

THE *December 15, 2002* STANDARD BEARER

A REFORMED SEMI-MONTHLY MAGAZINE

In This Issue:

MEDITATION

Rev. James D. Slopsema

The Murder of Bethlehem's Infants 122

EDITORIAL

Prof. David J. Engelsma

The Sword of Christmas 124

LETTERS

126

ALL AROUND US

Rev. Gise VanBaren

127

CHURCH AND STATE

Mr. James Lanting

***Federal Court Declares Pledge of Allegiance
Unconstitutional*** 130

GO YE INTO ALL THE WORLD

Rev. Arie den Hartog

***Two of the Most Interesting Parts of Our Work
in Singapore*** 132

DECENCY AND ORDER

Rev. Ronald L. Cammenga

Reconciliation of Secret Sins 136

REVIEW ARTICLE

Prof. David J. Engelsma

***What God Is This?
Dave Hunt's Accurate Representation
of the God of Arminianism*** 139

BOOK REVIEWS

142

NEWS FROM OUR CHURCHES

Mr. Benjamin Wigger

143

The Murder of Bethlehem's Infants

Then Herod, when he saw that he was mocked of the wise men, was exceeding wroth, and sent forth, and slew all the children that were in Bethlehem, and in all the coasts thereof, from two years old and under, according to the time which he had diligently inquired of the wise men.

Then was fulfilled that which was spoken by Jeremy the prophet, saying,

In Rama was there a voice heard, lamentation, and weeping, and great mourning, Rachel weeping for her children, and would not be comforted, because they are not.

Matthew 2:16-18

How angry Herod was when the wise men failed to return to Jerusalem to inform him of the whereabouts of the King of the Jews, whose star they had seen in the east. In an attempt to kill this new-

born king, Herod ordered all the children of Bethlehem two years old and under to be killed.

Many misconceptions have arisen about the murder of these children. Some in the early church viewed the slain babes of Bethlehem as the first martyrs. This butchery has been called "The Slaughter of the First Martyrs" and "The Slaughter of the Innocents." The early church even celebrated this event with the Feast of the Holy Innocents.

Matthew interprets this horrible incident quite differently. By the inspiration of God he sees this butchery of Bethlehem's babes as a fulfillment of a prophecy of the prophet Jeremiah. And this prophecy speaks of God's judgment on an apostate nation. The babes of Bethlehem were not innocent martyrs. But Jeremiah's prophecy also proclaims the salvation of God for the church.



A brutal murder.

Herod was not a Jew but an

Idumean, a descendant of Esau. Through military victories and cleverness he had gained the appointment of king of Judea by the Roman Emperor. To gain the loyalty of the Jews, Herod had adopted the Jewish religion and enlarged the temple in Jerusalem.

But Herod was a monster. He had at least ten wives, two of whom were his nieces. His energy was spent protecting his throne. He killed anyone whom he considered a threat. This included even his wives and sons. It was said that it would be better to be Herod's pig than his son. Just before his death Herod gave command to round up the principal leaders of the Jews and have them killed so that there would be mourning at his death. Thankfully, this was not carried out.

This helps explain the actions of Herod in killing the babes of Bethlehem.

Understandably, Herod was greatly concerned when the wise men came to Jerusalem with reports of a star and seeking the newborn

Rev. Slopsema is pastor of First Protestant Reformed Church in Grand Rapids, Michigan.

The Standard Bearer (ISSN 0362-4692) is a semi-monthly, except monthly during June, July, and August, published by the Reformed Free Publishing Association, Inc., 4949 Ivanrest Ave., Grandville, MI 49418.

Postmaster: Send address changes to the Standard Bearer, P.O. Box 603, Grandville, MI 49468-0603.

REPRINT POLICY

Permission is hereby granted for the reprinting of articles in our magazine by other publications, provided: a) that such reprinted articles are reproduced in full; b) that proper acknowledgment is made; c) that a copy of the periodical in which such reprint appears is sent to our editorial office.

EDITORIAL POLICY

Every editor is solely responsible for the contents of his own articles. Contributions of general interest from our readers and questions for The Reader Asks department are welcome. Contributions will be limited to approximately 300 words and must be signed.

