



**A Reformed  
Semi-Monthly  
Magazine**

# ***The Standard Bearer***

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**Vol. 75, No. 13  
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# Thou That Destroyest the Temple!

*And they that passed by reviled him, wagging their heads, and saying, Thou that destroyest the temple, and buildest it in three days, save thyself. If thou be the Son of God, come down from the cross.*

Matthew 27:39, 40

My words a cause for scorn  
they make,  
The lip they curl, the head  
they shake,  
And, mocking, bid me trust  
the Lord  
Till He salvation shall afford.

**T**hus, centuries before the bloody scene on Calvary was enacted, sang Israel's inspired poet.

Historical circumstances, no doubt, were such that he was able to sing these woeful lines with application to himself. Yet, in principle, he sang because the Root of David was in him. Of that Root he

was, in the midst of all his own suffering and reproach, a prefiguration. And the Spirit of that Root whose shadow he was urged him from within to bewail His shame and suffering.

Now, here on Golgotha, the full reality of the implication of the twenty-second psalm is revealed. The Root of David has come. And, what is more, "His hour" has arrived. Not until "the hour" could the forces of darkness have power over Him. Now He is delivered into the hands of sinners and numbered with the transgressors.

The rapidity with which the history of Jesus' suffering is realized is a sign of the bitterness of the hatred that had so long been restrained in the bosom of the enemies. The powers of darkness, the fury of hell, all the forces of the world are let loose upon Him, and they fall upon Him with a fury that would tear Him asunder. In a few

hours it is all finished. Events follow one another in rapid succession. The way from Gethsemane to Calvary is quickly traversed. They take Him and bind Him, though there is no accusation; they try Him and condemn Him, though there is neither indictment nor testimony; they deliver Him to the fury of the mob, of the world, of the soldiers, though there is no guile; they buffet Him, spit on Him, smite Him with reeds, crown Him with thorns, plow His back with cruel scourge-stripes, though He never did evil; they surrender Him to be crucified in the midst of evil-doers, though they found no guilt in Him!

Now He hangs there, a reproach to the church, to the world, to unnumbered foes, that rejoice in His downfall.

A number of people have followed from Jerusalem. And gradually the curious mob increases in number, both from those that re-

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ceived the fast-spreading news of Jesus' condemnation in Jerusalem and from visitors that arrive from elsewhere on this main road leading from the north to the Holy City. But there is neither pity nor awe in their words as they reveal the thoughts of their hearts in respect to the cross of the Man of Sorrows!

Some stay to behold and mock. Others pass by to cast a casual glance and jeer! All scoff and taunt and spit their venom.

And though they know it not, they are the full realization of this other lamentation of their own inspired singer:

Unnumbered foes would do  
me wrong,  
They press about me, fierce  
and strong,  
Like beasts of prey their rage  
they vent,  
My courage fails, my strength  
is spent.

◆◆◆ ◆◆◆ ◆◆◆

Ha! Thou that destroyest the temple!

The biting sarcasm came from the lips of those who passed by!

Who they were and whence they came we know not. Perhaps they were Galileans. Or perhaps they were from the dispersion. More than likely they had come from far to celebrate the Old Testament Passover in the Holy City and knew not that for this they were just a little too late, seeing that the end of the law was here on Calvary and that the real Passover was being killed on this bloody tree.

But passersby they were, and this speaks volumes!

Cold-blooded natures, that could pass by the horrible spectacle of three fellowmen bleeding to death and writhing in agony, without being nailed to the spot in dread amazement! Superficial natures, that could behold without considering, that could judge without investigating, that could accept

the judgment of their wicked leaders without inquiring, and pass by the scene of Messiah's condemnation, of the cross of Jesus, whom they knew (who did not know Him?) to be one who had traversed the country, now for three years, doing good, healing the sick, curing the blind and the deaf, the maimed and the lame, raising the dead, comforting the sorrowing, feeding the hungry, and preaching the kingdom of heaven! Indifferent natures, that could pass by the death-struggle of the Innocent, of whom no man could recall that ever He had done evil, without calling to account those that committed this murder! Blind followers of blind leaders, who passed on into the city of the shadows, while reality was here!

And thousands like them today, always, following the leadership of superficial rationalism, pass Calvary with a casual glance. They consider not and know not and pass on into the shadows, the shadows of hell!

But, though they consider not, they jeer; and though they pass on without investigation, they judge; and with a wagging of the head they express the only pity they know: the poor fool!

And they rail on Him and blaspheme Him and emphatically subscribe to His condemnation as if they knew.

Ha! thou that destroyest the temple!

Save thyself! Come down from the cross!

If thou be the Son of God!

◆◆◆ ◆◆◆ ◆◆◆

Thou that destroyest the temple!

With this perversion of the truth they seek, with their wicked leaders, to justify the crucifixion of the Innocent!

A lie it was in a double sense.

For, first, the Lord had never said, as they imply, that He would destroy the temple. He said that

He would rebuilt it, if they would destroy it. The declaration was first made after He had cleansed the house of His Father and driven out the thieves and robbers, and the leaders, who profited from this thievery in Father's house, had demanded a sign of His authority to do these things. As a sign of His power and right to cleanse the temple, the Lord had witnessed that He could and would rebuild the temple if they destroyed it. His words had been perverted and, thus perverted, had been brought as a testimony against Him, when He was tried before the High Priest and they found nought wherein to condemn Him. In this perverted form the testimony had been repeated and picked up by the mob, and through them by these passersby, who now jeered: Ha! thou that destroyest the temple!

No, not as a destroyer, but as builder of the temple had He announced Himself!

They are, we are, sinful man is a temple-destroyer. For the temple is the house of God, the dwelling of God with man, God's covenant of friendship. To know Him and to be known by Him, to love Him and to be loved by Him, to be consecrated to Him in willing service and to be blessed by Him, to enter into His communion and dwell in His tent, to walk with Him and to talk with Him — that is the temple of God, of which, after all, the building made with hands, as it stood in the Holy City of old, was but a figure and shadow. That real temple we destroy. For we are by nature covenant-breakers, enemies of God, who mind the things of sin and death, who depart from the ways of God and follow after the Prince of darkness to do his will, always destroying the temple, violating God's covenant, unwilling and unable to dwell in His presence.

And so the Lord had said: Destroy ye this temple!

He would rebuilt it!

Such was the first lie with

which they attempted to seal His condemnation.

Secondly, He had not spoken of the palatial edifice on Mount Zion, which was but the shadow-temple, but of His body, of Himself, for He was the real temple of God. The essence of the temple, God dwelling with us, was realized with and in Him. Was He not Immanuel, the Son of God come into the likeness of sinful flesh? Were not God and man united in Him as never before, in unity of divine person? And, as such, would He not rebuild the house of God that was lying in ruins as far as we were concerned and always kept in its state of desolation by our sins and iniquities?

Was He not rebuilding that temple even then and they did not know it? Indeed, God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself. Here, on the accursed tree of Calvary, the foundation is laid for the new and everlasting temple of God, even while they are destroying the old temple in His flesh, but they realize neither that they themselves are destroying the old house, nor that He is already laying the groundwork for the new.

Presently He will raise the superstructure of that glorious and eternal house of God!

For, having laid the foundation of righteousness, of the righteousness of God in His own precious blood, having fulfilled all obedience in His awful death, He will have license to perfect the temple. From the dead He will be raised, into heaven He will be exalted, with the Spirit He will be filled, and He will raise the temple till it will stand in all its beauty of perfection in the everlasting tabernacle of God with men!

But the leaders, in whose very ears the words were spoken, were blind because of devilish hatred. Their hearts were hard and their eyes were darkened, so that they could not see.

And the superficial passersby, who accepted the judgment of their

wicked rulers, were as blind as they.

They are destroying the temple! And while they destroy it, He is already rebuilding it!

But they know not. And so they jeer, like brute fools signing their own destruction.

Ha! thou that destroyest the temple!

Come down from the cross!

◆◆◆ ◆◆◆ ◆◆◆

Come down!

If thou be the Son of God!

How terrible a mistake is their conclusion as they mockingly express it!

Perverted as is the judgment which they cast in His teeth that He would destroy the temple, so erroneous is the conclusion they sarcastically draw with respect to Him that is suspended before their eyes on the accursed tree of Calvary.

Do not mistake their sarcasm! When they repeat the words of the Tempter in the wilderness and on the pinnacle of the temple: "If thou be the Son of God," they mean that He is not! With the devil it had been an appeal to what the Tempter knew Jesus is: the Son of God. A bold challenge it had been, that He might reveal the power of His Godhead by choosing the way of disobedience to the Father. And who can doubt that behind the jeers of this furious mob of mockers, railing at the Man of Sorrows, there is still the same Tempter who personally attacked the Servant of Jehovah in the wilderness, still taunting Him to forsake the cross, to leave the terrible way of obedience in suffering and come down to show His power? And who does not realize that this jeer was one more dagger-thrust in the heart of the bleeding Savior, aggravating the burden of His passion? But, though this were the purpose of the Tempter, his instruments are not conscious of his designs. They do not intend to make Him reveal His

power, but to declare that He has none. Their purpose is not to provoke Him to come from the cross, but to assert that He cannot. They do not appeal to the power of His Sonship that He might save Himself from the accursed tree, but sarcastically they emphasize that He is not the Son of God!

There is argument in their sarcasm!

He does not come down because He *cannot* come down; and because He cannot come down He is not the Son of God! Thus runs the devilish logic of their bitter jibe!

It is the argument of the blindness of sin!

For being blind to the fact that *they* are destroying the temple, and still affirming that *He* is the destroyer; being willingly ignorant of the truth that He is even now rebuilding the temple they destroy, they cannot possibly conceive of another, of a deeper, of a totally different reason for His clinging to the bloody tree than the one they sarcastically suggest: He cannot come down, He is powerless, because He is not the Son of God!

How terrible is the darkness of sin!

For change now the viewpoint and consider the truth and behold the reality of things, and the fatal fallacy of their sarcastic argument is immediately apparent. Confess that we are the destroyers of the temple of God because of our sins and transgressions and the depravity of our wicked nature; that this temple of God could never be rebuilt but on the foundation of the perfect righteousness of God; that this foundation of the perfect righteousness of God could never be laid but by such a sacrifice as could perfectly satisfy the justice of God; that such a perfectly satisfying and, therefore, atoning sacrifice could never be offered by you and by me, by men, by angels, by any creature, because our blood would not be precious enough; because our death would not be deep enough to pay for the sin committed

against the most high majesty of God; because our wicked nature would never be willing to bring the perfect sacrifice if it could; and because we would be swallowed up in eternal death if we were willing. Then you will also understand that none but the Son of God could bring that sacrifice, could shed that blood, could taste that death, could fully satisfy the justice of the Most High, could lay the foundation for the everlasting tabernacle of God with men!

