reformed worldview.

Whatever supposedly Christian worldview can make its way and hold its own only by ignoring predestination is thereby exposed as false.

The Reformed, Christian worldview is in perfect harmony with God's election and reprobation from eternity. It has its source and foundation in predestination. The power of the Christian life that flows from and expresses the Christian's worldview is the particular grace of election.

Whatever else the Christian worldview may be, it is a view of life and work in all of creation as holiness unto the triune God. Making this worldview known to Israel and calling Israel to the life that expresses it, Moses grounded the worldview in God's election: "the LORD thy God hath chosen thee to be a special people unto himself, above all people that are upon the face of the earth" (Deut. 7:6).

The apostle did the same to the church of the new covenant: we should be holy and without blame before Him, "according as He hath chosen us in Him before the foundation of the world" (Eph. 1:4). □

—DJE

■ A Decidedly Unbiblical Teaching

You are probably aware that I wrote a letter to *Christian Renewal* (18 May 1998) regarding a letter by Jelle Tuininga on the well-meant offer. Though I cannot recall a sermon on this subject, I have never believed in it, but did not have a good defense against it. Then several years ago I was made aware of the writings of A.W. Pink through our daughter, who is a Christian school teacher in Huntsville, AL. She presented me with a gift of four of Pink's books, among

which was *The Sovereignty of God*. This book clearly presented arguments against the well-meant offer.

I want to give you my sincere thanks for your analysis of this subject in your book *Hyper-Calvinism & the Call of the Gospel*. But knowing the antipathy of Tuininga against the PRC, I did not want to refer to your book in my first letter for evidence against the well-meant offer.

You have presented me with additional information on the offer. For this I want to give you my sincere thanks for the article by Jimmie Frew, Sr. that you published in the *Standard Bearer* (15

May 1998). This article has been very helpful in that it has shown that the PRC are not alone in rejecting the well-meant offer as a decidedly unbiblical teaching.

I've written another letter to *Christian Renewal* refuting what Tuininga wrote in the issue of 18 May 1998 in response to my letter for the same date. In my refuting letter I've taken the liberty to reference the article by Frew and to quote from John Gerstner's "Foreword" in your book. Many thanks again for your fine publication. □

Herman Dykstra
Concord, CA

Review Article

Prof. David J. Engelsma

Universalism in the Reformed Churches

The One Purpose of God: An Answer to the Doctrine of Eternal Punishment, by Jan Bonda. Tr. Reinder Bruinsma. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998. Xxv + 278 pages. \$25 (paper).

The one purpose of God referred to in the title of this book is God's alleged desire to save every human without exception. The author, a minister in the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands, supposes that this is the meaning of I

Timothy 2:4: "Who will have all men to be saved." Interpreting "all" in this text, in Romans 5:18, in I Corinthians 15:22, in Romans 11:32, and in other places in this way, Bonda contends that God will eventually save every human without exception. The book is a daring, bold affirmation of universalism. By virtue of this fact, it is a denial of hell as everlasting punishment.

Ominously the book begins with a quotation of the early theologian Origen.

Eventually, all those who died in unbelief will be converted to Christ and be saved. This will take place by means of their suffering for a limited time the anguish of hellish judgment. In the case of

many, what the gospel could not accomplish—their repentance—temporary "hell" will bring about.

This salvation of all without exception will occur only by way of and in connection with the future salvation of all physical Jews, those who have died in unbelief as well as those then living. With appeal to Romans 11, Bonda insists upon the continuing significance of "Israel," which he understands as the totality of physical Jews. The importance and place of the Jews yet today in God's scheme of salvation is the other side of the book's central theme.

Paul also writes about this judgment—the day of God's wrath, when "he will repay according to

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each one's deeds" (Rom. 2:5-6). The judgment is the beginning of the great deliverance. Under Christ's kingly rule God's children—those who are Christ's—will lead lost humanity back to God. All who ever died will be made alive in Christ, and at last God will be all in all (Rom. 8:14-21; I Cor. 15:20-28). So there will be salvation for those who died in a state of unbelief; salvation after the judgment. There will also be salvation for those who rejected the gospel. The majority of the Jewish people did that, but all Israel will be saved.... God (in the judgment—DJE) makes evil fall back on the heads of evildoers. He does not have in mind their destruction, however, but their redemption and healing; they will be ashamed and loathe what they did, and return to God. Eventually all will, with their whole heart, choose for the good for which God initially created them. Israel will do so first. Then all nations will join redeemed Israel (p. 258).

Does the Reformed man or woman incredulously object on the basis of the book of Romans with its clear teaching of predestination? Most of *The One Purpose of God* consists exactly of an interpretation of the entire book of Romans that rejects predestination, limited atonement, and particular grace (pp. 74-255). According to the exegesis of Bonda, admittedly following Karl Barth, the book of Romans proclaims the final salvation of every human by a grace of God that embraces all. The chapter with which Bonda begins his exposition of Romans is titled, "God Wants All to Be Saved."

That a minister in the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands pointedly and publicly assails basic doctrines in the Reformed confessions, as Bonda does, comes as no surprise. It is startling, however, to find Christian Reformed theologian Sierd Woudstra doing this in his enthusiastically favorable foreword. Woudstra unequivocally under-

writes Bonda's radical heresy. Woudstra charges that in their teaching of eternal punishment the Reformed creeds are "seriously flawed" (p. xx). The Christian Reformed theologian expresses agreement with an implication of Bonda's universalism, namely, that the cross of Christ was not "satisfaction," that is, was not "a price paid to God": "that death, as Bonda points out, was not a price to be paid to God" (pp. xx, xxi; cf. pp. 86, 87). Woudstra once vowed to uphold the Reformed creeds and never to criticize them, whether publicly or privately. But why concern oneself with lying to the Holy Ghost in the church, if there is no hell anyway?

The fundamental assumption of the book is that God has a purpose, or desire, of saving every human without exception. The biblical basis is a reading of I Timothy 2:4 and similar texts that explains "all" as referring to every human. The predestinarian texts are made to harmonize with the passages that speak of a desire of God to save all. From this desire of God to save all, Bonda concludes that all will, and must, be saved, if not before death, then after death.

Woudstra outlines the argument:

The title of the book, *The One Purpose of God*, succinctly captures the point Bonda tries to make on the basis of meticulous biblical exegesis. This title is based on Paul's words in I Timothy 2:4 that God "desires everyone to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth." The book's subtitle, "An Answer to the Doctrine of Eternal Punishment," follows from that text. Once we accept Paul's conviction here at face value, the doctrine of eternal punishment becomes at least problematic. For it

raises such questions as, Will God achieve his desire? Will there be an end to God's desire of salvation for certain individuals? Particularly the question, Is a person's eternal fate irrevocably sealed at his or her death? (pp. xix, xx)

The book, therefore, does not permit itself to become a handy sword with which the "conservative Calvinistic" theologians and churches can slash the "liberal" Reformed Churches in the Netherlands and, perhaps, the Christian

Reformed Church in North America to their own advantage.

This is what they will do, gasping at and fulminating against gross heresy. But the book is a sword that, as soon as they try to wield it, pierces the heart of their own "conservative" theology. For the universalistic, hell-denying book rests squarely—and immovably—on the notion that God has a purpose to save every human without exception inasmuch as He

loves them all. And this is the theology of all who maintain the theory of the "well-meant offer of salvation." The agreement of most "conservative Calvinists" with the "liberal" Bonda and Woudstra is evident in their interpretation of Bonda's basic text, I Timothy 2:4 and, by necessary implication, verse 6. They too explain that God wishes to save, and that in some sense Christ gave Himself a ransom for, every human without exception.

The issue is God's purpose, God's desire, God's sincere wish, that is, the purposing, desiring, sincerely wishing God. If God has a desire to save all without exception, born of His love for all without exception, but some of these perish everlastingly, God will suffer everlasting misery. Just as the believing parents of nine godly children grieve daily over one un-

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godly child, insomuch that the grief over the one bids fair to overwhelm the joy over the nine, so God will forever grieve over the eternal perdition of those whom He once loved and sincerely desired to save, and still (being unchangeable God) loves and desires to save. Heaven will be an everlasting hell for God.

This is impossible.

If God does, in fact, have a purpose in love to save all, all must, somehow, be saved in the end. For God's sake! To this the "conserva-

tives" are committed with their "well-meant offer." Time will show it! Time *has* shown it! Universalism in the Reformed churches has shown it!

The issue in the Reformed churches today, as ever, is predestination: election and reprobation.

Either the Canons of Dordt, wholeheartedly, honestly, unabashedly, and consistently maintained, or Jan Bonda's *The One Purpose of God*.

Either the one eternal purpose

of God in love to save a certain, definite number of the elect in Christ, accompanied by an eternal rejection of the others unto everlasting damnation, or an eternal desire of God to save every human without exception (I Tim. 2:4 on the reading of many "Calvinists"!), which explodes predestination, denies the cross as satisfaction, and abolishes everlasting hell.