EDITORIAL OFFICE

Prof. David J. Engelsma
4949 Ivanrest
Grandville, MI 49418
(e-mail: engelsma@prca.org)

BUSINESS OFFICE

The Standard Bearer
Don Doezeema
P.O. Box 603
Grandville, MI
49468-0603
PH: (616) 531-1490
(616) 538-1778
FAX: (616) 531-3033
(e-mail: doezeema@prca.org)

CHURCH NEWS EDITOR

Mr. Ben Wigger
6597 40th Ave.
Hudsonville, MI 49426
(e-mail: benjwig@juno.com)

NEW ZEALAND OFFICE

The Standard Bearer
c/o B. VanHerik
66 Fraser St.
Wainuiomata, New Zealand

UNITED KINGDOM OFFICE

c/o Mr. Sean Courtney
78 Millfield, Grove Rd.
Ballymena, Co. Antrim
BT43 6PD Northern Ireland
(e-mail: sean67@cprbookstore.fsnet.co.uk)

SUBSCRIPTION PRICE

\$17.00 per year in the U.S., US\$20.00 elsewhere.

ADVERTISING POLICY

The Standard Bearer does not accept commercial advertising of any kind. Announcements of church and school events, anniversaries, obituaries, and sympathy resolutions will be placed for a \$10.00 fee. These should be sent to the Business Office and should be accompanied by the \$10.00 fee. Deadline for announcements is at least one month prior to publication date.

16mm microfilm, 35mm microfilm and 105mm microfiche, and article copies are available through University Microfilms International.

Website for RFFA: www.rffa.org
Website for PRC: www.prc.org

King of the Jews. Herod was not looking for the Savior. Consequently, he supposed that this newborn King of the Jews was a direct threat to him. This occurred toward the very end of his life, when his suspicions nearly drove him mad.

All this led Herod to attempt to destroy this baby. He instructed the wise men to inform him of the whereabouts of this babe, so that he might also worship Him, planning all the time to kill Him. But now he saw that he was mocked. He had been bested in his own schemes and was being mocked by the wise men (so he thought) and perhaps by his own palace. Filled with rage and fear he sent his soldiers to kill all the baby boys of Bethlehem two years and under. His purpose was to kill, if possible, this newborn king. Failing that, Herod sought to take his vengeance out on Bethlehem. Joseph had been warned by God in a dream and was well on his way to Egypt. However, the infants of Bethlehem were slain. This did not involve the killing of thousands, as some have supposed. Bethlehem was a small town. There were perhaps ten to twenty baby boys killed. What a shock this would be to any community, but especially to a town as little as Bethlehem.



A fulfillment of prophecy.

By the inspiration of the Spirit of God, Matthew sees this brutal murder of Bethlehem's babes as a fulfillment of prophecy. He cites Jeremiah 31:15: "A voice was heard in Ramah, lamentation, and bitter weeping; Rachel weeping for her children refused to be comforted for her children, because they were not."

Jeremiah was a prophet of God to Judah. He prophesied during the reigns of Judah's last kings, before Judah was taken into captivity in Babylon. He spoke of the destruction of the nation because of her sin. The prophecy of Jeremiah was partially fulfilled during the reign

of Jehoahaz. At that time Babylon besieged Jerusalem and led captive the princes of Judah (Daniel and his three friends included) and others. He also plundered the temple.

The words of Jeremiah 31:15, which Matthew quotes, were spoken by Jeremiah after this siege of Jerusalem. Jeremiah spoke of lamentation and bitter weeping in Ramah. Ramah was on the border of Israel and Judah, about five miles north of Jerusalem. It was here that the captives of Judah were assembled for deportation into Babylon. Among these captives was lamentation and bitter weeping.

Jeremiah identified this weeping with the weeping of Rachel over her children and refusing to be comforted because they were not. Rachel was the wife of Jacob's carnal love. Jacob was attracted to Rachel simply for carnal reasons. God's judgment upon this carnal love was that for many years Rachel was barren. This caused great grief for Rachel. "Give me children, or else I die," was her complaint to Jacob (Gen. 30:1). Finally, God gave her two sons, Joseph and Benjamin. This meant that Rachel's children would be found both in Israel and in Judah. Joseph's two sons, Ephraim and Manasseh, became tribes in Israel. Benjamin was with the tribe of Judah in the kingdom of Judah. But now Rachel was robbed of her children. The nation of Israel had long ago been led into captivity. And now Judah was being led away, weeping and lamenting. According to Jeremiah, the weeping of Judah at Ramah was the weeping of Rachel for her children. With the captivity of Israel and Judah, Rachel was once more without her children. Rachel was again weeping. Her weeping was heard in the weeping of her children, as they also fell under the judgment of God for their sins.