You realize that it is another power than the might of men and the wicked forces of darkness that keeps this Man of Sorrows on the

bloody tree; that there is another reason than that which is expressed in the sarcasm of these superficial passersby that restrains Him from descending now upon His mockers. The reason is infinite, unfathomable love, the love of God to His own, the love of the Savior to the Father who sent Him and to the people who were given Him.

Then you part with the jeering passersby!

You confess your sin at the foot of Calvary's cross and pray: Lord, if Thou be the Son of God, do not come down! For only Thy blood can atone for my sin! And only in Thy death can the temple be rebuilt

which I destroyed! Save not Thyself, but me!

Nay, rather, you jubilantly repeat the language of faith: He is the Son of God, and because He is He will not come down!

And because, being the Son of God, He did not come down but shed His precious life-blood, He is the rebuilder of the temple, the foundation of which is in His blood!

In that temple He made me a living stone! To the praise of His glory!

Lord, Son of God, thanks that Thou didst not come down!

Hallelujah! □

## Editorial

# A Defense of the Gospel of Grace Against ECT (4)

ECT unites evangelical Protestants and Roman Catholics in the fellowship and work of Jesus Christ. Such union must have a basis. The basis proposed by ECT is the oneness of evangelicals and Roman Catholics in the Christian faith, including the fundamental truth of justification. Therein lies ECT's fatal compromise of the biblical and Reformation doctrine of justification. For Rome's doctrine of justification is heresy—the Galatian heresy of justification by works (see the editorial in the March 15, 1999 issue of the *Standard Bearer*). By uniting on the basis of a common faith, the evangelicals approve Rome's heretical doctrine of justification. Thus the evangelicals surrender the

doctrine of justification that was confessed by the Reformation and that is taught by Holy Scripture.

The matter of the basis of the union and cooperation of evangelicals and Roman Catholics in ECT is intriguing. It is so especially to Christians in the Dutch Reformed tradition and to Presbyterians who are disciples of J. Gresham Machen.

The evangelical leaders in ECT considered making "common grace" the basis of the union. "Common grace" is widely recognized among evangelical Protestants as a beneficent influence of the Spirit of God within unregenerated, ungodly men and women. Although non-saving, it is supposed to preserve the ungodly from total depravity, thus enabling them to do good works in the sphere of everyday, earthly

life. The result is the creation of a good, even God-glorifying culture. Believers are thought to share this sin-restraining, culture-forming grace. "Common grace," therefore, becomes a basis for the union and cooperation of the godly church and the ungodly world in exactly the kind of venture launched by ECT.

The theory of a culture-forming "common grace" that unites evangelical Christians and Roman Catholics in the task of fighting a culture-war and building a decent, if not godly, culture originated with the 19<sup>th</sup> century Dutch Reformed theologian, Abraham Kuyper. Kuyper gave popular expression to his theory in his well-known *Lectures on Calvinism*. He rode the union of Roman Catholics and Reformed effected by his theory of "common grace" into the

office of prime minister of the Netherlands.

The evangelical leaders of ECT are well aware of Kuyper and his "common grace." They are also well aware that, on the basis of "common grace," the renowned Dutchman pleaded for union of Reformed Christians (the evangelicals of his day) and Roman Catholics in a cooperative effort very much like that envisioned by ECT.

Defending ECT's union of evangelicals and Roman Catholics, Charles Colson calls upon Abraham Kuyper. He quotes Kuyper affirming what today is described as "cobelligerency in the culture-war."

At the threshold of this century, the great Dutch Calvinist Abraham Kuyper stated the need succinctly: In war against atheism and pantheism, he wrote, "Rome is not an antagonist, but stands on our side, inasmuch as she recognizes and maintains the Trinity, the deity of Christ," and the other fundamental doctrines. When Catholics battle the church's external enemies, Kuyper argued, Protestants should welcome them as allies (*Christianity Today*, Nov. 14, 1994, p. 136).

Colson appeals again to Kuyper in his 1995 defense of ECT, in the book *Evangelicals & Catholics Together: Toward a Common Mission* (Word; hereafter, TCM).

Our call to cooperation is itself part of our heritage as evangelicals. For example, on the threshold of the twentieth century, the noted Dutch Calvinist, Abraham Kuyper, succinctly described for European Christians the very situation all Christians now face in America: "Now, in this conflict [against liberalism] Rome is not an antagonist, but stands on our side, inasmuch as she recognizes and maintains the Trinity, the Deity of Christ, the Cross as an atoning sacrifice, the scriptures as the Word of God, and the Ten Commandments. Therefore, let me ask if Romish

theologians take up the sword to do valiant and skillful battle against the same tendency that we ourselves mean to fight to death, is it not the part of wisdom to accept the valuable help of their elucidation?" Kuyper's reinvigorated Reformed theology and his development of worldview criticism proved a great influence on later evangelical thinkers, including Francis Schaeffer. In his own struggle against modernism in its manifestations at that time, Kuyper forged a coalition of fellow Calvinists and Dutch Roman Catholics led by Hermanus Schaeppman. Together, they helped bring moral and social reform to the Netherlands ("The Common Cultural Task: The Culture War from a Protestant Perspective," pp. 38, 39).

Colson's appeal to Abraham Kuyper is effective to silence the objection to the union of evangelicals and Roman Catholics in ECT on the part of all those who embrace Kuyper's "common grace." Those who regard Kuyper's *Lectures on Calvinism* as the authoritative guidebook for cultural Christian life cannot object to the union and cooperation of evangelicals and Roman Catholics in ECT. Indeed, those who are committed to the cooperation of believers with avowed *unbelievers* in forming a godly culture can hardly object to cooperation with Roman Catholics.

Colson also marshals J. Gresham Machen against the detractors of ECT. This shuts the mouth of many conservative Presbyterians. Also Machen acknowledged a certain oneness of Rome and "devout Protestants." Having appealed to Kuyper, Colson continues:

A generation later, here in America, another great Reformed theologian, and a courageous defender of orthodoxy against modernists within his own Presbyterian Church and the cultural elite at large, also advocated a theological alliance with Catholics against

the advancing influence of modernist doubt, skepticism, and relativism. He was J. Gresham Machen, a professor of theology at Princeton Seminary and one of the foremost champions of the Reformed tradition of his generation (TCM, p. 39).

Colson then quotes Machen from the Presbyterian's *Christianity and Liberalism*:

How great is the common heritage that unites the Roman Catholic Church, with its maintenance of the authority of Scripture and with its acceptance of the great early creeds, to devout Protestants today! We would not indeed obscure the difference which divides us from Rome. The gulf is indeed profound. But profound as it is, it seems almost trifling compared to the abyss which stands between us and many ministers of our own church (cited in TCM, pp. 38, 39).

Nevertheless, Colson and his evangelical cohorts *reject* "common grace" as the basis for the union and cooperation of ECT. The reason is not that they oppose the doctrine of "common grace" as such. Rather, they judge that "common grace" is an inadequate basis for such a weighty work as ECT has in view. Fighting the demonic powers now unleashed in North America and then forming culture after a godly pattern are a monumental task. For such a titanic struggle and heavy labor, "common grace" is far too frail and shallow a basis.

Explaining why Christians cannot "simply forge political alliances with Catholics . . . on the basis of common grace," Colson writes:

ECT calls all orthodox believers to unite on the great truths of the faith against both secular modernism and theological liberalism. To see our task as merely forging political alliances, based on common grace, is to miss the gravity of the conflict we face and to deprive us of our best weapon.... Our best weapon is the distinctiveness of

Christian truth, expressed in unity by all true believers. The biblical ethic is unique: It does not merely prescribe a set of rules, it also promises the power of the indwelling Holy Spirit to overcome our sin. This is the power that enables Christians to stand their ground on the cultural battleground. In the abortion debate we have seen how quickly mere political allies can flee. Common grace does not keep soldiers in the trenches (*Christianity Today*, Nov. 14, 1994, p. 136).

Colson makes the same argument in *TCM*:

While cooperation on the basis of common grace might suffice for merely political alliances among different religious communions, it can not suffice in reestablishing Christian influence in our increasingly secular and even increasingly hostile culture. Indeed, the urgent task before all Christians today far transcends victories in political campaigns. Our task is nothing less than to articulate convincingly the biblical worldview to a culture awash in nihilism and hedonism (p. 37).

Surely, Colson is right in finding "common grace" completely inadequate for the task of fighting the culture-war and forming a godly culture in North America at the

end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Colson has insight into what is really happening in North America, indeed in all of Western civilization, today. He understands the nature of the fearful struggle of light and darkness. He knows what power is required for the church of Jesus Christ to withstand the pressures of our time and then victoriously to promote the kingdom of God.

This insight is lacking in those Reformed theologians who continue calling us to engage in the great battle in our culture on the basis, and with the power, of "common grace." Do not these Reformed theologians see, not even yet, that the struggle of the church and believer is with the nearly fully developed kingdom of the beast?

Why, even an admitted unbeliever like Robert H. Bork sees this, as his recent, grim *Slouching Towards Gomorrah* (HarperCollins, 1996) shows.

To send us off into this war armed with, and grounded upon, "common grace" is like sending a soldier onto a modern battlefield with a pop-gun.

We need the invincible steel of the truth of the Word of God, wielded, consciously, in the power of the (special) grace of God in Jesus Christ. The basis both of the warfare and of the constructive work of the people of God today

is, and must be, the *gospel*.

Even if there were such a thing, such a spiritual power, as "common grace," Christians today must reject it, as David once rejected the armor of Saul. It is unsuited for the battle of the LORD against Goliath of Gath.

Colson, the Baptist, sees this clearly. He puts our Reformed theologians, still determined to outfit themselves in "common grace" (which has accomplished no victory, cultural or otherwise, in the past 100 years), to shame.

ECT grounds itself, not in "common grace" but in the faith.

But exactly this constitutes the compromise of the gospel by the evangelicals of ECT. For ECT affirms oneness in the faith of evangelicals and Roman Catholics. More specifically, it affirms oneness of evangelicals and Roman Catholics in the doctrine of justification.

It affirms the spiritual oneness of evangelicals with Roman Catholics, whose doctrine of justification is the heresy of righteousness by the will and works of the sinner.

This is fatal compromise of the truth of justification.

And this is the loss of the gospel of grace. □

— DJE  
(to be cont.)

Only by blood could atonement be made  
To wash foul sins from the soul.  
No other offering could cover our guilt,  
Purify, cleanse, and make whole.

Blood of bulls, goats, and rams would not suffice,  
Though some were offered each day.  
God's only Son's precious life-blood was spilt,  
Our many sins on Him lay.

How can we thank Thee, Lord, for that great gift,  
Christ's precious blood freely given;  
We'll praise Thee now and eternally raise  
To Thee, our glad hymns in heaven.

*Standard Bearer*, 1929

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# Can Advocates of Universal Grace in the Preaching Defend Calvinism? (or, The Essential Oneness of Arminianism and the "Well-Meant Offer")

## [A Review Article]

*The Grace of God, The Bondage of the Will*, ed. Thomas R. Schreiner and Bruce A. Ware, vol. 1: *Biblical and Practical Perspectives on Calvinism*; vol. 2: *Historical and Theological Perspectives on Calvinism*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 1995. 521pp. \$16.99 per volume; \$29.99 the set (paper).