Bonda's book should make for some theological soul-searching in the Reformed community. □

All Around Us

Rev. Gise VanBaren

■ Two Beasts

We often speak of the nearness of the end of time. In fact, throughout the New Testament age the church has testified of this. It is very true that for the past 2,000 years the church could rightly speak of the nearness of the end of time and of Christ's return. Since it is the next great event on that "time-clock" of God, it is properly called "near" even though thousands of years have transpired. The question might arise, however: could another thousand years go by before Christ's return?

There have always been "normal" disasters. Christ even says concerning the coming of these that *the end is not yet*. But there have been additional and remarkable signs seen in our generation. There has been the rapid development of mankind in the realm of science and medicine—just think of those things which have happened within our lifetimes! But in addition to that, there is the fulfilling

of the Word of God found in Revelation 13. There is revealed the two beasts: one arising out of the sea (one world-power arising out of the instability of nations), and one out of the earth (the rise of one-world church and development of science in a "stable" political scene). Two reports brought this to my attention recently.

The Christian News, May 4, 1998, reports on a call for church unity:

Kampen, the Netherlands (ENI)—

The general secretary of the World Council of Churches has renewed his call for the main Christian churches to start, in the year 2000, a process to lead to a universal Christian council uniting all churches and Christians.

And from the *Denver Post*, May 7, 1998:

In private parlays from Zurich to Hong Kong, in closed courtrooms from Singapore to Paris, in legal chambers in London and New York, in government offices from Washington to Tokyo, close-knit bands of global planners are writing the rules that will govern the world economy into the 21st century and beyond.

Most of these rules carry an American stamp. With the

world's most powerful economy, the United States is exporting its laws and regulations to the rest of the world. The message: anyone who wants to do business in America has to play by American rules.

All this work has two things in common.

First, little of it protects workers or communities, or reins in the power of global markets. Instead, it is aimed at making the markets safer, more efficient and, hence, more powerful.

Second, it is taking place virtually unnoticed and not debated by voters, politicians or the press. To a great degree, the rules are being written by experts and technicians, with no democratic input.

The dread of the global market's power and anarchy has grown since the Asian financial crisis last autumn and dominates debates whenever world economic leaders gather.

"Creating the institutions and arrangements for handling globalization is the greatest intellectual challenge now facing the world," Richard Haas of the Brookings Institution said. "A gap must be filled. This is going to be the next great area of intellectual endeavor."

As the market's power has increased, so have efforts—some governmental, some private, some both—to wrap it in the rules and regulations that long have con-

Rev. VanBaren is pastor of the Protestant Reformed Church of Loveland, Colorado.

trolled all the major national economies, including the American one.

A global market ultimately requires a one-world power to enforce the rules and regulations adopted by the nations and by the marketplace. Some of this is seen already in the European Common Market, where the individual nations are increasingly submitting to centralized control. And, of course, the United States of America exists as a "common market" because of the centralized control found there. As such control is extended over the nations of the world, one can recognize the rise of the "beast out of the sea." There will be an enforced unity which will surely be the kingdom of the antichrist. Then, even as we are already seeing, the faithful child of God will suffer great persecution, and the attempt will be made to silence the faithful church of Christ.

It is true that we know not the day or the hour of Christ's return. Surely, however, we ought not to deceive ourselves into thinking that hundreds or even thousands of years can transpire before His return.

■ "Coffee, tea, or He?"

Charles Krauthammer, in an essay appearing in *Time* magazine, June 15, 1998, writes a very penetrating article concerning religion: conviction—or preference? One is surprised, to say the least, that in a national magazine of the stature of *Time* an essay of this insight could be presented. But, likely, few will read an article that might pinpoint the vast void in the nation's religious convictions. He writes:

As I checked in for an outpatient test at a local hospital last week, the admissions lady asked for the usual name, rank, serial

number, insurance and ailment. Then she inquired, "What is your religious preference?" I was tempted to say, "I think Buddhism is the coolest of all, but I happen to be Jewish."

My second impulse was to repeat what Jonah said when asked by the shipmates of his foundering skiff to identify himself: "I am a Hebrew, ma'am. And I fear the Lord, the God of Heaven, who made the sea and the dry land." But that would surely have got me sent to psychiatry rather than X ray. So I desisted.

In ancient times, they asked, "Who is your God?" A generation ago, they asked your religion. Today your creed is a preference. Preference? "I take my coffee black, my wine red, my sex straight and my shirts lightly starched. Oh yes, and put me down for Islam."

The article continues:

According to Chesterton, tolerance is the virtue of people who do not believe in anything. Chesterton meant that as a critique of tolerance. But it captures nicely the upside of unbelief: where religion is trivialized, one is unlikely to find persecution. When it is believed that on your religion hangs the fate of your immortal soul, the Inquisition follows easily; when it is believed that religion is a breezy consumer preference, religious tolerance flourishes easily. After all, we don't persecute people for their taste in cars. Why for their taste in gods?

Oddly, though, in our thoroughly secularized culture, there is one form of religious intolerance that does survive. And that is the disdain bordering on contempt of the culture makers for the deeply religious, i.e., those for whom religion is not a preference but a conviction.

Yale law professor Stephen Carter calls this "the culture of disbelief," the oppressive assumption that no one of any learning or sophistication could possibly be a religious believer—and the social penalties meted out to those who nonetheless are.

Every manner of political argu-

ment is ruled legitimate in our democratic discourse. But invoke the Bible as grounding for your politics, and the First Amendment police will charge you with breaching the sacred wall separating church and state. Carter notes, for example, that one is allowed to have any view on abortion so long as it derives from ethical or practical or sociological or medical considerations. But should someone stand up and oppose abortion for reasons of faith, he is accused of trying to impose his religious beliefs on others. Call on Timothy Leary or Chairman Mao, fine. Call on St. Paul, and all hell breaks loose....

...We've come a long way in America. After two centuries, it seems we finally do have a religious test for office. True religiosity is disqualifying. Well, not quite. Believers may serve—but only if they check their belief at the office door.

At a time when religion is a preference and piety a form of eccentricity suggesting fanaticism, Chesterton needs revision: tolerance is not just the virtue of people who do not believe in anything; tolerance extends only to people who don't believe in anything. Believe in something, and beware. You may not warrant presidential-level attack, but you'll make yourself suspect should you dare enter the naked public square.

But you ought to find and read the entire article yourself. The man (whose "conviction" is evidently the Jewish religion) "hits the nail on the head." How true: anything is condoned and the "rights" of all are insisted upon—except when it is a matter of worshiping the one true God as He has revealed Himself in His Word. It is another indication of the last times in which we live. □

The Reformed Family: The Church Picnic

"And all the congregation of them that were come again out of the captivity made booths, and sat under the booths ... and there was very great gladness."
Nehemiah 8:17

There are some things in our personal lives that we should hold on to no matter how busy and complicated our lives become. Each of us, for instance, should commit himself to pockets of time for reading worthwhile books and meditating. And personal prayer times ought to punctuate each day, reminding us that earthly pursuits are not the sum total of our lives.

There are some things in our family life that we should never give up. Eating meals at the table — not in the van — with their accompanying devotions and lively discussion of political and spiritual topics, should be a high priority on each family's list. Family board games and evenings spent together in silent reading ought never fade into gradual disuse.

There are some things in our church life that are not negotiable for the Reformed believer. Simplicity of liturgy in worship, singing the Psalms, attending worship at least twice a Sunday, catechizing the youth, and house visitation come to mind. Scripture regulates some of these activities, reason

enough for continuing them. Others come down to us through time-honored tradition, no reason for discontinuing them.

One of those good traditions of the church, not regulated by Scripture, is the yearly church picnic. I don't know the antiquity or history of the church picnic, but it is at least a hundred years old and probably began in the Netherlands. As is true of many traditions, the church picnic is one tradition which lends collective coherence to our busy lives and qualitative meaning to the fellowship of the saints. In *Habits of the Heart*, Robert N. Bellah writes: "Our lives make sense in a thousand ways, most of which we are unaware of, because of traditions that are centuries, if not millennia, old. It is these traditions that help us to know that it does make a difference who we are and how we treat one another." No one, however, will ever be put under discipline for neglecting the church picnic. Like attending the societies in the church, it is purely optional.



It is an early Saturday morning in 1954. Like many other families in Hope Protestant Reformed Church, we have been up for several hours already. Many potatoes have to be peeled, vegetables diced, and eggs chopped to make the potato salad. Today we will enjoy bakery buns that Dad will pick up on his way home from work. Mother bakes two pies. One is piled high in a cloud of meringue

and the other is a fruit pie because Dad prefers fruit pies. Mother, however, takes great pride in the texture and height of her meringue — and we kids are warned not to pick off the toasted tips on the meringue — it must show well at the church picnic! The pungent aroma of baked beans fills the kitchen this morning. When done, these will be swathed in layers of newspaper, and finally blanketed in the least frayed of the bath towels to keep the beans as warm as possible during the long afternoon. The Saturday cleaning must be completely finished by noon today because games for the kids begin at 2:00, and we have a brother or sister in nearly every age category.