Matthew sees this word of Jeremiah as a prophecy fulfilled in the slaughter of the babes of

Bethlehem.

The judgment of God upon the Jews in taking them into captivity was a type or picture of a greater judgment that God would bring upon them in the future. This greater judgment was to lose their special place in God's covenant. For generations the children of Israel had been God's covenant people. But one day they would lose this distinction. In the way of their own sin and apostasy they would be rejected as the covenant people of God and be replaced by others. The captivities of Judah and Israel were an indication and prophecy of this terrible reality.

And the slaughter of the babes in Bethlehem was the beginning of this greater judgment on the Jewish people. The baby Jesus of Bethlehem was the Savior, sent from heaven by God. The Jews would soon reject Him. This rejection was already anticipated by the fact that there was no room in Bethlehem's inn for Him. This rejection of Jesus would reveal the apostate nature of the Jews and in turn fill their cup of iniquity so that they would lose their place as God's covenant people. What a terrible judgment that was! What a privilege and honor to be the covenant people of God! What blessings come to them in the covenant! How horrible to lose that place, to be cast away from the living God, and to come under His terrible wrath. But that was what awaited the Jewish people. Soon they would be destroyed as a nation. They would be persecuted throughout the rest of history. And as a people they would perish eternally in hell. Of these terrible judgments upon the apostate nation of Israel, the slaughter of the babes of Bethlehem was the beginning.

This slaughter of Bethlehem's babes and the horrible judgment that was about to fall upon the Jewish nation was prophesied and anticipated by the judgment of God upon Israel and Judah in the days of the kings.

And it brought to them the weeping of Rachel for her children.



A blessed gospel.

Jeremiah had more to say in the section of his prophecy quoted by Matthew. Jeremiah also prophesied that God would bring the remnant of Judah and Israel back again to Canaan. Upon their return God would establish a new covenant with them, in which He would write His law upon their hearts (Jer. 31:31-33).

This prophecy was partially fulfilled in the return of Judah from captivity under Zerubbabel. Under Zerubbabel a remnant of the Jews returned to rebuild Jerusalem and the temple. For a time the people prospered under God's blessing. But it soon became ap-

parent that this was not the new covenant in which the law would be written on the hearts of God's people so that they would serve Him perfectly.

This prophecy of Jeremiah is fulfilled ultimately in Jesus Christ. Through His atoning death on the cross Jesus has established the new covenant. This covenant was established in principle at Pentecost with the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. Into this covenant was brought the elect remnant of the Jews. But soon the Gentile nations were brought in through the power of the gospel of Christ. And they are still being brought in, as many as were ordained to eternal life. Upon their hearts God writes His law so that they honor Him and serve Him in love.


But as we struggle with our own sin, we all recognize that this new covenant is not yet fully realized. So we look to the return of Jesus Christ on the clouds of glory, when the work of God in Christ will be complete and we will all serve the Lord in perfect love and devotion to enjoy Him forever.

Of this new covenant the wise men were first fruits.

To this new covenant we also belong in Jesus Christ.

But this new covenant is possible only with the judgment of God upon Israel for filling the cup of iniquity and being rejected by God as a people.

This final judgment and rejection began with and was anticipated by the murder of Bethlehem's babes.

In it we find our salvation. 

Editorial

The Sword of Christmas

Right celebration of the birth of Jesus Christ reckons with the sword of Christmas.

The error of the American unbeliever who waxes sentimental over the birth of Jesus as the symbol of world-peace is his failure to reckon with the sword of Christmas. The heresy of the preacher who proclaims Jesus' birth as universal grace and salvation is his rejection of the sword of Christmas. The illusion both of the liberal and of the conservative postmillennialist that the birth of Christ heralds a bright new day of earthly peace in history for Christ's followers is shattered by the sword of Christmas.