In 1989 a number of prominent, nominally evangelical theologians and philosophers published a vigorous defense of Arminianism, *The Grace of God, The Will of Man: A Case for Arminianism* (ed. Clark H. Pinnock, Grand Rapids: Zondervan). In defending traditional Arminianism, the authors frankly acknowledged that the implication of the theology of free-will is the rejection of the Christian God. The God of Arminianism is always responding to man in history and is, therefore, always in the process of becoming. The book expressly rejected God as omnipotent, omniscient, immutable, and sovereign.

The authors suffered no timidity in assailing Calvinism. Enthusiastically, they resurrected all the old slanders against Calvinism. Editor Clark Pinnock lamented "how morally loathsome the doctrine of double predestination is." In a chapter, "The Biblical Doctrine of Election," William G. MacDonald charged that the God of Calvinism's doctrine of predestina-

tion (that is, the God of Romans 9) is a "potentate like the Muslim God, who loves most to impose his will."

### Responding to "Goliath's" Challenge

The review of this work in the *Standard Bearer* (Dec. 1, 1989, pp. 115, 116) concluded, "It will be very interesting to see who among the Reformed and Presbyterians will have the courage to take up the challenge of this 'Goliath' and present the case for Calvinism." The two companion volumes, *The Grace of God, The Bondage of the Will*, would play David to *The Grace of God, The Will of Man*. As the title shows, the two-volume answer challenges the beast of Arminianism in its lair—the will of man—in agreement with Luther's decisive condemnation of the theology of free-will in his *The Bondage of the Will*.

Volume one demonstrates the foundation of the theology of divine sovereignty by exegesis of Scripture, as well as showing the practical application of this theology to the life of the church and believer. Included are chapters on "The Sovereignty of God: Case Studies of the Old Testament"; "Divine Election in the Gospel of John"; "Does Romans 9 Teach Individual Election unto Salvation?"; "Are There Two Wills in God?";

"The Meaning of Foreknowledge"; "Does Divine Sovereignty Make a Difference in Everyday Life?"; "Prayer and Evangelism under God's Sovereignty"; and others.

Contributors to the first volume include Raymond C. Ortlund, Jr.; Thomas R. Schreiner; John Piper; Jerry Bridges; Edmund P. Clowney; and others.

The second volume addresses various theological, philosophical, and historical issues in the controversy between the theology of grace and the theology of man's own will. These include "Grace, Election, and Contingent Choice: Arminius's Gambit and the Reformed Response," by Richard A. Muller; "Augustine, Luther, Calvin, and Edwards on the Bondage of the Will," by John H. Gerstner; "John Wesley's Contention with Calvinism: Interactions Then and Now," by Thomas J. Nettles; "The Place of Effectual Calling and Grace in a Calvinist Soteriology," by Bruce A. Ware; "The Love of God: Universal and Particular," by J. I. Packer; "Does Middle Knowledge Solve the Problem of Divine Sovereignty?," by J. A. Crabtree; "God, Freedom, and Evil in Calvinist Thinking," by John S. Feinberg; and others.

The books are encouraging. The truth of divine sovereignty still has some defenders. They are in strategic, sometimes surprising places. Raymond C. Ortlund, Jr.,

of Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, proves by sound interpretation of several Old Testament passages that the Old Testament teaches "the sovereign freedom of God in his dealings with man" (p. 25). He exposes the Arminian explanation of the passages as a reading into the passages of a "wrongheaded" system of biblical interpretation.

Thomas R. Schreiner, of Bethel Theological Seminary, shows by careful work with the text itself that Romans 9 teaches election of individuals to salvation. Schreiner is refuting the contemporary exegesis that explains Romans 9 as merely the choice of Israel as a nation unto a certain service of God in history.

Jerry Bridges, of The Navigators, has a fine little piece in the section of volume one that applies Calvinism's confession of God's sovereignty to the life of the saint. By an observant reading of Isaiah 5:27, he extends God's absolute sovereignty to a shoelace.

Outstanding are the articles in volume two by Richard A. Muller, of Calvin Theological Seminary, and John H. Gerstner, for many years professor at Pittsburgh Theological Seminary.

### **Arminian Theology Laid Bare**

With impressive scholarship, Muller establishes that Arminius' doctrine of predestination was that of a universal will of salvation dependent upon the (foreseen) free-will of the sinner. It was not a moderating of Beza's allegedly scholastic supralapsarianism. Consistent with conditional predestination, God's calling by the gospel, for Arminius, was the gracious offer of salvation to all alike on the condition of faith.

Faith must intervene between the universal love of God for the world and the application or effecting of the promise of salvation. All human beings are, therefore, genuinely offered the promise of

salvation on the condition of repentance and faith—so that even those who do not ultimately believe "may be admonished of their duty, and may be invited and incited to faith and conversion" (vol. 2, p. 262).

At the heart of Arminius' doctrine of salvation lay the error of two contradictory wills in God. With one will, He wills the salvation of all alike. With the other will, which has finally taken into account men's acceptance or rejection of the offered salvation by their free-will, God wills the salvation only of some.

From the Reformed perspective, there is a far deeper problem in the Arminian contention that God wills the salvation of all people and that the salvation of some relates only to the acceptance or the rejection of God's grace. The Reformed of the seventeenth century noted this problem as the untenable hypothesis of contradictory wills in God: Arminian theology claimed that God antecedently wills the salvation of all people but consequently wills not the salvation of all, but only of some, on the grounds of certain conditions (vol. 2, p. 273).

Thus, "the Arminian God ... is either ineffectual or self-contradictory" (p. 278).

Muller judges, correctly, that this theology of Arminius is "the basis of much Protestant soteriology" today. But this theology is "little more than the recrudescence of the late medieval semi-Pelagianism against which the Reformers struggled. It (*sic*) tenets are inimical to the Pauline and Augustinian foundation of Reformed Protestantism" (vol. 2, p. 277).

In contrast to Arminian theology, Muller outlines the corresponding doctrine of Reformed theology. The one electing decree of God is particular and unconditional. There is no contradictory will in God for the salvation of all. Quoting the Reformed theologian

Riissen, who represents the Reformed consensus, Muller charges the notion of contradictory wills in God with folly.

Who ... would be so foolish as to attribute such wills to God? According to this doctrine God genuinely wills that which he knows will never happen, indeed, what he wills not to bring about (vol. 2, p. 274).

There are legitimate distinctions regarding God's will. One is that between the will of decree and the will of precept. Another is that between the hidden will and the revealed will. But these do not involve positing two contradictory wills in God.

### **Unfinished Business for Reformed Theology**

Muller's superb analysis of the issue between Arminian free-willism and the (Calvinist) gospel of the sovereign will of God confronts all would-be defenders of Reformed theology with a glaring piece of unfinished business. This is the widespread acceptance among professedly Calvinistic theologians, churches, and organizations of the theology of the "well-meant offer of the gospel." By this is meant, precisely, the teaching of universal grace in the preaching of the gospel. Whereas in the decree of election God is gracious only to some, in the gospel He is gracious to all without exception. On the theology of the "well-meant offer," God sincerely desires to save many whom He does not sincerely desire to save in the decree of election.

How does the theology of the "well-meant offer" differ from Arminius' theology of a "prevenient grace of God ... offered to all and ... not irresistible" (vol. 2, p. 261)? How does the theology of the "well-meant offer" with its fundamental, admitted tenet of two contradictory wills in God differ from the two-wills-doctrine of Arminianism?

Before God on whose behalf all good theology is done and at the bar of sound, honest, theological scholarship, it is intolerable that Reformed theologians studiously avoid this issue by silence or glibly dismiss it with the slogan, "hyper-Calvinism!"

### Gerstner on the Bondage of the Will in Church History

John H. Gerstner contributes a learned, informative, historical chapter on the views of Augustine, Luther, Calvin, and Edwards on the bondage of the will. All five of these worthies (I include the historian himself) agree that the will of the fallen sinner is enslaved to Satan and sin. They agree also that this truth is basic to the gospel of salvation by grace, as indeed it is.

Gerstner gets off a memorable description of Luther:

Among our four champions of an enslaved will that only grace can liberate, Luther is clearly the least lucid though perhaps the most fervent. While the others elucidate and answer problems raised against this central doctrine, Luther swallows them all, God having given him a strong stomach. Grace is necessary and grace is sovereign and that is that (vol. 2, pp. 285, 286).

In the end, does not every one who knows salvation from sin in the blood of Christ come down with Luther? "Grace is necessary and grace is sovereign and that is that!"

### Three Weaknesses of the Defense

There are three weaknesses in this extended defense of God's sovereignty in salvation that no review may ignore. First, there is a prevailing sentiment that Arminianism, although defective, is yet a valid form of the gospel. The introduction presents Calvinist theology as merely "the most satisfying approach ... to the doctrines of grace" (vol. 1, p. 17).

Robert W. Yarbrough concedes

that "modified Arminianism ... concurs substantially" with Reformed theology. Regardless of the differences, Yarbrough pleads for tolerance of Arminianism in view of the supposedly greater threat to the gospel today from liberal modernisms and postmodernisms (vol. 1, pp. 60, 61). Arminianism is not seen, and condemned, as "another gospel, which is not another" (Gal. 1: 6, 7).

The tolerance shown Arminian theology in this defense of Calvinism stands in stark contrast with the hatred and contempt displayed toward Calvinism by the defenders of Arminianism in Pinnock's *The Grace of God, The Will of Man*.

A second weakness is the conviction of many of the writers that God loves all humans without exception and desires to save all. It is not evident in a majority of the writers that their zeal for election outstrips their zeal for the notion of a will of God for the salvation of all without exception.

Running throughout both volumes is the theme of two contradictory wills in God. This is the very teaching that Richard Muller both charges as false, foolish doctrine against the Arminians and exposes as opposed to the Reformed tradition.

The doctrine of a desire of God for the salvation of all and, therefore, the notion of two contradictory wills in God are laid down by the editors as axiomatic already in the introduction. "God chooses only some to be saved, and yet there is also a true sense in which he desires the salvation of all" (vol. 1, p. 17).

John Piper devotes an entire chapter, the fifth in volume 1, to arguing that God has both a will of election and a will to save all, and that this self-contradiction does not disclose Him as the God of utter confusion. Piper "affirm(s)" with John 3:16 and I Timothy 2:4 that God loves the world with a deep compassion that desires the salvation of all men" (p. 130). The

love of John 3:16 is God's love of *agapee*, the love that gave the only-begotten Son in the incarnation and cross. The desire of this love—*this* love—according to Piper, is the will of God for the salvation of all.

This is contradiction indeed! God gave Christ in incarnation and atonement for some only, but God gave Christ in incarnation and atonement for all without exception. And this, says Piper, is Calvinism's understanding of the "offer of salvation to all" (p. 127).