All week, really, we have been getting ready for the church picnic. Doing each day's chores a little earlier than usual has made things so confusing that it's hard to realize that it is actually Saturday. The lawn is already mowed, the garage is swept and hosed out, and the car is washed. It looks as if the boys have seen to their Saturday work, too. Dad will be home from the factory at noon. Our hair is already washed and braided, an ordeal usually reserved for Saturday evening, and our canvas shoes have been scrubbed and are presently drying on the fence. My brothers all have their mitts, and Dad makes sure they do because, although he doesn't own a mitt, he's planning to play ball, married men against the singles—the only way the teams have ever been organized—and he'll need to use one of the boys' mitts. Mother reminds

Mrs. Lubbers is a wife and mother in the Protestant Reformed Church of South Holland, Illinois.

him that last year he threw out his back playing ball, but her warning falls on deliberately deaf ears.

Dad loads the trunk of the old black Buick with baskets of food, bats, balls, mitts, baby buggy, extra clothes for the boys who are sure to fall into the creek, and sweatshirts in case it gets cold. As he slams the trunk, he can't resist remarking to Mother, "There won't be room for the kitchen sink unless we strap it on the top." "Just be careful of the pie," she pointedly reminds him. All the windows of the car are cranked down, and without a seatbelt in sight we kids are crowded into the back seat with strict warnings that there had better not be any fighting for the short ride to Johnson Park.

This is a long-awaited day! It is the highlight of our summer, being one of its very few picnics! All my classmates will be at the picnic, and we will be able to enjoy an ice-cream cone dipped from a heavy canvas bag packed with dry ice. I remember that one has to stand in the ice-cream cone line for a long time because the ice cream is as hard as a brick, and I'm always a little apprehensive about the hairy-armed man who puts that very arm deep within the bag to dig out the ice cream. But later in the day, the dry ice will be great sport to play around with. I wonder who pays for the ice cream, because we don't.

I want to win a prize this year. I've never, ever won a prize at the church picnic, and how proud I'd be to win just this once. Everyone, even the minister, watches the games, beginning with the toddlers digging pennies out of sawdust and ending with the water balloon-throwing contest by our parents. Even as young kids we know the husbands who don't dare get their wives wet — although they'd like to — and the ones who deliberately throw the waterlogged balloon a little out of range and fast. I am sure that my game will be some kind of running race, either a three-

legged burlap bag race or just flat-out running. I'm a pretty fast runner and I have been practicing running the length of the driveway for several weeks now. But, just in case my game is a ball toss, I have been brushing up on that skill as well. I notice that my brothers have been, too.

The minister, the late Rev. J.A. Heys, presides at the picnic. He is wearing his Sunday suit with a stiffly-starched long-sleeve white shirt, and his ubiquitous bow tie. No one mistakes who is the minister at our church picnic. In the thirteen years of Rev. Heys' ministry at Hope, I never recall it being any different. But, everyone at the church picnic is dressed very neatly, and with most body parts well covered.

We sit at long rows of picnic tables, and one reason I am so anxious to get there early is so that we can set our food on a table next to my best friend, Betty. But Mother has other plans: we will set our table next to those who don't have friends or relatives in the church. How cruel, she implies, to fraternize only with one's friends ... at a church picnic, no less. I don't get it! But Mother is firm in her decision, and so we sit next to people I've never talked to before in my life. It wouldn't have worked out anyway, I find out later, because Betty's mother holds to the same standards as mine does.

After the evening meal, the men and boys hurry to the ball diamond while the women and girls clean up the dishes and debris. It is still early and light out. It is then that the most lasting impression of the church picnic is made on me. After the men leave, a game is announced for the married women. Each woman has to stand by the picnic tables and take turns calling her husband from the ball diamond. The wife whose husband responds to the call by coming back to the picnic area is the winner. To my dying day, I'll never forget those yells. They are loud, pierc-

ing, long-drawn-out calls that would do a Kentucky hog caller honor. No husband comes running. Not one as much as turns around. They have heard those calls before, and know from the strength and intensity of the call that anyone with that much energy can't possibly be hurt. Then, a new, young bride steps up. In a most sweet and dulcet voice, she melodiously sounds her husband's name. To the wonder of us all, he stops in mid-stride, drops his bat, and saunters the distance across the park to see what she wants. I haven't always patterned her example, but I've never forgotten it either.

Sunday morning finds everyone sitting properly in his accustomed pew. A few of the elders carry themselves a bit gingerly, and scattered throughout the congregation there is a broken arm or two; the mothers do look a mite drained, but everyone is starched and clean once again.

It was a great church picnic, a memorable celebration of God's great goodness and the love and unity in this small country church. Even so, I didn't win the race ... again.



For the 32 years my husband and I have been in South Holland, there are certain older members who have never missed the church picnic ... or the school auction, or the twice yearly lectures, or the school graduation exercises, or This is not merely coincidental, but rather, these folk seem to plan their lives around these extra-curricular events. I remember the years when they used to play ball as nimbly as any mountain goat, and bandaged their own children's knees. Now, they take out their lawn chairs and participate vicariously through their children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren. But they haven't stopped attending. They are the much-needed role models

for us and for our children. By their godly example they have shown us that life in the church, the communion of saints, takes precedence over the other more attractive recreations.

Lessons Learned at the Church Picnic:

1. Someone is always faster or smarter. Each of us is but one building block in God's great cathedral.
2. There is a loving, effective way to talk to one's mate.

3. Befriend the lonely, reach out the hand of fellowship to the unlovely. Break out of one's structured little group, and be amazed at the other interesting people in the church. I now get it!

4. It takes united family effort to attend the church picnic. One of life's little ironies is that the less one has to do in preparation for the church picnic (most food is catered at today's church picnics), the less likely one is to attend.

5. The church picnic is a great equalizer. One can go on exotic vacations with one's friends or golf at exclusive clubs with one's cronies, but at the church picnic everyone is the same. We are all reduced to the lowest common denominator. There we sit, row upon row, a great banquet of sinners, saved by grace.

That's what I learned at the church picnic as a child.

Your children are learning their lessons, too. □

That They May Teach Their Children

Prof. Russell Dykstra

The Covenant: The Life of the Preaching*

The covenant of grace is the life of Reformed preaching. Covenantal preaching will be, first of all, *Reformed*—as Reformed as John Calvin. The doctrine of the covenant, it could be said, flowed out of the sixteenth century Reformation. The theologians of the reformation were covenantal—Calvin, Olevianus, Bullinger. Their contemporaries and followers developed the doctrine of the covenant. The theologians of the Netherlands in particular continued the development of the doctrine.

Preaching that is faithful to the covenant must necessarily emphasize the doctrines of sovereign and particular grace (the five points of

Calvinism). The Protestant Reformed doctrine of the covenant is not only perfectly consistent with the "five points," it is, to my knowledge, the only covenant doctrine that is totally consistent with the five points.

The Reformed preacher, therefore, will preach unconditional election. Not an election isolated from the covenant, but election woven into the covenant. That is, that God elects the members of His covenant. In addition, unconditional election means that God sovereignly establishes His covenant with the elect alone, and that, without conditions.

Covenantal preaching will stress particular atonement. Those chosen, covenant people, the elect alone, are redeemed by the blood of Christ, and effectually redeemed. This means that the gospel is not an offer of the covenant to all, nor a general promise to all the baptized. The covenant and the promise of forgiveness are only for the elect.

Total depravity is maintained by the preacher faithful to the covenant. Man neither has, nor can have, any part in the establishment of the covenant. It is unilateral.

Proper respect for the covenant means that grace is irresistible. God sovereignly does save His people and incorporate them into His covenant.

Perseverance of the saints is likewise a necessary part of the covenant. God preserves His people. They do not fall away. His covenant, being eternal, is not broken.

The Protestant Reformed preacher will, of necessity, emphasize the Protestant Reformed distinctives on the covenant, namely that it is unconditional, and that grace is not common, but sovereign and particular and of one kind—saving.

Covenantal preaching not only will be Reformed, it will be *doctrinal*. That follows from the fact that the covenant is essentially theocentric—it is the truth about

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** This is the last part of the text of the address given at the seminary graduation of Nathan Brummel on June 15, 1998. For the first part, see SB July 1998.*

God. The preacher who wants his people to live the covenant of grace will want them to know *God*. That means they must have doctrine! Truth. Every sermon is teaching them about their covenant God, their Savior, in Christ.