The sword of Christmas is the bloody word of history. Before

Jesus is two years old, the soldiers of the empire march to His birthplace and, on account of Him, massacre Rachel's children. As soon as the church of the New Testament begins preaching the gospel of God manifest in the flesh, the Jewish nation persecutes the church. For some two hundred and fifty years, the Roman Empire attacks the Christians worldwide. When the Reformation recovers the good news of Jesus Christ, the Roman Church, the empire, and individual governments turn on those who confess Christ, harassing, imprisoning, torturing, and killing.

Still today, in Islamic nations, Muslims kill the Christians, whom they hate. Wherever the Roman Catholic Church controls the state

and can get away with it, Rome continues to persecute Protestant Christians. Apostate and departing Protestant churches persecute the true church, if not with the steel sword, then with the sword of the tongue and pen. Western nations, increasingly anti-God and pro-Man, resent and ridicule those who defend chastity, oppose the state-sanctioned murder of the unborn, and confess Jesus Christ as the only Way of salvation, that is, the disciples of Christ.

The sword was Christ's own Word about His birth. "Think not that I am come to send peace on earth: I came not to send peace, but a sword" (Matt. 10:34). His coming was His incarnation and birth. The purpose of that coming is division between men. The di-

vision is not amicable. It is the division of hatred, the determination to destroy, and war. The sword of Christmas is the war against the church, spiritual in nature but taking physical forms, of those who hate and persecute the disciples of Christ for their confession of Christ's gospel and their obedience to Christ's will. It is hatred of Christ by His enemies as He is present in men and women in His Word and Spirit. It is division occasioned by the truth and holiness that Christ came into the world to give His elect people in all nations and among all races.

Let Christians celebrate the birth of Christ. It is worthy of celebration. Culminating in the atoning death and victorious resurrection of Jesus Christ, it brought us peace with God, peace with each other, and peace with the circumstances of our lives. It promises the peace of perfect harmony with God throughout the whole creation in the Day of Christ. But in our celebration let us not ignore the sword of Christmas.

The Sword in Our Family

We covenantal Reformed Christians can be guilty of this — ignoring the sword of Christmas — as regards our own family-life. We convince ourselves that the purpose of the incarnation of the Son of God is peace with God for every member of our family. Therefore, the meaning of the birth of Jesus must be lovely harmony among all the family members. Nothing may be allowed to disturb these harmonious relations. Regardless of open unbelief, bold denial of the truth, and impenitent disobedience to Christ's will, husband and wife, parents and all the children, blood relatives and the in-laws are all one happy family. Especially during the Christmas season, we insist on it. We celebrate the plowshares and pruninghooks of Christmas, the dove and olive branch of the birth of Christ. We turn a blind, if not hostile, eye to

the sword of Christmas—in our family.

Did not Christ come for the peace of His people?

Is not His peace a covenantal harmony, embracing the children of believing parents in the generations?

In a world of men and women divided against each other because all are at war with God — the only union and peace of humans — a world whose most painful and destructive divisions are those of divorce and the separation of parents and children, is not the Babe of Bethlehem the Savior of the family?

The sword of Christmas in the covenant family is the cruel word of the history of the people of God. There will be Reformed husbands observing Christmas this month apart from their wife and Reformed wives observing Christmas without their husband, although wife and husband are very much alive. There will be Reformed parents celebrating the birth of Christ in the absence of one of their children. There will be children glorifying God for the gift of His Son whose father or mother does not share in the festivity, but is antagonistic, and absent.

I remember well, from the earliest days of my ministry, the hard words concerning her husband of a wife with whom I had reasoned and pleaded, in the presence of the husband, that she not divorce him: "I hate him." The cause was his conversion to Christ according to the Reformed faith, his membership in a true church, and his life of discipleship after Christ. The result for him was a life of loneliness, without wife and children, though he had both, until the day of his death.

The sword of Christmas in the family of the Christian!

That we ignore the sword of Christmas in our family is inexcusable. Christ Himself foretold it. "I came not to send peace, but a sword. For I am come to set a man at variance against his father, and the daughter against her mother, and the daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law. And a man's foes shall be they of his own household" (Matt. 10:34-36).