J. I. Packer agrees: "God in the gospel expresses a bona fide wish that all may hear, and that all who hear may believe and be saved (I Tim. 2:3-6; cf. 4:9-10)" (vol. 2, p. 419).

The doctrine of a love of God for all in the gospel, with its desire on God's part for the salvation of all, is Arminianism's teaching of universal, resistible grace in the gospel. It is this *as such*. It is this *on its very face*. It is also the abandonment of the sovereignty of God. The God of a loving desire to save everybody is a God of an unfulfilled, frustrated will. He will be eternally unhappy, so long as one of those whom He loves and desires to be with Him in heaven remains in hell. This is not the God of the Bible, who does all His pleasure.

The third weakness is the refusal of almost all the writers to confess, defend, and explain reprobation. Indeed, there is almost complete refusal to *mention* it. One would gather from these books that the Reformed tradition, Reformed theologians, and the Reformed creeds know nothing of an eternal decree appointing those not chosen in the decree unto eternal perdition.

Donald J. Westblade does assert that Scripture teaches reprobation, but he is an exception (vol. 1, p. 84). J. I. Packer forthrightly eschews the doctrine of reprobation. With appeal to Anglican Article 17, he recommends "bypassing debates about reprobation."

What he intends is the virtual denial of reprobation (vol. 2, p. 417). But Calvin taught us that without reprobation there can be no election:

The human mind, when it hears this doctrine (predestination—DJE), cannot restrain its petulance, but boils and rages as if aroused by the sound of a trumpet. Many professing a desire to defend the

Deity from an invidious charge admit the doctrine of election, but deny that any one is reprobated.... This they do ignorantly and childishly, since there could be no election without its opposite reprobation (*Institutes*, 3.23.1).

The Canons of Dordt rightly present reprobation as one decree with election (I/6).

An election that “bypasses” reprobation is not biblical election. How can theologians defend the sovereignty of God in salvation against the Arminian assault without biblical election?

This third weakness accounts for the other two.

Together, the three weaknesses vitiate the books’ defense of sovereign grace. □

## Letters

### In Defense of Universal Salvation

I saw your comments on Jan Bonda’s book, *The One Purpose of God: An Answer to the Doctrine of Eternal Punishment*, in a newsletter that I regularly receive (see “Universalism in the Reformed Churches” in the August, 1998 issue of the *Standard Bearer*).

The newsletter is “Saviour of All Fellowship” (Jan., 1999). About your review article on Bonda’s book, the newsletter remarks:

We were interested in a review of Jan Bonda’s book, *The One Purpose of God* (Eerdmans, 1998), by David J. Engelsma of the Protestant Reformed Church.... The Protestant Reformed Church tries to maintain

the position that Christ died for the elect only, which has led them to limit the “all” of I Timothy 2:4 and similar passages to less than all descendants of Adam. Professor Engelsma uses Bonda’s book as a warning to compromising Calvinists. He admits that Bonda’s conclusion (universal salvation) is the only logical one if passages like I Timothy 2:4 and Romans 11:32 refer to everyone without exception.

I am a member of the Christian Reformed Church, but differ in my theological views. The main differences are:

- 1) universal salvation after the judgments;
- 2) soul sleep (where are the six million holocaust Jewish victims

now? choices: heaven, hell, grave; I and the Bible pick the last);  
3) premillennial view of prophecy.

I am sending you a few pamphlets on alternate views of the end. Not that you are going to change. Do this later. Most (Christian Reformed) ministers reveal only after retirement how they interpret Scripture. This is safer.

I am a retired language teacher, born in (you can guess) the Netherlands.

Walter Vander Beek  
Palmyra, NY

### Response:

Universalism in the Reformed churches!

— Ed. □

## Marking the Bulwarks of Zion

Prof. Herman Hanko

# Nestorius and an Unholy Squabble About Christ (2)

### Introduction

In the last article we left Nestorius in the high office of patriarch of Constantinople. He thought it his business, from the very beginning of his rule, to root out heresy in whatever form it would take; and he was utterly

ruthless in his efforts. That is, he was totally impatient with any heresy except the one against which Augustine, bishop of Hippo, was fighting, the heresy of Pelagianism. He gave comfort and support to two men who had been condemned in Western North Africa for teaching the free will of man.

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So we may sum up Nestorius as a thoroughly unlikable office-bearer in the church of Christ. He was gifted to a considerable extent with ability to learn and with wide theological knowledge. He was a powerful orator and effective preacher. He was entrusted with a position of great responsibility. But, rather than use his gifts in caring for the sheep Christ had placed under him, he saw his sole work to be the rooting out of every idea which he deemed heresy, and he did so with vehemence and ruthlessness. He became a rather nasty man.

I also mentioned, though in passing, that Nestorius was on a personal crusade to get rid of the term he hated so much: *theotokos*. The term was applied to Mary, the mother of the Lord, and meant to honor her as "the mother of God." He set about this with a vengeance.

It is not so easy to determine exactly why Nestorius hated the term so much. One reason was that he was deeply opposed to a "Mary cult" in the church. The cult was to be found chiefly among the monks in their waste desert places, and it was intended to lead to the worship of Mary because of her exalted position in heaven. Another reason was, it seems, his pride. The church was deeply divided over the use of the term when Nestorius came to office, and many looked on him as one who could, with his sound and practical judgment, unite the church once again by finding common ground between those who hated the term and those who wanted it.

But the most serious reason for the opposition of Nestorius to the term *theotokos* was his hatred of the doctrine which the term implied and which became the real issue in the controversy.

#### Nestorius' View of Christ

While the great council of Nicea (325) had settled the matter of the divinity of our Lord, it had not said very much about Christ's

human nature. In what sense was Christ "like us in all things"? And how was it possible for Christ to be both "very God of very God" and "like us in all things" at the same time? Those were the burning issues. Apollinaris had given his opinion and had been declared heretical. It was now Nestorius' turn.

Nestorius did not doubt the absolute divinity of Christ, nor did he in any sense deny it. He was also persuaded that Christ was indeed fully human, except that Christ did not sin. But when he was asked about the relation between Christ's humanity and His divinity, he erred badly. He claimed (and this was because of his opposition to the term *theotokos*) that the human and the divine were united in Christ in much the same way as a man and a woman are united in marriage. Husband and wife become "one flesh," an expression which defines their unity; but they remain distinct and separate individuals.

So the union was a *moral* union only, not a real union of person. Nestorius liked to speak of Christ's human nature as the "temple" in which dwelt the divine nature. He refused to accept the idea that Mary was the mother of God, and spoke of her as the mother of a man only. He used the rather strange expression: "God passed through Mary's womb"; but Mary was in no sense God's mother.

This error of speaking of the union of Christ's two natures as a *moral* union implied (though probably Nestorius never said it in so many words) that Christ had two persons: a human person and a divine person. His divine person was the person of the Son in the holy Trinity, but his human person was born of Mary. Two persons were united in Christ, much like two persons are united in marriage.

This would, of course, never do. And the church recognized it.

We might mention in passing that the error of Nestorius is rela-

tively common today. Two instances of this come to mind.

I recall hearing a radio speaker some years ago discussing the temptation of Christ. He was puzzled by the question how Christ's temptation could be real if Christ could not sin. He solved the riddle by saying that Christ could not sin in His divine nature, but He could sin in His human nature. As he developed that idea, it became clear that he believed that Christ was two persons, a human and a divine. The human person could sin, but the divine person could not. The question that came up in my mind was this: Could our Lord Jesus Christ, in any sense at all, sin? That is preposterous.

The second instance of Nestorianism has to do with the error of the well-meant offer of the gospel. One theologian, whose writings I have in my file, defended the well-meant offer with the following line of reasoning. In His human nature, Jesus was under the law. The law requires that we love all men as our neighbors. In His human nature Jesus loved all men; although, of course, in His divine nature He loved only the elect. He was correctly charged with Nestorianism.

#### The Intervention of Cyril

Nestorius' opposition to the idea of Mary as the mother of God aroused fierce opposition to him and to his views. If you would like to have some idea of how strong Mariolatry was already in the days of Nestorius then consider a quote from a sermon of one of the bishops in Constantinople who did not agree with Nestorius and who defended the term *theotokos*.

[Mary] is the spotless treasure-house of virginity; the spiritual paradise of the second Adam; the workshop in which the two natures were annealed together; the bridal chamber in which the Word wedded the flesh; the living bush of nature, which was unharmed by the fire of the divine birth; the

light cloud which bore him who sat between the cherubim; the stainless fleece, bathed in the dews of heaven, with which the Shepherd clothed his sheep; the handmaid and the mother, the Virgin and Heaven.

So violent did the opposition to Nestorius become that he was forced to call a synod in Constantinople in 429 which was firmly under his control and which followed his directives. That synod declared his views correct and deposed some of the more violent members of the clergy who opposed Nestorius.

But that synod was not by any means the end of the battle. The controversy increasingly involved the entire Eastern church, especially the church in Alexandria, over which Cyril ruled. Alexandria was in Egypt. Egypt, with its hot and dry climate, had been the womb of monasticism, and the majority of monks were found there. It is not surprising that Mariolatry was strong there and Mary was revered as the "mother of God."

Cyril was (it cannot be denied) the defender of orthodoxy in the struggle and the chief opponent of Nestorius' heresy. Why he chose to put his nose into affairs in Constantinople is another matter. Cyril was, in comparison with Nestorius, the greater and more profound theologian. He was also a man of lower character. He was a vain and haughty man who loved the trappings of his office. But worse, he believed and put into practice the adage: The end justifies the means. He stopped at nothing to defeat Nestorius and considered any method of attack to be justified by the rightness of his cause.

Other factors were involved in what became a bitter war between these two. Alexandria was also a patriarchate in the eastern church, and the rivalry between Alexandria and Constantinople for supremacy added fuel to the controversy. But,

in any case, Cyril took it upon himself to correct Nestorius and began what became a rather lengthy correspondence. As the correspondence continued, it soon became violently bitter and brought no solution of any kind. Cyril took the opportunity to write to many other bishops throughout the church, filling them with evil stories about Nestorius and the horror of his heresy.

Both Nestorius and Cyril appealed to the emperor for help, but Nestorius, friendly to the emperor and a frequent visitor to the imperial court, gained the emperor's approval. In disgust, Cyril appealed to the pope, who was elated that his supreme jurisdiction in the church was so recognized. The pope called a synod in Rome which decided to excommunicate Nestorius unless he retracted his views within ten days of the receipt of the synod's decision.

I suppose it is necessary to tell a bit more concerning the ugly conflict. Cyril took it upon himself to execute the papal decree, and so he issued, on his own, the bull of the excommunication of Nestorius. This solved nothing. The two spent the next years excommunicating each other and hurling anathemas at each other, while both tried in every way to gain the support of the populace.