Covenantal preaching is also *antithetical*. It repudiates all lies because lies defame the covenant God. Covenantal preaching calls God's people to forsake sin as friends of God; to be holy as God is holy. It commands them to seek God and to love Him with all their heart, mind, soul, and strength. It calls them to forsake the world, not to be friends with the world, because friendship with the world is enmity with God.

In addition, preaching of the covenant is *preaching the cross*. At the cross the Mediator of the covenant realized the covenant in the shedding of His own blood. There the covenant people were adopted. Righteousness was merited for them by Christ. There Christ merited for them eternal life. In the cross, the chosen were reconciled to God.

Thus, preaching directed by the covenant will be a preaching of the *whole counsel* of God. How could it be different? The covenant is the very center of God's counsel. It serves, directly, the glory of God. Such preaching will insist that salvation is sovereign and sure to all the elect, to the covenant people. At the same time, it will set forth the truth that there is no salvation outside the covenant.

The covenant determines the *manner of preaching*. It will be, first of all, *warm and pastoral*, not coldly doctrinal. Preaching is not a lecture on doctrine or a speech on morality. It is rather the speech of God to His covenant people. They hear the voice of the Good Shepherd in the preaching; He whispers to them His secrets (Ps. 25:14).

Covenant-directed preaching is *practical and down to earth*. This is to be expected, for the covenant is the heart of religion—life with

God! The covenant does not leave the believers with a list of do's and don'ts. It does not leave the people with conditions they must fulfill. Rather, it sets forth the way of covenant fellowship with God, namely, obedience, thankfulness, and loving God.

Proper attention to the covenant will yield preaching that is *authoritative*. As is the covenant, so the preaching will be unconditional on the commands of Scripture—the covenant is not an agreement. The Reformed preacher, therefore, does not bring his own word or opinions, but only God's Word. God speaks His word though the ordained preacher. Consequently, the Reformed minister preaches with authority.

Consider also the profound effect that the covenant has on how the minister *views and addresses the congregation*. He addresses them organically as covenant people, not dividing the sermon into a word to the converted, a word to the unconverted, and another word to the "seeking." Surely he does not address them as unbelievers, but as covenant people. They are the "*beloved in the Lord*."

The preacher does not drive the sheep with a rod. Nor is his preaching but impotent pleading. Rather, in the sermons the preacher consciously instructs the covenant children of the Most High God, knowing that grace to obey is conveyed by admonitions.

The covenant and the minister's life in the congregation

God's covenant likewise determines the character of the minister's life in the congregation.

The covenant shapes the work that a Reformed pastor does. Take, for example, his work with the youth of the flock. The pastor seeks diligently to know the youth, to be able to talk with them. He desires to help them in their many trials and heartaches, as well as to share in their joys and triumphs. Certainly he does not avoid them.

He rather looks for ways to work with them and enjoy their fellowship.

In that same connection, teaching catechism is a top priority in his work. It never receives short shrift in the pastor's busy schedule.

Why this special attention to the youth? Because the covenant is with believers and their seed! Because God is pleased to gather His church from the children of believers. Because the youth must know God if they are to live in covenant fellowship with God.

House visitation also has covenantal support. It is not an activity to be evaded or minimized. It is perfectly in harmony with the covenant of grace—fellowshipping together about the Word of God.

However, family visitation is not a mere social visit. Rather, as representatives of the Chief Shepherd, the minister and elders are most interested in the spiritual condition of the home. Are the believers living the truth of the covenant? Do they hear God in the preaching? Do they seek His face diligently in church? Do they obey His Word? In short, are they living and active members of the covenant, or dead and inactive, members in name only?

Conscious of the covenant, the Reformed pastor goes to the sick and sorrowing. The telephone rings in the parsonage. Perhaps it is late at night, or very late in a busy week, when sermons are not finished. Someone is in the hospital, seriously sick, or a member in the congregation is touched by the death of a loved one. The Reformed pastor does not have to be forced to visit—it is the essence of friendship to go! He loves the sheep, and desires to bring comfort from the Word. These people are his covenant friends.

Counseling is guided by the truth of the covenant. The pastor is a shepherd who leads the troubled with kindness. Yet the Word of God and His covenant are

not compromised. Sin is pointed out, and sinners are admonished. Sin, after all, brings God's wrath and cuts the sinner off from covenant fellowship with God.

Furthermore, the covenant prescribes much in the one area that the Reformed preacher deals with most, namely, marriages and family. Husbands and wives will be instructed to live the covenant—the husband loving his wife, as Christ does the church; the wife submitting to her husband, as the church does to Christ.

Divorce is rejected as a solution to the troubled marriage. That because marriage, as the beautiful picture of God's unbreakable covenant, is an unbreakable bond. Thus it follows that remarriage is not an option for those who are divorced, even for those whose spouses have committed adultery or who have sinfully deserted them. Only death breaks the bond of marriage.

The covenant determines the instruction and admonition given to troubled families—how parents are to instruct and discipline their children (in love). That the parents must demand respect from children because parents represent God to the children. How children must behave towards one another. It is all grounded in the covenant!

What rich instruction flows out of the doctrine of the covenant for those who are overcome with doubts. The preacher reminds them, "You had assurance, but now it is gone? But God's covenant is eternal and unconditional! You cannot be lost."

To those who are burdened with anxious care, his word is, "God cares for you. He is your covenant Father."

The covenant guides in the problems between the saints. They are to regard each other with the judgment of love, as believers, covenant people. They are members of the family of God. They *must* settle their differences and live in peace and love.

In addition, the covenant requires that all his life and activity in the congregation be pure and holy. There must never be a hint of evil-doing in the minister's life—no impropriety, no immorality. In covenant life with congregation, the minister entreats an elder "as a father; and the younger men as brethren; the elder women as mothers; the younger as sisters, with all purity" (1 Tim. 5:1-2).

The minister's life with the congregation is marked by friendship. Negatively, it ought never be characterized by animosity. He is not at war with the congregation. Nor may it be dictatorial. He is not constantly seeking to exercise authority, grabbing for power. Additionally, the preacher/congregation relationship is not a business relationship where he signs a contract to do a certain work for a time, or so long as it goes well.

But the relationship is that of godly friendship, the foundation of which is their common unity in Christ—one truth, one love of God, one Spirit (Eph. 4). Together they are members of the body of Christ and of the covenant family of God.

The Reformed minister displays an open love for the congregation, a love that they return. In that love he seeks the advantage of the members of the congregation. They are first. He spends himself for the sheep.

The covenant dictates that the Reformed preacher open his home and family to the congregation, and to the stranger. It is a covenant of friendship.

The Reformed preacher's life is characterized by humility in the sphere of the congregation. These are God's people—of greatest importance. They are the apple of God's eye. God has loved them from eternity. They are the sheep given to the great Shepherd, for whom the Shepherd laid down His life. They are predetermined by God to live in heaven with Him in eternal, blessed, covenant fellowship. He is but one among them,

and the lowliest of them—called to be their servant. A minister is a slave of Christ, called to serve God by serving the people, taking special care for the weak of the congregation.

In all his activities in the congregation, the minister honors God, who alone is worthy of praise. The Reformed preacher emphatically does not want the attention or praise drawn to *him*. The whole purpose of the covenant is that all the glory goes to *God*. A minister who lives the covenant does all things for God's glory.

The covenant and the preacher's life in the world

Finally, notice that the covenant determines how the Reformed preacher carries himself in the midst of the world. If it is true, and it is, that all believers, as members of the covenant, are representatives of God, the minister is supremely so. He lives antithetically. He does not desire honor from the powerful men of the town. He lives spiritually separate. His life reveals his love for God by his obedience. His friends are not the ungodly.

In this world he is a witness both to the blessings of the covenant (the good news of salvation), as well as to the curse to all outside the covenant (warning of judgment). By word and example, without embarrassment, he testifies to the truth of the Reformed faith and walk.

The Reformed preacher is not one who says, "I will live as I please, so long as my conscience is clear with God." He cares about the impression people get from his speech and life—not because he is concerned about the opinions of men, but because he cares what men say about his covenant God!

The Reformed preacher is also friend to the stranger. The covenant determines this. God made us, who were strangers and aliens, to be His friends. The preacher knows this personally and therefore is first in line to welcome the stranger in the

worship service. He is as quick to hold out the hand to the stranger, as he is to shun the company of the ungodly.

In conclusion, take notice that the covenant of grace is not just a doctrine, but a way of life. It is not merely a truth that the minister preaches about, but a truth that governs the whole of his life and work.

It is the central truth of the Reformed faith. What one believes about the covenant will determine also what effect it has on the life of

the Reformed preacher. I charge the graduate to take fast hold of that doctrine. You have a good foundation of covenantal theology. Grow in it. In that way I promise you a good ministry, an exciting and most enjoyable ministry.

This is the particular calling of the faithful Protestant Reformed minister, namely to hold fast to and defend the precious treasure that God has entrusted to us. What a privilege to teach God's people the power, beauty, and glory of covenant life with God.