The sword of Christmas will cut into the tightly woven fabric of the family of Christians, the fabric of the Reformed, covenantal family.

A son renounces the faith and abandons the church. A daughter marries a divorced man and thus lives impenitently in adultery. A daughter-in-law embraces a false gospel, joins a false church, and worships a false god. Because the relatives confess the truth, worship the true God, walk on the way that is genuine discipleship after Christ, and rebuke the sinner, the sinning loved one hates his relatives and breaks off harmonious relations, or makes them impossible. Family life is disturbed. Division disrupts the closest earthly communion. War breaks out, and the battlefield is the home.

This is painful. This is nothing less than a form of losing one's life for Christ's sake. Faithfully and willingly endured, this is cross bearing for the Christian, not merely severe suffering, but sharing something of the agony of the cross of Christ. When it comes down to it, Christianity knows only one cross. This agonizing pain and loss for the Christian who endures the sword of Christmas are not at all the atoning suffering of the cross of Christ, nor

anything at all of the punishing wrath of God. But they are his sharing in the suffering of Christ at the hands of a hateful, hostile world of enemies.

Faithfully and willingly endured, this is cross bearing for the Christian, not merely severe suffering, but sharing something of the agony of the cross of Christ.

Since these enemies of Christ and the Christian are members of the Christian's own household, the suffering is intense. The strong temptation, therefore, is to mute the confession of Christ, compromise the truth of the gospel, widen the way of discipleship, silence the rebuke, and treat the sinning relative as though all were well.

How often is this not done? How often is this not done among us?

And how often does not a father say in defense of his denial of Christ for the sake of keeping the love and fellowship of his son, "But he is my son"? How often does not a mother excuse herself, "But she is still my daughter, and I cannot be expected to lose my daughter"? How often does not the mother-in-law justify her tolerance, or even approval, of her daughter-in-law's ungodliness, "Christ would never require me to give up my daughter-in-law and with her my son and my grandchildren"?

As though Christ never said, "He that loveth father or mother

more than me is not worthy of me: and he that loveth son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me" (Matt. 10:37).

Especially at the season of

Christmas, the temptation to compromise our confession of Christ for the sake of enjoying the love and fellowship of a Christ-denying family member is strong. At the very time we remember the coming of the one who brought the sword, we blunt the sword that He brought, or take it out of His

hand altogether.

But then we love kindred more than we love Christ. And then we are not worthy of Him.

Besides, a sword-less Christ is not the Christ of Scripture. A Christ who never causes division in Reformed families is not the Christ of Scripture. A Christ who allows the compromise of His truth, the tolerance of disobedience to His commands, and the fellowship of those who deny Him with those who confess Him, in the interests of the carnal peace of His

disciples in the world, is a figment of our imagination.

Nor is the peace we obtain at the cost of our confession of Christ His peace.

Christ's peace is blessed harmony among those who together confess Him in the truth and together walk in His ways because all alike have been reconciled to God. By virtue of the covenant, Christ's peace does indeed extend to the Reformed family. But it does not necessarily include every member. One may be an enemy of Christ and therefore also an enemy of his own father, her own mother, or her own mother-in-law.

It is Christ Himself who sends this sword. It is Christ Himself who is this division in the family. Sending this sword in our family was His purpose in His incarnation and birth.

Come, let us celebrate Christmas.

Let us celebrate the blessed plowshares and pruninghooks of His peace — often as a covenant family.

Let us also celebrate the coming of the Christ by receiving and enduring, with tears, the sharp sword of Christmas — if need be, in our covenant family.

— DJE 

The strong temptation is to mute the confession of Christ, compromise the truth of the gospel, widen the way of discipleship, silence the rebuke, and treat the sinning relative as though all were well.

Letters

Rev. 3:20 and the Promise

I have read Rev. VanOverloop's meditation entitled "The Divine Dwells with the Humble" (*Standard Bearer*, Aug. 2002), as well as the letter of Mark Brooks and Rev. VanOverloop's response (*SB*, Oct. 1, 2002). I have two matters of concern, issues that I would request the brother to address, both of which are related.