It all culminated in an ecumenical synod held in Ephesus (not too far from Constantinople, although on the other side of the Bosphorus) in 431. It was a strange synod. For one thing, the great Augustine had been asked to preside. But he could not, for God took him to heaven in 430. One wonders what would have happened had he been there. I suspect that God made it impossible for Augustine to come because the whole controversy was an unholy mess.

For another thing, a large group of bishops from the eastern Mediterranean (Syria and Palestine) were late for one reason or another. Most of them were sup-

porters of Nestorius. The delegates waited fourteen days and then met in solemn session. Nestorius was there, but the wave of opposition to him was so great that he needed police protection. Cyril was also there with a large number of Mary-worshiping monks. The synod condemned Nestorius and his views in this way: "The Lord Jesus Christ, by Nestorius blasphemed, has ordained by this most holy synod that the Nestorius above named be excluded from the episcopal dignity, and from sacerdotal fellowship." Because it met without a large contingent of late bishops, the synod has gone down in history as "The Robbers' Synod."

No sooner had the synod passed its condemnation than the other bishops arrived. But it was too late. The synod had spoken. But this did not deter Nestorius' supporters. They proceeded to hold their own synod, at which all the decisions of the Robbers' Synod were nullified, Cyril excommunicated, and Nestorius exonerated.

Thus the unhappy controversy ended in what can only be called a stalemate.

### Subsequent Events

The rest of the story is quickly told. It was finally the emperor who tipped the balance against Nestorius. For whatever reasons, he approved of the decisions of the Robbers' Synod. The pope did the same. This was a combination against which opposition was broken.

Nestorius retreated to a cloister in Antioch, perhaps the same in which he had lived while in that city. It may very well be that he would have been happy to spend the rest of his life there. But his presence there was not trusted, for he had many supporters in the city. So he was banished to an oasis in the Upper Nile River, far from church activities and too isolated to have any influence.

Here he wrote his autobiography, to which he gave the name,

"Tragedy." Even in such isolation he was given no peace. One historian writes: "The unhappy Nestorius was now dragged from the stillness of his former cloister of Euporpius, before the gates of Antioch, in which he had enjoyed four years of repose, from one place of exile to another—first to Arabia, then to Egypt—and was compelled to drink the bitter cup of persecution which he himself, in the days of his power, had forced upon the heretics."

He died near to 450, shortly before the great synod of Chalcedon. He was, obviously, not an old man.

### Conclusions and Summary

We must say three or four things about the controversy in conclusion.

The first must be emphatically stated: Nestorius was wrong, and his refusal to retract his views made him a pernicious heretic. Regardless of what one may think of how he was treated, sympathy for him must not obscure his sin of holding erroneous views. I emphasize this for, throughout history, debate has raged over the question whether Nestorius was truly a heretic or whether he was (and is) condemned for views he did not teach. Sometimes sympathy can make one blind. Let it be clear: he taught a view of the union between the two natures of Christ which led inevitably to the conclusion that Christ possessed also a human person. This is serious and destructive of the faith.

However much we may dislike Cyril, and however strongly we wish to condemn his tactics, he was right in his opposition to Nestorius. What his own views were is difficult to say. He seemed to be correct for the most part, but the flaw in his views may have been an over-emphasis on the *union* of the two natures of Christ. I say that because, shortly after Cyril died, the church in Alexandria itself became heretical. In its fierce opposition to Nestorianism and the

separation of the two natures, the church there (or, at least, many in it) began to go to another extreme and teach a union between the human and the divine natures of Christ which merged the two natures in such a way that Christ was neither wholly God nor wholly man, but some kind of God-man. The divine and human so mixed with each other that one single nature emerged neither completely human nor completely divine. Christ was, therefore, one person with one nature. That too is heresy; and I suspect Cyril had a lot to do with influencing the church in Alexandria to go in that direction. So indeed, in some sense we can surely say, "A plague on both your houses."

The term *theotokos* was the bone of contention. Can Mary be properly called, "The mother of God"?

Quite frankly I do not care all that much for the term. It has its origin in wrong views of Mary; it is not found in Scripture; and it is subject to wrong interpretations.

Nevertheless, it can be, I think, interpreted correctly. The person of the Son of God, the second person of the holy Trinity, united the human nature which came from Mary with the divine nature at the very moment of conception in Mary's womb. The Son of God was our Lord Jesus Christ from the moment of His conception. The Son of God in our flesh was indeed in Mary's womb. How that was possible is the great mystery of God become flesh, Immanuel, God with us. It is true and the clear teaching of Scripture.

The controversy between Nestorius and his supporters, and Cyril and his supporters — and all the struggles which followed — was finally settled in 451 at the synod of Chalcedon. That synod taught (you can find it in the back of the *Psalter*; I won't quote the whole creed):

... Christ, the same perfect in Godhead and also perfect in man-

hood; truly God and truly man ... begotten before all ages of the Father according to the Godhead, and in these latter days, for us and for our salvation, born of the Virgin Mary, the Mother of God, according to the Manhood; one and the same Christ, Son, Lord, Only-begotten, to be acknowledged in two natures, *inconfusedly, unchangeably, indivisibly, inseparably*; the distinction of natures being by no means taken away by the union, but rather the property of each nature being preserved, and concurring in one person and one Subsistence, not parted or divided into two persons, but one and the same Son, and only begotten, God the Word, the Lord Jesus Christ....

You will notice that the creed uses the expression "mother of God." It is embedded for all time in our creedal heritage. So God has ordained.

It is, however, interesting that our Confession of Faith (Belgic Confession), while mentioning the Apostles' Creed, the Nicene Creed, and the so-called Athanasian Creed (Art. 9), does not mention the Creed of Chalcedon. This is striking, and one wonders whether this is due to the fact that Guido de Brés disliked the term *theotokos*, especially because he had just come out of Roman Catholicism with its idolatrous doctrine of Mary.

Whatever may be the case, the Confession of Faith does incorporate in it the same teaching as is found in the Creed of Chalcedon (Art. 19), and the same doctrine may be found in the Athanasian Creed.

What makes us pause in adoration and worship is God's wonderful ways of providence by means of which He, the sovereign Lord of the church, brought truth out of such an unholy and oftentimes wicked battle. And that truth is no less than the truth of our Lord Jesus Christ. Upon the truth of Chalcedon rests our only hope of salvation. □

## The Covenant of Marriage

# 2. Courtship Within the Covenant (cont.)

### Dating in the Church - 1

**W**hen a person dates, he must seriously look for a life's mate. That fact has already been established. Dating is not in itself a form of recreation. It is a serious matter. For that reason, never may a young person of the covenant date an unbeliever. The Bible is clear: "Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers." This we established in the last article we wrote concerning courtship. Dating someone who is not a professing believer and who shows no interest in God's kingdom is expressly forbidden. The rule of Scripture is: dating must be carried on within the sphere of the church and covenant.

But that raises another question of more immediate concern: may I date a person who is not a member of my own church or denomination? May I date a young man or woman who may not believe exactly the way I do, yet professes his or her love for Christ and His cause in this world? To many this question has an easy answer: "Of course I may!" Most parents in the church world today do not have a problem with their children marrying and going to a denomination other than their own. This careless attitude arises out of a lack of spiritual conviction and an ignorance of what it means to be a

member of a church institute. In fact, carried through to its logical end, this attitude will result in the cutting off of the covenant in the line of one's generations. Children and children's children will be lost to the myriads of churches that have turned from the truth and entertain the lie.

To one who takes seriously what he believes and what is taught in the churches of which he is a member, the question of dating outside of his own church is difficult to answer. We emphatically believe that God's church and covenant is not limited to one denomination of churches. Likewise, we believe that God has His people in churches that differ from us doctrinally. Believers are not limited to one denomination of churches. If this is true, then certainly it is not necessarily wrong for a young person to date or even marry another believer who comes from a denomination or church other than his own.

There are a number of serious considerations, however, that one must bear in mind when it comes to dating outside the sphere of his own churches.

In the first place, there are many denominations in our world and society that call themselves Christian. Yet, many of these denominations and those in them maintain doctrines and practices that are far from the truth expressed objectively in the Bible. They say they believe in God! They say they believe in Jesus Christ! But *what* they believe of God and

Christ is very different from what the Bible teaches. Just because one says he is a Christian, therefore, does not make him a true follower of the Christ of the Scriptures. There are those who zealously follow after false doctrines which deny the God and Christ of the Scriptures. They are truly sincere in what they believe! In fact, sometimes their enthusiasm puts us to shame! But zeal for a certain cause or position does not make a person a true Christian. The truth is that a person can be sincerely wrong! Consider how zealously wrong the Jews were (Rom. 10:2)!

That we come in contact with all kinds of people that call themselves Christian is a given. We are in this world. God has placed us here to carry on our life. Just as we often at work or in our recreation meet people who are unbelievers, so also we meet and speak with people who bear the name Christian. And it is not really all that difficult to discover where a person stands spiritually. When we converse with others we find out quickly where they stand on many different issues and doctrines. If they are filled with zeal over a false Christianity, this will reveal itself in the topics of their conversation. We also can soon tell what type of a life-style people live simply by talking with them. If they live for the pleasures of this present world, this will become clear in what they want to talk about.

The point is that we are able to discover this about people *before* we

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date them. We need not date them to learn what their life and faith consist in. And the rule we ought to follow is this: we may not date for fun (because dating is not recreational) those who, although claiming to be Christian, nevertheless oppose in their doctrine and walk of life the God and Christ of the Bible! We will find in the next article that this is true within the sphere of one's own denomination too; and if it holds true there, it certainly holds true of those outside of one's denomination! In the realm of Christianity, where the false church swells in size and the true church dwindles, we must not assume that we may date just anyone who calls himself or herself a Christian. Rather, we must exercise consciously the command of I John 4:1, "Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God," before dating even someone who calls himself a Christian.

This is not, however, the only warning that needs to be issued at this point. People are members of a particular church or denomination because they are convinced of the doctrines that are taught there. Believing children of God take seriously what the Bible teaches — or at least they should! When they make confession of faith in their own church, then they vow before God and the church that they acknowledge the doctrines taught in their particular church to be the true and complete doctrine of salvation. That means that young people who make confession of their faith in another denomination are committed to the doctrines of their churches as much as we are to ours. That is the only conclusion we may reach.

But that in turn means that, though perhaps we may not question the sincerity of others, nevertheless the content of their faith is different! Each one of them is convicted of doctrines that the other simply does not believe are true! The natural tendency at this point

is to say, "Well, these doctrinal differences really do not matter to us. We are both believers. That is what counts! We will solve these differences later on, after we have fallen in love or are married." Wrong! We must realize that what a person believes is not simply going to be cast aside, even for the love of another. These are matters of the heart, after all! We *believe* them! We are *convicted* of them! And though it may seem as if they really make little difference when we are in love, they do! And they will! We might close our eyes to them at first because we are attracted to a person, but later on in our relationship those differences will and must come out! Do you honestly think that you can expect anyone simply to throw away what he believes because you have married him? You would not, would you? Why should he, then?