In it all, however, the Reformed preacher must keep his congregation's eyes focused on the life awaiting us—the full enjoyment of covenant friendship. Remember, too, and this will keep the Reformed preacher humble, that no matter how much we come to know and enjoy this covenant in this life, the full enjoyment in heaven will be better than anything we ever taught the congregation.

Preach, and live, this covenant—the sovereign, eternal, unconditional covenant of grace. □

Ministering to the Saints

Prof. Robert Decker

The Discipline of Officebearers (2)

Article 79 speaks of the procedure to be followed by a consistory when one of its members commits public, gross sin and needs to be suspended and/or deposed from office.¹ In addition to the application of discipline outlined in Articles 71-78 which applies to all members of the church, the Church Order declares that ministers, elders, and deacons who commit "any public, gross sin which is a disgrace to the church or worthy of punishment by the authorities ..." must be suspended and deposed from their office. This is necessary for several reasons:

1. These men hold special offices in the church in which they are called to exercise the authority of

Christ in the way of ruling God's people, ministering Christ's mercies to the poor, and preaching the gospel. Public, gross sin makes them unfit to work on behalf of Christ. They must be removed from office.

2. Because of the sacredness of the special offices and the importance of these offices in the church, unfaithful officebearers cannot and may not continue in these offices.

3. Public, gross sin makes it impossible for officebearers to represent Christ among God's people, to serve as an example to the flock of God, and to warn the saints of the ways of false doctrine and sin.

Article 79 distinguishes between the censure of elders and deacons on the one hand and the censure of the ministers on the other. In the case of an elder or deacon committing public, gross sin the suspension shall be immediate. In the case of the ministers the process is a bit different and longer. It ought to be noted in this

connection that "immediately" does not mean that the offending elder or deacon must be suspended before a careful investigation is carried out. The consistory must be certain that the man in question is indeed guilty of public, gross sin. But when the consistory is certain, the sinning officebearer must be immediately suspended.

This suspension is not necessary in the case of the elders and deacons. The Article stipulates that "the elders and deacons shall immediately ... be suspended or expelled from their office, but the ministers shall only be suspended. Whether these shall be entirely deposed from office shall be subject to the judgment of the classis, with the advice of the delegates of the (particular) synod mentioned in Article 11" (emphasis mine, RDD). No doubt the reason why a minister must first be suspended and may not be deposed without the judgment of the classis and the advice of the synodical delegates is

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that the ministers, while serving in particular congregations, belong to the entire denomination. More on this a bit later. In the case of a sinning elder or deacon, the consistory itself must decide whether to suspend first and then proceed to depose, or simply to depose the offending officebearer immediately. The nature of the sin may be such that the consistory is convinced that the man ought, for the sake of the name of Christ and the reputation of the church, be deposed immediately. In this event there would be no suspension, just deposition.

In either case, that is, whether the consistory decides first to suspend or decides to depose immediately, this must have the approval of the consistory of the nearest church. No consistory may act alone! Suspension and deposition are matters so serious that another consistory must be involved and concur. The fathers were concerned that in matters so serious no mistakes be made, no injustices be done.

The procedure which the consistory must follow is:

1. The consistory makes a decision to suspend or depose its offending elder or deacon dependent upon the approval of the nearest church.
2. The consistory of the nearest church is notified and meets with the consistory in charge of the suspension. The entire case is carefully discussed so that the consistory of the nearest church is thoroughly acquainted with the case and is able to make an informed and correct decision.
3. The consistory of the nearest church then meets separately and comes to its decision.
4. If this decision is to concur with the suspension or deposition, a proper announcement is composed by the consistory and given to the congregation on the next Lord's Day.
5. If, however, the consistory of the nearest church does not concur with the decision to suspend

or depose, and if the disagreement cannot be resolved, the matter must be brought to the classis.

Ministers, according to the article and as noted above, may not be immediately deposed. When a minister commits public, gross sin he must be suspended. This is done by his consistory and with the concurrence of the consistory of the nearest church. In addition, because the ministers serve the entire denomination, all the consistories must be notified of the suspension. When the other consistories are so notified, they are not asked to approve of the suspension, they are simply informed of it. They must recognize the suspension.

Before a consistory may finally depose a minister, the matter must be brought to the classis. At that meeting of the classis, the synodical deputies from the neighboring classis must be present. The consistory must present its decision to depose the minister and clearly state its grounds for that decision to the classis. The classis must give careful consideration to the matter. The classis must take a decision to advise the consistory to proceed with the deposition. The synodical deputies must also agree with the decisions of the consistory and the classis. Only then may the consistory proceed to the deposition. If there is disagreement between the consistory and classis, or if the synodical deputies cannot concur with either the consistory or the classis, the matter must be resolved by the synod.

There are good reasons, in addition to the one cited above, why the classis and the synodical deputies must concur in the deposition of the ministers. The ministerial office is a sacred office indeed. The minister is called to serve in that office for life. Besides, the churches in common through their synod examined him and declared him a candidate for the ministry of the Word and sacraments. The

churches in common concur when he accepts a call. The churches in common must have a voice, therefore, in his deposition from office as well.

It stands to reason that if the officebearer does not repent after suspension and deposition, he must be disciplined according to the steps outlined in Articles 76 and 77.

The extremely difficult question is often asked whether a man who is deposed from office and who repents of his sin can be ordained once more into the same or another office. The Church Order itself does not deal with the question. This may mean that the fathers considered it to be obvious that once a man is deposed he is forever barred from serving in office. Or it could mean that the fathers considered it to be obvious that a deposed man could be reinstated in office if he repented and showed amendment of life.

However that may be, if one compares the list of the "principal, gross sins" which according to Article 80 "are worthy of being punished with suspension or deposition from office," with the fact that ministers, elders, and deacons must be "blameless" and "have a good report of them which are without," the answer would seem to be obvious.² Still more, Article 80 also speaks of "all sins and gross offenses as render the perpetrators infamous before the world, and which in any private member of the church would be considered worthy of excommunication." These considerations, it would seem, point in the direction of answering the question in the negative. Once a man is deposed, he ought never be ordained to office again. □

1 See the *Church Order of the Protestant Reformed Churches*, hereafter, the Church Order.

2 See I Timothy 3:1-13.

The Promise and/or Law

Therefore it is of faith, that it might be by grace; to the end the promise might be sure to all the seed; not to that only which is of the law, but to that also which is of the faith of Abraham; who is the father of us all.

Romans 4:16

There are numerous old sayings which reflect on the tendency of those who have a fault to see that fault as existing in nearly everyone else, while failing to recognize it in themselves. One is reminded of this when reading through Dr. Schilder's little book, *Extra-Scriptural Binding – A New Danger*. This book, being a critique of our *Declaration of Principles*, seeks to demonstrate that this document did not warrant being adopted because it was "not clear" in its formulations. But Schilder does so in terms so often obscure and confusing that one can hardly refrain from recalling that ancient proverb brought to our attention by Jesus, "Physician, heal thyself" (Luke 4:23).

Nevertheless, it is important that we try to understand what Schilder was meaning to say. Both he and Hoeksema were men of exceptional ability, and able communicators, each in his own way — which is perhaps where the problem lay. As deep as was their re-

spect for each other, their theological outlooks were different. Hoeksema was a logician, Schilder a rhetorician; Hoeksema built his ideas through well organized theological thinking, Schilder searched for effective expression; Hoeksema was concerned with finding truth and explaining it, Schilder with establishing moral responsibility; Hoeksema worked to build understanding, while Schilder would make authoritative pronouncements. The result was that, as simply and concisely as Hoeksema sought to lay out the formulation of the *Declaration*, Schilder insisted he could not be sure what it meant. His claim was that, because of weakness in its composition, the *Declaration* was not allowing for what he was convinced had to be allowed, while in fact he and Hoeksema were looking for different things.



The focal point of this problem was in that central portion of the *Declaration of Principles*, to which Schilder directs his primary criticisms throughout. It reads:

- a. All the covenant blessings are for the elect alone.
- b. The promise of the gospel ... concerns only the believers, that is, the elect.
- c. If the *promise* of God is for them (the little children), then the promise has to be *infallible* and *unconditional* and can therefore only concern the elect.
- d. Hence, that promise is surely only

*for the elect.*¹

Now for those familiar with traditional Reformed thinking, these propositions would seem to make perfectly good sense, and, given the Arminian influences of our day, to lay down principles which are well worth being said.

What is dealt with here are the blessings of the covenant as they derive from that basic promise given by God to Abraham in Genesis 17:7: "I will establish my covenant between me and thee and thy seed after thee in their generations for an everlasting covenant, to be a God unto thee, and to thy seed after thee." The point is simple and beautiful. The Lord God appeared to Abraham and promised him that He would always be with him as his God and his friend (James 2:23), as well as with his children after him.

The difficulty is that historical development made it clear that this seed did not include all of Abraham's physical descendants, or even all who received the sign of the covenant; but rather, as the New Testament goes on to explain, this seed was essentially only one, the Lord Jesus Christ (Gal. 3:16), and all those who, by sharing the same faith which Abraham had, are joined to Him (Gal. 3:26-29). Such faith is not something anyone can produce by himself, but it is a gift wrought by God in those He has chosen from eternity (Canons 1:5,6). And this is what the *Declaration* very briefly says: "the covenant blessings are for the elect alone."

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This, however, Schilder insisted, is not in every sense so. There is a very real way in which the blessings of the covenant are for everyone; and his effort to prove this is the central focus of this book.

Schilder begins his effort in this way:

What is the meaning of *are for* in the sentence *the covenant blessings are for the elect alone*? Does it mean lawfully and legally affecting the addressed man to the letter, seizing him and putting him for all eternity under an unremovable claim? Then we say "It is for everybody."²

With this we are given our first insight into Schilder's chief concern, the matter of legality and law, the legal rights and responsibilities of the individual person. To him this is what the covenant is all about: "seizing him and putting him for all eternity under an unremovable claim." Apparently, to the mind of Schilder, it is not friendship which God brought to Abraham, but a legal claim, to his life and that of his children, with rights and responsibilities for all.

And so it is that Schilder, as he continues in the next chapter, would apply this to baptism:

The big question that now appears is: What *happens* at baptism? Do I receive a dogmatic statement: God brings all the elect to salvation? Or am I addressed with a *legal statement*, in which I am personally and individually involved?³

This is what baptism means to him; and it lies at the heart of his controversy with Hoeksema—the meaning and significance of baptism. As far as Schilder was concerned, it has to do with rights and responsibilities, and the fact that they are inalienably tied together. With the rite of baptism, a "*legal statement*" is made with regard to every baptized child. God claims that child for His own, and will

hold him responsible to meet His demands throughout life and into all eternity.

Now there is a certain truth to the fact that God does have such a claim, not just to those who are baptized, but to every child born throughout time and in every land. Their Creator holds a right to them, which includes a responsibility that will never cease, even after the close of time. But is that what the covenant is about? Evidently Schilder thought it is.

But there is another element which appears here almost in passing which we should not overlook. Schilder takes a sneering attitude toward stating of doctrinal truth when he says, "Do I receive a dogmatic statement: God brings all the elect to salvation?" It is as though somehow such would be a repulsive thing. And one wonders. Did Schilder not know what he was doing, for fewer things were closer to the heart of Hoeksema than that. Hoeksema had spent his life seeking out and teaching doctrinal truth to young and old. It was to him the central focus of Christian service and life—as it had been to all of the great Reformers in their time. And now Schilder would snub it off as though of little regard?

And that is not the end. In the next chapter Schilder continues in the same vein:

If the words "*are for*" mean that the promise creates a *legal* connection and acknowledges the already existing connection and also puts the baptized person individually under *legal* claims, then we say the promise is for all.⁴

Once again we have this same thing, a "*legal connection*" and "*legal claim*." It sounds so strange. What was Schilder's fascination with things like that. Then we have to remember that he grew up in a different place and in a different age. His were those days in Europe when great dictators were all the rage, men like the Czars of Rus-

sia, and then Stalin, Hitler, and Mussolini, always confronting the world with the question of who, and what nation, had the right to rule. And in the middle of it all, especially in Schilder's formative years, there was the influence of the great Dutch leader, Abraham Kuyper. For a whole generation Kuyper had worked to mold the minds of the people to his concept of sphere sovereignty, the idea that every person is given a place, a sphere of operation within which he held special rights tied to special responsibilities. And if these responsibilities were kept, men would be given the right to rule in their own sphere, *pro rege*, for the king; but if they did not, they would have failed. To the Dutch of that day it was an idea with endless fascination, and for Schilder as well. Differ as he might with Kuyper's view of presupposed regeneration, there still continued in his heart, apparently, the conviction that this kind of a legal claim was that with which the covenant of God has to do.

And so it continues as he moves further into this book. There Schilder returns to the idea of *promise*, as he writes:

If I understand only *one* syllable of the *gospel*, it is that it has to do with *messages*, not with God's hidden thoughts, but with what He has to *say* to us. In this case it is not spoken by an objective reporter who can produce news of facts and *happenings*, but by an ambassador sent by Him. In front of others, such an ambassador represents his own king with authority. He does not just come to tell something about His majesty, such as when and where he was born, what his family tree looks like, how many children he has, where his residence is, what his habits and hobbies are, in short, news that fills our papers and magazines numbers and facts. Not so *this* ambassador; he comes with official authority as an accredited representative, to do business. He comes not to refer to a truth, but

to say, "This and that is the will of my King. I am appointed to make this known in His name. I do not bring a news report and I do not just communicate facts, but I bring an authoritative word concerning a testament."⁵

Now it is the rhetorician that speaks, concerned not with the content of what is said, but with what authority the speaker says it. No interest here with pleasing words, decorated and garnished verbiage, designed to appeal; Schilder's would be the voice of one having "official authority as an accredited representative" *pro rege*, for the king. Schilder would speak as an ambassador to whom the listeners are required to listen. And that is fine. Certainly with such authority the gospel does speak. But as gospel, as good news, is it not in the fact that God will save those who believe—who are only the elect in the end?

And we could go on, except that there is also here another ironic slur that should not be overlooked. With condescension Schilder speaks of "hidden thoughts" as "spoken by an objective reporter who can produce news of facts and *happenings*." With "something about His majesty, such as when and where he was born, what his family tree looks like, how many children he has, where his residence is, what his habits and hobbies are, in short, news that fills our papers and magazines numbers and facts." And one wonders what is meant. Perhaps, of course, there is validity to such when speaking of earthly kings. Their personal lives are often far less than what one might wish to have known. But here in the covenant it is the Lord God of heaven and earth with whom we have to do, pure and perfect and holy in all of His ways. A whole book, the Bible, He has given to us, filled with news and facts about who He is and what He does, so that, in the words of the

Shorter Catechism, "We may glorify God and enjoy him forever." Is all of this to be sarcastically shoved aside so that simple pronouncements of law may be made?

But Schilder is not through. He goes on to explain further what he has in mind:

In short, when I read of the promise of the gospel then I stick to this leading thought.... I want to read this term *promise of the gospel* as it is used in the Canons of Dort, especially in II, 5, where we can read that the promise of the gospel ought to be announced (this is something different than reading the heading "City News" in the newspaper) and proclaimed (this is something different than giving an objective paraphrase of it) with the demand to repent and believe. I would love to see the Canons of Dort maintained.

They frankly say:

a. The promise comes with the command. This is not a mere news report, mere objective, "hm, hm," but a placing *under God's claim*. No news-cast, such as: apples don't fall far from the tree, or: it is nice weather, or: the earth has two poles, or: God is a simple Being, or: three persons are together one Being, or: a heaven and a hell are coming.

No dogma, no mere statement, but an official address to someone, an approach. An announcement. A proclamation! (*Proponere*). Don't be a proponent of yourself or of your sermon proposal. For *that* proclamation of *your* word has nothing to do with the Canons of Dort II, 5. The preacher must officially present God as the Promiser and Commander in one, in one authoritative message.⁶

And once again there is no dispute, that is, in regard to what the Canons have to say. That the promise of the gospel with this command to repent and believe is to be proclaimed to all nations, no one would ever dispute. But is this what the covenant is about? This is God's word to the nations; while the covenant was given with sign and seal to Abraham, and with him

to all who, as he, did believe. It was a confirmation of love that He would always be there as their friend—hardly a commandment of law.

And one would that that were all, but once again, even more harshly, there comes through that bitter caricature concerning the teaching of facts. Schilder now speaks not just of "reading the heading 'City News' in the newspaper," but he goes on to add, "No news-cast, such as: apples don't fall far from the tree, or: it is nice weather, or: the earth has two poles, or: God is a simple Being, or: three persons are together one Being, or: a heaven and a hell are coming." And one shudders. With one breath he combines such aphorisms as "apples don't fall far from the tree, or: it is nice weather, or: the earth has two poles," with great Bible truths as "God is a simple Being, or: three persons are together one Being, or: a heaven and a hell are coming." These are some of the great truths of the Christian faith, things of which Jesus says, "ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free" (John 6:32).

There is a sadness to that. Here is one who suffered so much for the faith, and spent his life teaching and inspiring the people of God; and did it come to the point that, here so close to the end of his days, he was ready to defend the proposition that pronouncement of law should be substituted for the doctrines of grace as the essence of the covenant of God? One could only wish it hadn't been. □

1 Schilder, Klaas, *Extra-Scriptural Binding — A New Danger*, Inheritance Publications, Neerlandia, Alberta, Canada, p. 88.