We might argue that marriage does not really rely on doctrinal agreement. We ask the question the prophet Amos raises: "Can two walk together, except they be agreed?" (Amos 3:3). Marriage is an intimate bond into which two people enter. They are united in one flesh. They must walk through life together. What joy and happiness when they can do this in perfect agreement with one another! What heartache and pain when doctrinal differences stand in the way of doing that! The foundation of a happy marriage is spiritual agreement. When that is not there, the marriage is threatened. It may be true that, because both husband and wife are believers, they agree that divorce is wrong. Yet, because their spiritual differences stand in the way, they are never really able to attain to the fullest joy that is a part of marriage.

Remember, Christian young people must not rest content simply to get married. Their interest must lie in establishing a solid, unshakable bond that will give them a lifetime of happiness in the Lord. To attain this they must be one in

faith and confession.

If only covenant young men and women would consider all of this before they begin dating outside the church where they are members! Instead, far too many view dating as fun — recreation. Nothing serious will develop out of it. Parents in ignorance permit it too, with the same thought in mind: "We will let you date him or her as long as you don't get too serious!" How often it happens: suddenly the relationship becomes serious, and the young man and woman have not even discussed their faith with each other. An engagement ring appears, and now the work begins to change one another. Sometimes God is gracious and He brings unity where it is not deserved. We thank Him for that! Most often the differences are not resolved. Then what? There are only three choices: break off the relationship, go ahead and get married anyway and hope for the best, or compromise. Actually, the only right choice is to break off the relationship, but who is going to do that when he is in love? A few perhaps. Most do not. They then enter into a marriage that is destined for contention and strife, or that is unstable because of compromise.

Does all this mean that it is not right for one to date outside of his denomination of churches? Not at all! We have already established the fact that God has His people in other churches too. But all this does serve to warn us. When a young person chooses to date someone outside the sphere of his own churches it is urgent that he speak with that person openly and freely about her faith — and that he do so immediately! All spiritual differences ought to be solved *before* they come to love each other!

We understand what that means, of course. It requires that we know what we believe — before dating a believer outside of our own denomination. We ought to be mature believers. Parents,

too, ought to exercise their authority in this regard. If our children are not ready to make confession of faith, do we think that they will be capable of making proper spiritual decisions when it comes to dating outside the sphere of their own churches? Wisdom and discretion are needed to do this. These come only with spiritual maturity.

We are beginning to find that courtship within the sphere of the covenant is not a frivolous part of life that anyone ought to enter lightly. Parents must train their

children, while those children are still young, in the principles that will guide them when they come to the age of dating. One principle is, "what part hath he that believeth with an unbeliever (infidel)" (II Cor. 6:15). Courtship within the covenant excludes dating those who do not profess to be Christian. That is one principle. The second is, when dating in the sphere of the church at large (or, as we will find, even within one's own denomination), "Try the spirits whether they are of God" (I John 4:1). Do not be content with mere

Christian profession. And the third principle is, "Can two walk together, except they be agreed?" (Amos 3:3). Doctrinal agreement must be found before learning to love one another. In our next article we will add yet another principle.

These must be taught by parents, but our covenant youth must also have the wisdom to live according to them when they look for a life's mate. This will determine for them the future joy and strength of their marriage. □

## Search the Scriptures

Rev. Mitchell Dick

# The Trial of Truth, Democrats, & Grand Old Pharisees (2)

(John 18:12-14, 19-40; John 19:1-16)

Jesus is seized. Mob hands take Him in the dead of the night to Annas, father-in-law to Caiaphas the high priest. Before Annas there is a preliminary hearing of sorts. Later, toward the dawn of that Friday, an official meeting of the Jewish ruling body, the Sanhedrin, is convened. Under oath Jesus affirms that He is the Christ the Son of God.

This affirmation is considered blasphemy by the Jewish jury. And Jesus is judged worthy of death. He is passed on to the Roman authorities for their prosecution. Pilate, then Herod, find the Man guilty of no crime. The Jews however—religious leaders and also frenzied crowd—demand the extreme penalty, crucifixion.

And the sinless, pure Son of God is taken to the ignoble, accursed death....

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Did you ever wonder *why*?

Why did the Jews think to bring Jesus to trial? Why not kill Him quietly? Then dump Him in Gehenna's fire, and be done with Him. Surely that would have been easier! Why did the Jews see the need of a trial and of a *form* of legality in their seeking to exterminate this their supreme opponent?

Fear of men, to be sure. The Jewish leaders certainly feared the multitude of people which had gone after Jesus and who thought that Jesus was everything they ever wanted in a king. Certainly this multitude would not take kindly their Hope being so abruptly removed from the scene by some jealous Pharisees. No doubt also the

Jews feared what the Romans might say if they caught the Jews murdering a man.

Hatred of Jesus. That is another reason the Jewish leaders sought the trial. For a trial and conviction would be, they thought, for the public humiliation and shame of Jesus.

Zeal of God. Paul later would bear the Jews record that they had a zeal of God, yet not according to knowledge (Rom. 10:2). So it was that in the putting of Jesus on trial the Jews thought they were in accord with the will of God, and that they would surely find that Jesus was a godless law-breaker and blasphemer. And that God would be pleased with their proceedings.

But other reasons for the trial of Jesus. God reasons. Over and over we read that Jesus is tried, and then taken to be crucified, in order that the Scriptures and counsel of

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God might be fulfilled (cf. Mark 14:49; John 18:32; Acts 2:23). God will have Jesus tried. It would not do *according to God* that Jesus be pushed off a cliff early in His ministry, or die now without a trial. God will have Jesus arraigned formally, publicly before the Jewish and world courts.

But why?

The answer: *for Truth's sake.*

For the sake of the truth, first of all, of sin. To *reveal* sin for all that it is—that is why Messiah is tried. In the world's finding Messiah guilty, and in its executing Him, will be lightning revelation of sin such as never before or since has flashed.

Want to know what sin is? Behold the trial of Jesus of Nazareth leading to the crucifixion of Jesus by men!

Here is the revelation of the truth of sin: men proudly and *religiously* seeking to establish their own righteousness, all the while proudly and *religiously* condemning the Lord our righteousness.

Here is sin: deniers of God condemning God's Son for godlessness.

Here is sin: desperate men seeking to do away with the Christ—by any means! Here a false witness. There a false witness. Abuse of authority. Bribery. Violence. You name it. The hooks and the crooks came out.

Here is sin: men rejecting *all* of God, aiming at nothing less than the death of God.

Here is sin: men of the *entire world* shouting "Away with Him!" the Savior of the world! For at the trial of Jesus behold the secular and sacred, the high and the hoi polloi gathered together to do what sin does. Indeed here is what even *the best* of the world will do: the cream of the religious and political crop, the Jacks of Jurisprudence, the Regnant Religionists say: Away with Jesus!

Here, in sacred halls of men. Here when Truth walks in. Here when Truth swears to Truth, and

the whole Truth, and nothing but the Truth, for He can swear by no higher. Here when men accuse Truth of blasphemy. Here when men say, What is Truth? Here when Truth is slapped and spit upon and whipped and mocked and delivered to be crucified. Here. Then. Let it be known. Sin.

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Another reason for the trial. It is for the sake of the truth of the Son. Here is my Son, God says. At the trial. Let it be known.

This, this Jesus, is God's pure Son. Sinless, sublime, silent One. *Holy One of God!*

Here Truth! All must see, though not one could look Him in the eye! Here the Redeemer! Here the Savior-Adam. Here the One of which every sacrifice and prophet, priest and king were but types and shadows. Here the Preeminent One in the counsel of God. Here He by whom and for whom all things were created. Here *Truth of God!*

Here!

Here Love of God! Willing to be accused of men, tried of men, abused by men, condemned by men. Here willing to take such sin of His own on His own—willing *to be made* that sin (II Cor. 5:21) that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him. Here willing to be accused of God, tried of God, condemned of God to go to the cross of God. They will say, "Away!" to the cross. But God will be saying, "Away now. *And go to hell!*" "Go now in the place of and to save My Own fallen liars, and adulterers-sinners all." "Go now to save those whose party, whose culture, whose wealth, whose will, whose work, whose theology will never save."

Here, I say, *Love of God!* And Jesus says: "I go."

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So that is the trial. Not the one that just hopped by. Not the one upon which sages recently medi-

tated during a certain interview. The trial of the Truth, Jesus Christ is *the* trial of the ages.

But there is another one. At the end of the ages. The first, the primary trial in history and in Jerusalem, was a trial *of* Jesus. This last, at the end of history, will be a trial *by* Jesus! It is the final judgment trial. It is the trial to come to which Jesus alluded at His trial before Caiaphas when He said: "Hereafter shall ye see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven" (Matt. 26:64).

Then ... what a trial! Then the standard will be no constitution, no poll, no party, no traditions of men, but the law of God. And this law will also be the prosecutor, the accuser, and the witness together. Then all in Adam will be found guilty before God. And no one, not any one, will then be able to deny, distort, mislead, or lie about it. All will have to admit to the sin of man and the just judgment of God. But this trial, this final trial, is our hope as believers in the Christ. It is our hope as those by grace in Christ. For at this last day, during this last glorious flash of Truth and Justice, the Son will wreak righteous vengeance upon all His accusers who not once during eight years of their term or ninety years of their life stopped their lying mouths. In this trial, at this time, every knee will bow and confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father.

And something else, even more marvelous, will happen. Awesome!

Our judgment. Here Law which might and could have justly sought to condemn will be silenced. For Truth Himself will rise, as it were, to our defense, as our Advocate. And He will speak but one Word, present but one exhibit for our vindication. And that will be the cross. Hold those hellish atoning agonies forth, He will, to twelve jurors ever so carefully chosen — to Electing Love, to Cov-

enant Grace, to Mercy, Wisdom, Righteousness, Holiness, Long-suffering, Kindness, Pity, Mindful of our human frailty, Desirous of Salvation, and Glory of God.

These all, all One, in no time deliberating, will rise up declaring: No condemnation! And enter thou church into the joy of your Lord!

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Open the Book, friends. Behold by faith this trial of the Truth. Believe it is for your justification now. Know it to be for your acquittal in the end.

## For Study, Meditation, & Discussion

### 1. Narrative

The trial of Jesus is recorded in John 18,19 and also Matthew 26, 27, Mark 14,15, and Luke 22, 23. Study the passages so that you are able to tell others what happened during this trial.

### 2. The reason for the trial of Jesus

We have seen above several reasons why God ordained this trial of His Son. But why did the Jews themselves seek a trial? Why did they not just stab Jesus in the night, or dump him, unceremoniously, off a cliff?

### 3. The sin of the Jews

List five ways the trial of Jesus by the Jews was illegal. Why was the sin of the Jews worse than that of Pilate and friends? In Matthew 26:25 we read the chilling statement of the Jewish people: "His blood be on us, and on our children." In other words, the Jews called a curse down upon themselves! In what ways has this curse and judgment of God been executed upon the Jews throughout history?