2 *Ibid.* p. 89.

3 *Ibid.* p. 89.

4 *Ibid.* p. 90.

5 *Ibid.* p. 136.

6 *Ibid.* pp. 136-137.

Spirit Wars: Pagan Revival in Christian America, by Peter Jones. Mukilteo, WA/Escondido, CA: Wine Press Publishing/Main Entry Editions, 1997. 331 pages. \$18.95 (paper). [Reviewed by the editor.]

Spirit Wars is the second book by the author on the resurgence of pagan religion in America as the revival of the Gnostic heresy, damned by the early church. The first was *The Gnostic Empire Strikes Back: An Old Heresy for the New Age* (P&R, 1992). The *Standard Bearer* reviewed *The Gnostic Empire* in the February 1, 1994 issue.

In *Spirit Wars*, Peter Jones demonstrates that the spirituality and worship of the heathen religions are rampant in the United States. This spirituality is pantheistic: all is god. It is mystical: a religion of feeling (this is the "knowledge" of gnosticism). It deifies man: all is god, but every human is especially god.

Weird as the beliefs and practices of this paganism are to the average American, to say nothing of a Christian, it is effecting tremendous change in the whole of the Western way of life. Jones remarks that "few in the church and the popular culture realize the enormity of the revolution going on around us" (p. 251).

Heathen worship of the gods is openly practiced in, and promoted by, the (nominally) Christian churches. Jones examines the notorious, revealing meeting of women from the liberal Protestant churches in 1993 that was called the "RE-Imagining Conference" (see pp. 142ff.). This is where "Gnosticism" comes in. The ancient heresy attempted to unite Christianity with pagan religion.

Driving the revived paganism in the United States are feminism and perverted sex. In a chilling quotation, Jones cites the feminist Naomi Goldberg:

The feminist movement in Western culture is engaged in the slow execution of Christ and Jahweh. Yet very few of the women and men now working for sexual equality within Christianity and Judaism realize the extent of their heresy (p. 195).

The advocates of heathen worship are wicked. Many are apostates from Christianity; some, like Virginia Mollenkott, are apostates from evangelical Christianity. God has given them over to a reprobate mind. They are also fools. One, a self-proclaimed "ecofeminist lesbian witch" (probably explained by the fact that she got a theological degree from Harvard Divinity School), announces to the world that she experiences "deep spiritual communion (with) her cat."

There is nothing funny about the movement. Peter Jones, a solid Presbyterian theologian, professor at Westminster Seminary in southern California, warns the saints that "we are witnessing the first signs of an assault against the truth of Christ the likes of which the church has never seen before" (p. 257). With the other signs of the return of Christ, including the formation of a "new world order" (which the neo-pagans enthusiastically promote), this sign—apostasy accompanied by lawlessness—points to the nearness of the Day of Christ. Immediately prior to the revelation of Christ must come the revelation of Antichrist (II Thess. 2), the kingdom of the beast.

That Jones does not spell out this significance of the movement is a weakness. Perhaps we are to expect this in the book that is to follow.

A practical warning to Reformed Christians with reading children, as well as to our Christian schools, is that Madeleine L'Engle is one of the revivalists of the "pagan revival in Christian America." L'Engle is a popular writer of books for children. According to Jones, "Madeleine L'Engle judges that the new worldview needs a new god 'who's big enough for the atomic age' since the God of Christ's time 'has deteriorated'" (p. 141). He quotes her uttering this blasphemy: "the paternalistic male chauvinist pig Old Testament God" (p. 183). ■

Princeton Seminary: Faith and Learning, 1812-1868 and *Princeton Seminary: The Majestic Testimony, 1869-1929*, by David B. Calhoun. Edinburgh: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1994, 1996. Pp. xxvi-495 and Pp. xxi-560. Vol. 1 \$35.99, Vol. 2 \$29.99 (cloth). [Reviewed by Prof. Robert Decker.]

Here is a detailed history of what was for over a century a bastion of Reformed/Presbyterian orthodoxy. The first volume contains excellent chapters on Archibald Alexander, Samuel Miller, and Charles Hodge. Likewise volume two contains excellent chapters on Benjamin Breckinridge Warfield and J. Gresham Machen. Calhoun also treats in detail the "mighty battle," as he calls it, between the conservatives and the modernists in the Presbyterian Church, a battle which commenced around the turn of the century. This mighty battle finally resulted in the establishing of Westminster Theological Seminary in Philadelphia by Machen and several of his colleagues in 1929. Interestingly enough, though they were staunch supporters of Machen, Geerhardus Vos, Caspar Wistar Hodge, and William Park Armstrong chose not to join

Machen at Westminster. Said Machen in the main address given at the formal opening of Westminster on September 25, 1929, "Westminster Seminary would endeavor to hold the same principles that old Princeton maintained.... We believe, first, that the Christian religion, as it is set forth in the Confession of Faith of the Presbyterian Church, is true; we believe, second, that the Christian religion welcomes and is capable of scholarly defense; and we believe, third, that the Christian religion should be proclaimed without fear or favor, and in clear opposition to whatever opposes it, whether within or without the church, as the only way of salvation for lost mankind" (v. 2, p 396).

These two volumes, in the opinion of this reviewer, make clear three main points concerning Princeton Seminary. One is that really up until the 1920s the Seminary held fast to Reformed orthodoxy, especially over against the higher critics in Hermeneutics. At the turn of the century through the outstanding work of men like John D. Davis, Robert Dick Wilson, and Geerhardus Vos, Princeton was still

resisting higher criticism, when virtually all of the other prestigious seminaries in America (Yale Divinity, Union Seminary, e.g.) had yielded to the critics. Great emphasis was placed on careful and faithful exegesis of Sacred Scripture using the original Hebrew and Greek languages. Princeton theology was derived from Scripture.

Second, the Princeton faculty was graced by several outstanding theologians. Some of these "big names" are of course A. A. Alexander, Samuel Miller, Charles Hodge, A. A. Hodge, B. B. Warfield, and J. Gresham Machen. These were men strongly committed to the Reformed faith. Warfield told his students that, "A 'Christianity' which can dispense with the immediately supernatural, to which the pre-existence and the proper deity of Christ are unknown, which discards the expiatory work of Christ, and which looks for no resurrection of the body, may readily enough do without the fact of the resurrection of Christ. But when it comes to that, may we not also do very well without such a 'Christianity'? What has it to offer to the sin-stricken human soul?" (vol. 2, p, 249).

Third, however, there was some very "strange fire on Princeton's altars." A. A. Hodge claimed that, "The difference between the best of either class (Arminianism and Calvinism, RDD) is one of emphasis rather than of essential principle. Each is the complement of the other. Each is necessary to restrain, correct, and supply the one-sided strain of the other. They together give origin to the blended strain from which issues the perfect music which utters the perfect truth" (vol. 2, p. 73). If Hodge were right, the Westminster Standards and the Canons of Dordrecht are hopelessly one-sided! D. L. Moody and Ira Sankey were cordially received by the seminary as well (cf. pp. 24-26, vol. 2). In addition to these Arminian influences, several of the faculty, notably Warfield and Machen, were weak at best in their evaluation of evolutionism (cf. pp. 256-257 and 360 of vol. 2).

All in all this is a fine account of Princeton seminary. It's written in a pleasant, readable style as well. Those who wish to learn from the past would do well to read these two volumes on Princeton. □

News From Our Churches

Mr. Benjamin Wigger

Congregation Activities

We received the following note from Rev. R. Miersma, pastor of the Immanuel PRC in Lacombe, Alberta, Canada and decided to include most of it here for you our readers.

"The Immanuel PRC considers it a privilege to share with you our joy in having our own new church building. After worshiping in

rented facilities for ten years, by God's grace, in the year of our tenth anniversary we now have a church building which we can call our own. The first worship services in the new building were held on September 21, 1997. Truly a memorable day. Most of you have never experienced the frustration of having to change the times of services several times a year to suit the needs of the congregation who owns the building. Now we can have our own Psalters and Bibles in the pews, our own literature and books displayed for our own congregation and for evangelism. The

Lord has richly blessed us in that He has given to us, a small congregation of only twenty families, not only a new church building, but also a new parsonage across the parking lot from the church. The pastor and his wife were able to move in just before the 1st of December 1997. As congregation we desire to thank all of you who gave freely and willingly in your offerings for our building fund to help make all this possible. That is a testimony of caring for and sharing with one another, in the body of Christ, unto the benefits of the whole.

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

"We invite you to come to sunny Alberta to visit us and our sister church in Edmonton. After a scenic tour of the Canadian Rocky Mountains you can have the privilege of worshiping with fellow saints on the Sabbath day. We look forward to seeing you."