### 4. Union of sinners

What were different ways that people joined together against

Go now from newspaper to God's book. Listen to the interviews Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John had long ago with the Christ and the Spirit of God.

Read. Listen. Have Truth, and the whole of Him, ever before your minds. Ever your light. Ever for your holiness. Ever your joy. Ever your hope.

These are perilous times. The trials of them try our souls. But the Truth is, and is coming. Be in the Truth. Know the Truth. Rejoice in the truth! Love ... Truth!

Jesus at His trial (e.g., Jews and Romans)? How is this seen today—people, world, churches, etc. joining together against Jesus and the cause of the Truth?

### 5. Pilate's sin

What was Pontius Pilate's main sin in delivering Jesus over to be crucified? Pilate tried to wash his hands of the matter, and to blame the Jews for the condemnation of the innocent One. List several examples in the trial which, however, show Pilate's guilt?

### 6. What is truth?

When Pilate asked, "What is truth?" (John 18:38), just what was he asking Jesus? Does this question condemn Pilate or excuse him? Is this question asked today? Or is it rather that sin and unbelief and the lie have so developed today that people do not even care about the question?

### 7. Pilate's wife's dream

Pilate's wife warned Pilate to have nothing to do with Jesus because she had that day suffered many things in a dream because of this Jesus (cf. Matt. 27: 19). Was this dream from God? What is the significance of this dream?

### 8. The choice of Barabbas

What was the sin of the Jews requesting to have Barabbas set free rather than Jesus?

### 9. Judas' repentance

When Judas saw that Jesus was condemned he repented and went out and hanged himself (cf. Matt. 27: 3ff.). What proof is there that this repentance was not real?

### 10. Crucifixion today?

If Jesus were on earth in body today would people crucify Him, or tolerate Him? Though Jesus is not here in body, how do sinners crucify Him still (cf. Acts 9:4; Gal. 6:14; Phil. 3:10; Heb. 6:6)?

How is it seen today that people think they do God service by their rejection of the Christ and His truth and the persecution of His body (Is. 66:5; John 16:12)?

### 11. The Trial in perspective (John 20:31)

What are the divine virtues of Jesus which shine forth in His behavior in the trial?

List several things which contributed to Jesus' suffering in this whole debacle. The Romans use the trial of Jesus to mock His alleged kingship. They make and crown Him with a crown of thorns, they give Him a reed for a scepter, and put a purple robe upon Him, all the while saying, "Hail, King of the Jews," and beating Him with their hands (cf. John 19:1ff.). But what is truly revealed here of Jesus *the King*?

Truth was on trial in the trial of Jesus. How do we show in our lives *now*, by our focus of faith, by our walk, and by our hope, that Truth was found *then* to be True and Pure, and that the lie and liars were condemned, that the Truth at the same time saved us, and that the Truth shall come again "to judge the living and the dead"? □

# Congregational Singing

"In the churches only the 150 Psalms of David, the Ten Commandments, the Lord's Prayer, the Twelve Articles of Faith, the Songs of Mary, Zacharias, and Simeon, the Morning and Evening Hymns, and the Hymn of Prayer before the sermon shall be sung."

Church Order, Article 69.

## Historical Background

The earliest Dutch Reformed synods addressed the matter of singing in the worship services. Already the synod of Wezel, 1568, decided:

As for singing in the church, the use of the Psalms as rendered by Peter Datheen shall be maintained in all the Dutch churches so that nothing less fitting and less edifying is introduced because of the variety of versions.

The synod of Dordrecht, 1574, reaffirmed the decision of Wezel. The Church Order of the synod of Dordrecht, 1578, included the following article:

The Psalms of David translated by Peter Datheen shall be sung in the Christian gatherings of the Netherlands churches as has been done until now, excluding the hymns which are not found in the Bible.

The synod of Middelburg, 1581, ruled that

Only the Psalms of David shall be sung in the churches, omitting the hymns which are not found in the Scriptures.

Article 69 of the Church Order of the synod of Dordrecht, 1618-19, read:

In the churches only the 150 Psalms of David, the Ten Commandments, the Lord's Prayer, the Twelve Articles of Faith, the Songs of Mary, Zacharias, and Simeon shall be sung. The song, "O God, Who Art Our Father," is left to the discretion of the churches whether to use or omit it. All other hymns shall be banned from the churches, and where some have already been introduced, they shall by the most suitable means be excluded.

Article 69 was revised somewhat by the synod of Utrecht, 1905. The hymn "O God, Who Art Our Father" was referred to as the "Hymn of Prayer before the sermon," and "the Morning and Evening Hymns" were added. Utrecht's revision was essentially that adopted by the Christian Reformed Church in 1914 and later by our Protestant Reformed Churches.

It ought to be plain that Article 69 concerns the singing at the official worship services of the congregation. The article is not prescribing what may and may not be sung at the Bible study societies, in the Christian schools, or in the homes of Reformed believers. The specific concern is with public worship.

Article 69 presupposes that the singing at the worship services of

Reformed churches is to be *congregational* singing—the *whole* congregation, including the children and young people.

Lusty singing! From the heart!

In the beginning of their existence the Reformed churches opposed strenuously choirs and soloists in public worship. Instead they insisted on the privilege and duty of the congregation to sing. The congregation was not to be sung to, but to sing. At the time of the Reformation, congregational singing had fallen into decline. For the most part, polished and practiced choirs had replaced the singing of the gathered people of God. Credit is given to the well-known Pope Gregory the Great (c. 540-604) for introducing this innovation. Calvin was outspoken in his denunciation of choirs and led the way for the restoration of congregational singing. It is a sad commentary on the state of Reformed worship today that in many Reformed churches choirs and soloists have again replaced congregational singing.

## Psalms Singing

It is plain from Article 69, as well as from the decisions taken by the early Dutch Reformed synods, that the Reformed churches stood for exclusive psalmody. This is still today the position of the Protestant Reformed Churches. This is not merely our tradition; it is our conviction.

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It is true that Article 69 refers to a few other songs besides the "150 Psalms of David" that may be sung in the worship services. Of these other songs, only the Lord's Prayer and the Songs of Mary, Zacharias, and Simeon are available in the present psalter used in the worship services of the Protestant Reformed Churches. The mention of these other songs that were in use in the churches at the time that the early church orders were written cannot be construed as a setting aside of the principle of exclusive psalmody. The rule in the churches is that the Psalms and only the Psalms are to be sung.

Psalms singing has a rich history in the Reformed churches. Already Calvin superintended the production of a psalter for the church of Geneva. At his request, a number of Psalms were versified by Clement Marot and Theodore Beza, and melodies were written by Louis Bourgeois and Maitre Pierre. Some of the work of these men survives in the psalters used in various Reformed and Presbyterian churches still today.

One of the earliest psalters used in the Reformed churches of the Netherlands was that produced by William of Nijeveld. In 1566 the Rev. Peter Datheen published his psalter. For many years Datheen's psalter enjoyed great popularity with Dutch Reformed folk. In 1580 yet another psalter was published by a certain Marnix of St. Aldegonde. Although this new psalter became accepted in some of the churches of the Netherlands, it never supplanted the psalter of Datheen.

Although Article 69 does not specify the use of a certain psalter, the psalter used in the Protestant Reformed Churches is the 1914 edition of the United Presbyterian Psalter. This psalter was the work of an interdenominational committee that included members of various Presbyterian and Reformed denominations. Most denominations that at one time used the Psalter

have since replaced it with more recently published song books. Besides the United Presbyterian Psalter, other English psalters have been produced and are being used for worship in other denominations, some of them of rather high quality. It cannot be denied that improvements could be made in our Psalter, both in regards to the lyrics and the melodies of certain numbers. Perhaps someday a committee of qualified persons could be appointed by the synod to propose a revision of the Psalter.

### **The Nagging Hymn Question**

Although historically the Reformed churches have stood for the principle of exclusive psalmody, there have always been those who promoted the introduction of hymns into the worship of the church. Some of these have been more conservative, wanting only hymns that are versifications of definite portions of Scripture. Others have promoted the singing of hymns generally, irrespective of whether or not the hymn is a versification of a passage of Scripture.

Prior to the synod of Dordrecht, 1618-19, the Remonstrants advocated the introduction of hymns in the worship of the churches. Article 69 is very much a response to their efforts. In 1807 a committee introduced a collection of hymns into the worship of the state Reformed Church of the Netherlands. At first the singing of these hymns was optional; eventually it became mandatory. The leaders of the Secession of 1834 (the *Afscheiding*) objected to these hymns and restored psalm singing. The Christian Reformed Church synod of 1932 revised Article 69 to make room for the singing of hymns in that denomination. In the years 1959-1962, our own Protestant Reformed Churches considered an overture to revise Article 69 to allow for the singing of a select number of hymns. After a lengthy discussion in the churches, this proposal was defeated by the

synod of 1962 (cf. Acts 1962, Article 188, p. 34).

Not only are there solid biblical arguments in favor of the use of the Psalms in the worship of the New Testament church, but the church today ought also to be mindful of the lessons of history.

Lesson #1. The introduction of hymns, many of which are doctrinally superficial or unsound, man-centered, and emotionally appealing has been an instrument of Satan to promote false teaching in the church.

Lesson #2. The introduction of a few hymns leads to many hymns, so many hymns that the Psalms invariably are shoved into the background.

This is not to say that there are not good hymns. There are. They may be sung. They may be sung in our homes, at programs, on our visits with each other, or while we are driving down the highway in our automobiles. But not in public worship. Here the will of God requires the singing of the Psalms.

In the interests of good singing in our worship services, the children of the church ought to be taught the songs in the Psalter. We ought to sing more than we do in our homes, perhaps making singing by the family a part of our regular family devotions. The Christian schools serve the churches well in this regard, making use of the Psalter in daily devotions, choirs, chapels, and programs. Pastors ought to have the children sing a number at the beginning of the catechism classes. In this way the good tradition of Psalm singing will continue to flourish in the churches.

### **Instrumental Accompaniment**

Deliberately Article 69 neither requires nor forbids the use of instrumental accompaniment in congregational singing. The reason for this is that instrumental accompaniment is considered an incidental of worship and therefore a matter of liberty.

It is well known that John Calvin, as well as other of the Reformers, opposed the use of instruments in worship. Some of the early Dutch Reformed synods spoke against the use of instruments. Nevertheless, this did not become the accepted position in the Dutch Reformed Churches, convinced as the churches were that the Scriptures permitted instruments as a matter of Christian liberty. Especially fond were the Dutch of the beautiful sounds of the organ. Singing in the Protestant Reformed Churches is generally accompanied by an organ or a piano.

A few arguments in favor of permitting the use of instrumental

accompaniment in the singing of the Psalms may be advanced. First, the word "Psalm" itself refers to a musical instrument, a stringed instrument. Second, the Psalms themselves make repeated mention of the worship of God with instruments: Psalm 33:2; 57:8; 71:22; 81:2; 92:3; 108:2; 144:9; 150:3. Third, not only does Scripture refer to the worship of God by means of instruments in the Old Testament, but it also refers to instruments in connection with the worship of the redeemed church in glory, as Revelation 5:8; 14:2.

Most consistories have adopted guidelines concerning the music played during the worship services

by organists. Some consistories require that only numbers from the Psalter be played before and after the worship service, as well as during the offertory. This belongs to the discretion of each consistory, taking into account always what best serves the edification of God's people. Although not, strictly speaking, a part of the worship service, what is played by an organist prior to the start of the service and what is played as the congregation is exiting the sanctuary ought to be conducive to worship.

Singing—a necessary and delightful part of the public worship of the church.

Let it be done according to God's will and for His glory! □

## News From Our Churches

## Mr. Benjamin Wigger

### Mission Activities

The February 28th bulletin from the Southwest PRC in Grandville, MI contained an update of our churches' mission work in Pittsburgh, PA.

"As previously reported, Rev. J. Mahtani (missionary to Pittsburgh) is under the care of a psychiatrist and a Christian counselor and on their advice has been relieved of his duties as missionary for 4-6 weeks. The consistory of the Kalamazoo, MI PRC has graciously consented to Southwest's request that Rev. W. Bruinsma, Kalamazoo's pastor, spend alternate weekends (Wednesday to Monday) in Pittsburgh during the months of February, March, and April to preach, lead all classes, and counsel Rev. Mahtani. The mission group will use sermon videos when Rev. Bruinsma is not there until Rev. Mahtani resumes some of the preaching which will, D.V., begin the latter part of March. Beginning in May, pulpit ex-

changes will be arranged between Rev. Mahtani and Rev. Bruinsma or Rev. Cammenga, Southwest's pastor, once per month until the end of the year to facilitate continued recuperation."

Southwest's council, under the belief that letters from home are important for the morale of a missionary family, also made arrangements to assure a steady flow of correspondence from their congregation to the Mahtanis by drawing up a schedule for their members to follow.

The consistory of the Grandville, MI PRC has granted the request of our churches' Domestic Mission Committee to release their pastor, Rev. A. Spriensma, for 6-8 weeks to labor in South Wales. Rev. Spriensma plans, the Lord willing, to be gone the last half of March through April.

Since Rev. R. Moore has accepted the call to Ghana, he is no longer able to go with the delegation, as originally planned, to the Philippines in early April. Consequently our churches' Foreign Mission Committee has asked our Edgerton, MN PRC to release their pastor, Rev. D. Kleyn, to take Rev.

Moore's place on that delegation. They are making plans to go, the Lord willing, for a couple of weeks in May.

Rev. and Mrs. R. Moore are working on their plans to move to Ghana, West Africa. Quoting from Rev. Moore: "Jan and I have been considering this work for quite some time, and are now confident that this is the Lord's will for us. We look forward to the labor, but also realize that it will be a difficult, but also a blessed labor. We cherish your prayers for us as we labor in Ghana."

### Denomination Activities

We pass along a note from our young peoples' Scholarship Fund Committee which might interest you, especially if you are a young person considering furthering your education to become either a school teacher or pastor in our denomination.

The S.F.C. would like to express its gratitude to our heavenly Father for these past several years. By the help of our churches, the amount made available to our young people studying for service as teachers or pastors has grown

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

from \$5000 to \$39,500. In 1995 we gave out \$4100 compared to 1998 when we were able to provide \$18,400.

The Protestant Reformed Psalm Choir, made up of members from many of our West Michigan churches, presented two concerts of praises to God through Psalms this early spring. The first was on February 28 at Grandville, MI PRC and the second, one week later on March 7 at First PRC in Grand Rapids, MI.

In connection with the March meeting of Classis West in Redlands, CA, our Hope PRC sponsored an officebearers conference on March 2, the day before classis. This conference had as its theme "The Doctrines of Sovereign Predestination." There was scheduled a keynote address by Rev. R. Moore titled "Predestination: The Heart of the Gospel." There were six sectionals led by various ministers and also an evening lecture by Rev. K. Koole on the subject, "The Doctrine of the Covenant as the Key to a Reformed Understanding of God's Sovereignty."

Hope's Evangelism Committee was also busy working to publicize this conference in their community and other parts of California.

### Congregation Activities

The Choral Society of the South Holland, IL PRC presented a program on February 21. Before the Choral Society sang, the Zeng Family Brass played several selections. They also accompanied the choir and congregation with some of their singing.

On February 26 and 27 the members of the Georgetown PRC in Hudsonville, MI were invited to Camp Geneva, on the shore of Lake Michigan, for a weekend of fun, fellowship, and spiritual enrichment at their annual church conference. This year's conference featured Rev. C. Haak, pastor of the Bethel PRC in Itasca, IL, as speaker. He spoke on the subject, "Contentment: An Inside Job." Besides his

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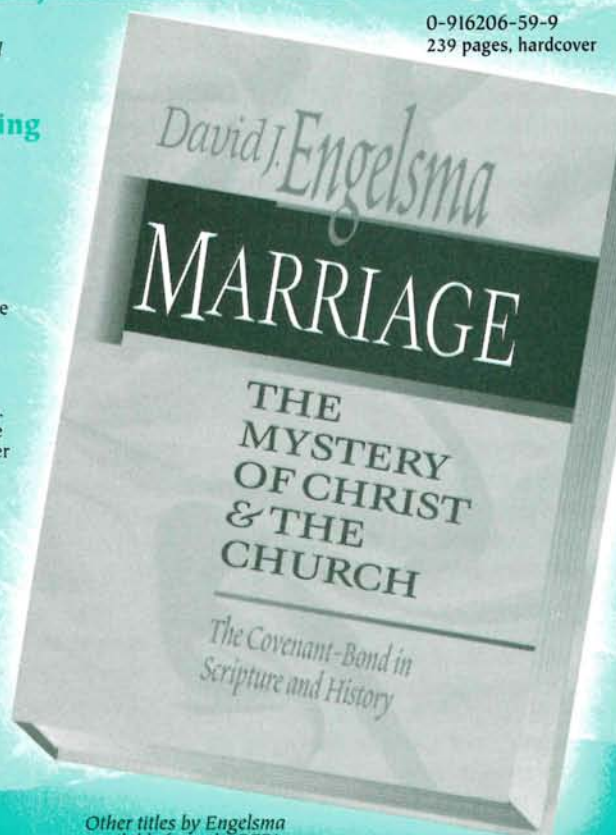
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two speeches on the subject, discussion groups looked at the theme from the aspect of contentment in single life, married life, and parenting.

## Minister Activities

The Hull, IA PRC met March 2 and voted to extend a call to Rev. C. Haak, pastor of the Bethel PRC, to serve as their next pastor.

## Food For Thought

"There is a true glory — the glory of a duty well done. And there is a true honor — the honor of the integrity of principle upheld."

—Robert E. Lee □

## ANNOUNCEMENTS

### TEACHERS NEEDED

**Hope Christian School of Redlands, CA** is in need of a teacher for the intermediate grades (3 & 4) for the 1999-2000 school year. The grade assignment, however, is flexible, with the possibility instead for an elementary position (grades 1 & 2). Interested persons are encouraged to send an application to Hope Christian School, Attn: Ed Karsemeyer, 1309 E. Brockton Ave., Redlands, CA 92374. You may also phone school, (909-793-4584), Bill Feenstra (909-793-3597), or Mike Gritters (909-793-4439).

The **Protestant Reformed Christian School of South Holland, IL** will be in need of a 5<sup>th</sup> grade homeroom teacher for the 1999-2000 school year. All interested persons should apply to the Protestant Reformed Christian School, 16511 South Park Ave., South Holland, IL 60473, or call the school at (708) 333-9197.

### WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

On April 7, 1999, our parents, grandparents, and great grandparents,

**MR. and MRS. MELVIN DeBOER**, will celebrate, D.V., their 50<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary.

We thank our heavenly Father for the years that He has given them together. We pray that the Lord will continue to bless them in their life together. We thank them for their love, support, and Christian upbringing that they have given to us.

"One generation shall praise thy works to another, and shall declare thy mighty works" (Psalm 145:4).

- \* Jack and Sheila DeBoer
- \* Jeff DeBoer
- \* Jerrold and Martha Bruinsma
- 6 Grandchildren
- 2 Great Grandchildren

St. John, Indiana

### WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

On March 21, 1999,

**HUGO and ELIZABETH SCHWARZ** celebrated their 60<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary. We thank God for the many years He has given them together, and for the loving care and godly instruction they have given to us. May the Lord continue to bless them throughout their lives together.

"But the mercy of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting upon them that fear him, and his righteousness unto children's children; to such as keep his covenant, and to those that remember his commandments to do them."

- \* Tom and Marilyn DeVries
- \* Robert and Phyllis Brands
- 14 grandchildren
- 2 great-grandchildren

Loveland, Colorado

### NOTICE!!!

Classis East will meet in regular session on Wednesday, May 12, 1999 at the Grace Protestant Reformed Church. Material to be treated at this session must be in the hands of the stated clerk by April 12, 1999.

Jon J. Huisken, Stated Clerk

### RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The council and congregation of Georgetown PRC express their Christian sympathy to Doug and Shelly Start and their family in the loss of their infant daughter,

#### GRACE START,

who was taken to glory before birth. May they find comfort and peace from God's Word in Lamentations 3:22-24: "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."

Rev. R. VanOverloop, Pres.  
David M. Ondersma, Clerk

### RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The Mary Martha Society of Hope PRC in Redlands express their sincere Christian sympathy to fellow members Winnie VanUffelen, Donna Bruinsma, JoAnn Pastoor, and Laura VanVoorthuysen and families in the loss of their father and grandfather,

#### MR. RALPH ROZEMA,

and in the loss of their brother and uncle,

#### MR. JOHN ROZEMA.

May they be comforted in the words of Scripture from II Corinthians 1:3, 4: "Blessed be God, ... the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort; who comforteth us in all our tribulation."

Rev. Arie denHartog, President  
Cindy Grothman, Secretary

### WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

On March 24, 1999, our parents and grandparents,

#### JOE and GWEN VanKAMPEN,

celebrated their 50<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary. We are thankful to our heavenly Father for giving them to one another and to us. We pray that God may continue to bless them in their marriage in the years to come.

"The lines are fallen unto me in pleasant places; yea, I have a goodly heritage" (Psalm 16:6).

- \* Dan and Mary VanKampen
- Michael, Andrew
- \* Bruce and Cher Jabaay
- Dave and Julie Steenwyke
- Benjamin, Jordan
- Richard, Brian, Lisa
- \* Larry and Pat Dutmer
- Jodi, Betsy, Ross
- \* Steve and Cindy VanKampen
- \* Joe and Deb VanKampen
- Laura, Kane
- \* Mark and Cindy Ophoff
- David, Kristin, Bradley, Daniel

Holland, Michigan