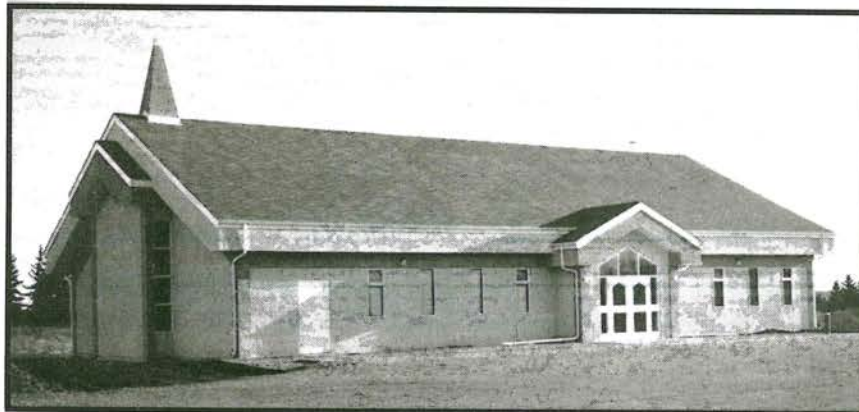
The Bethel PRC in Itasca, IL has been experiencing continued delays with obtaining the necessary building permits needed before construction could begin on their new church building. A major part of this difficulty has been having to deal with more than one government agency for approval of the permits. Thankfully, this now appears to be coming to an end. Their hope was that actual start of the project would begin with ground-breaking on July 2—coincidentally, the same day our First PRC in Holland, MI celebrated the dedication of their newly completed church building.

The now disbanded Trinity PRC of Houston, TX gave their assets to the churches (approx. \$90,000) to use as they wished. Synod decided that \$25,000 should serve as seed money for a new fund for the purchase of homes for our home missionaries, with the balance going to the Emeritus Fund.

Back in April, the consistory of Immanuel PRC in Lacombe, AB sponsored a lecture to promote the cause of having their own Christian school. Rev. R. Miersma spoke on "The Call to Arise and Go Forward." Perhaps partly in response to that lecture, in early June there was a meeting at their church for the purpose of reconstituting their own school society, with the goal of having their own school.

Evangelism Activities

The Peace PRC of Lynwood, IL sponsored an "informal lecture" on June 19 with Rev. Cornelius Hanks speaking on "The P.R.C.: Past, Present, Future." What an opportunity to listen and learn from the wisdom of an old saint who has lived, by God's



Immanuel PRC, Lacombe, Alberta, Canada

grace, through the history of our churches from the very beginning.

The Evangelism Committee of First PRC in Edmonton, Alberta, Canada thanked their congregation for their help recently in distributing over 1000 "Welcome" brochures to mailboxes in the neighborhood around their church. This effort was followed in early June with a Spring Lecture in which Rev. M. DeVries spoke on "The Battle for our Children: vs. Public Policy; vs. the Media and Entertainment; and vs. Family Breakdown."

Denomination Activities

The PR Psalm Singing Choir has recently completed work on their third recording, entitled "Fitting Praises III." They are making it available at a special introductory price of \$6.00 per tape or \$11.00 per CD through August. You may place your order by contacting Mr. Mike Feenstra, 4342 41st St., Grandville, MI 49418 / 616-531-2349, or after August 31 at the Reformed Book Outlet, 3505 Kelly St., Hudsonville, MI 49426 / 616-669-6730.

The addition of ten new stations in the month of June has brought an increase of response to the Reformed Witness Hour, the radio voice of our churches. The group of believers in Pittsburgh with whom our churches are laboring added a "tag" on the end of the program broadcast in their

area. This has resulted in new visitors to their services.

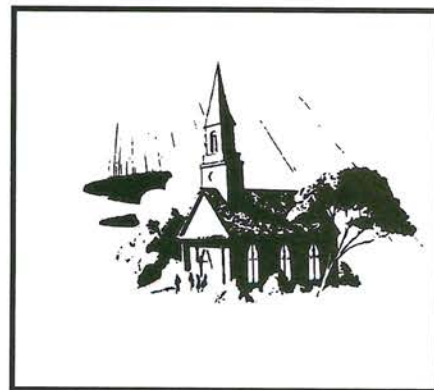
Minister Activities

Candidate Daniel Kleyn, now Pastor-elect Kleyn, has accepted the call he received from the Edgerton, MN PRC. Plans are for him and his wife to finish his summer commitment in Pittsburgh, and then move to Edgerton in August, before being examined at the regular fall classis in Loveland, CO. Candidate Nathan Brummel will be filling Edgerton's pulpit after his brother, Rev. A. Brummel, leaves for South Holland in early July, D.V.

Food For Thought

"That which begins not with prayer seldom winds up with comfort."

—John Flavel □



ANNOUNCEMENTS

RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The council of Hope PRC express their Christian sympathy to Elder Marinus Kamps in the loss of his daughter-in-law,

MRS. PAUL (LISA) KAMPS.

May he and his family find comfort in God's Word, "Blessed be God, ... the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort; who comforteth us in all our tribulation" (II Corinthians 1:3, 4).

Rev. James Laning, President
Harry Langerak, Clerk

WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

On August 24, 1998,

ROBERT and ANNE DRNEK

will celebrate 25 years of marriage. We are grateful to the Lord for giving them to one another and to us. We are thankful for their godly instruction and example to us. May God continue to bless them in their marriage in the years to come.

"Truly God is good to Israel, even to such as are of a clean heart" (Psalm 73:1).

- ☼ Jonathan Drnek
- ☼ Rodney and Elizabeth Kleyn
Sarah and Alyssa
- ☼ Daniel Drnek

Hudsonville, Michigan

RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The Ladies' Society Ruth of Hope PRC express their Christian sympathy to our fellow member, Mrs. Marinus Kamps, in the sudden death of her daughter-in-law,

MRS. PAUL (LISA) KAMPS.

May she and her family find comfort in God's Word, "It is of the Lord's mercies that we are not consumed, because his compassions fail not. They are new every morning: great is thy faithfulness. The Lord is my portion, saith my soul; therefore will I hope in him" (Lamentations 3:22-24).

Rev. James Laning, President
Evelyn Langerak, Secretary

Seminary Convocation

Seminary Convocation will be held on September 9 in First PRC (Grand Rapids) at 7:30 P.M. We urge all to demonstrate their support of the denominational work of training young men to be pastors by attending this program.

NOTICE!!

Classis West of the Protestant Reformed Churches will be hosted by the Loveland Protestant Reformed Church in Loveland, Colorado on Wednesday, September 2, 1998 at 8:30 A.M., the Lord willing. All material for the classical agenda is to be in the hands of the stated clerk thirty days before classis convenes. All delegates or visitors in need of lodging or transportation from the airport should notify the clerk of Loveland's consistory, Mr. Larry Nelson, 617 West 36th St., Loveland, CO 80538. Phone: (970) 667-0952.

Rev. Steven Key,
Stated Clerk

NOTICE!!

Classis East will meet in regular session on Wednesday, September 9, 1998 at the First Protestant Reformed Church, Holland, Michigan. Material for this session must be in the hands of the stated clerk no later than August 10, 1998.

Jon J. Huiskens
Stated Clerk

WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

The Lord willing, on August 2, 1998, our parents and grandparents,

DONALD and BONNIE HOKSBERGEN,
will celebrate their 30th wedding anniversary.

We thank the Lord for their godly example, and the Christian upbringing they gave us. We pray that our heavenly Father may grant them many more years together, and that their marriage may be a reflection of that perfect marriage between Christ, our Savior, and His bride, the church. "Know therefore that the LORD thy God, he is God, the faithful God, which keepeth covenant and mercy with them that love him and keep his commandments to a thousand generations" (Deuteronomy 7:9).

- ☼ Mike and Teresa Potjer
(4 children in glory)
- ☼ Craig and Heather Hoksbergen
Colton, Deanna
- ☼ Kent Hoksbergen
- ☼ Amanda Hoksbergen

Hull, Iowa

On Isaiah 53

Open Thou my mind and heart, Lord, that I may see
The truths and comfort Thy servant brings to us — to me —
Within Thy sanctuary; I confess to Thee:

Mine, mine the need.

Man of sorrows, by Thine own rejected and despised,
Beaten with stripes, bleeding on a Roman cross devised,
Taking on Thyself Thy people's sins, for our peace chastised —

Mine, mine the blame.

Wounded and bruised, He for our iniquities atoned,
Stricken and smitten by Father God. The crowd condoned
The cross, the mockery of the Holy, righteous One; yet I bemoan:

Mine, mine the shame.

Like wandering, stubborn sheep, willfully our way we trod.
Yet, interceding 'twixt His guilty people and the righteous wrath of God,
He hung; for me His life blood flowing from hands and feet unshod—

Mine, mine His love.

Thus He, for His people, died, arose, ascended,
Sits at Father's right hand, by angels now attended,
Calls to Himself in time His own, by Comforter defended;

Mine, mine that glorious home above.

—Hulda J. Kuiper