1. The first has to do with the reference to Revelation 3:20 in the meditation, specifically the words

"Behold, I stand at the door and knock." The brother does not quote these words, only the last part of the verse dealing with the promise. But it is clear that he was deeply conscious of them in the course of the meditation as a whole. Hence, the question, namely, What exactly is meant by "the door"? Is it the door of the church institute, which is my conviction? Or is it the door of the heart? And if the latter, in what sense? If the latter is the case, even

if the brother makes the heart the heart of the elect, in what sense can it be said that Christ "knocks" on such? It is my conviction that Christ "knocks" on the door of the heart of no man, not even that of the unrepentant elect. Rather that He comes with the demand of His effectual Word and enters, overcoming our rebellion and working repentance. This question the brother did not answer in connection with the letter of brother Brooks. But it needs an answer.

2. The second question, which in my judgment is even more crucial, if that is possible, has to do with the matter of the promise, the promise of Revelation 3:20 and specifically this quote from the meditation: "The humble spirit hears God's voice, and opens to Him. Then God promises, 'I come in to him, and he with me' (Rev. 3:20)" (emphasis RF). The question is this, In what sense does God's promise ever follow our action, which the word "then" clearly indicates? It is my conviction that objectively the promise precedes our action. And that it is exactly by the power of the promise, which is always effectual, that the activity of repentance and faith is wrought in us. The latter is the fruit of the promise of God in Christ, which is always first. Now perhaps the brother is talking not about the promise of God objectively. But rather the conscious experience of that promise by the repentant child of God. If the latter is the case, then the truth is this, that we experience the conscious *reality* of the promise in the way of repentance. But then the brother should have stated such that way, not "Then God promises...." In our day of doctrinal error and general lack of doctrinal distinctiveness and being specific in how one expresses one's position, it is crucial that we be

specific and specifically Reformed.

Richard Flikkema
Jenison, Michigan

Response:


You raise two questions.

Your first question asks, "What exactly is meant by the 'door' in Revelation 3:20? You express the belief that it is the door of the church institute. Also you express the conviction that Jesus never "knocks" at the heart of any man, not even of the unrepentant elect.

I believe that to understand what is meant by the "door" we need first to understand what it means that Jesus "knocks" on the door. The context provides the answer. Christ declares that He "knocks" by means of rebuking and chastening (v. 19). So Christ's knocking is an admonition to zeal and to repentance. Why cannot this apply both to the church institute and to the individual elect believer? In both cases God uses the same means to accomplish sanctification in the life of His elect. I believe that the "door" can be understood to be the spiritual consciousness of the church institute at Laodicea and of the individual believers within this congregation. Further evidence that the object of Christ can be individual believers is the fact that in verses 20 and 21 the object is spoken of as an individual person. "If any *man* hear

my voice, ... I will come in to *him*, and will sup with *him*, and *he* with me. To *him* that overcometh...." This supports, exegetically, the position that Christ can be addressing spiritually lukewarm individual elect believers.

Jesus' promise is that when those elect believers come to a consciousness of their need for Him, then they will experience blessed fellowship with Him. That is true experientially. That was the point I was striving to make in writing the other two sentences to which you object. I wrote: "The humble spirit hears God's voice, and opens to Him. Then God promises, 'I will come in to him and will sup with him, and he with me' (Rev. 3:20)." I admit that the second sentence lacks clarity, because of a grammatical error. I should have put a comma after the word "Then." It was my intention that "then" would modify the word "come" and not "promises." With the comma, it would have been clear that I was drawing attention to the fact that (from the viewpoint of experience) when the repenting believer consciously hears Christ's voice and humbles himself, acknowledging his constant need for the Savior, *then, according to God's promise*, he experiences blessed fellowship with Him.

— Rev. Ron VanOverloop 

All Around Us

Rev. Gise VanBaren

■ The "missing link (wink, wink)"

An interesting number of *U.S. News & World Report*, Aug. 26-Sept. 2, 2002, contains articles treating "The Art of the Hoax." It makes for some interesting read-

ing. One hoax in particular I found interesting: the hoax of the "Pilt-down Man." His skull was discovered in 1912. Until 1949 he was presented as the "missing link" in the chain of evolution. The skull showed the intelligence of early man — yet supposedly proved his link to lower forms of life. On the basis of that skull, artists presented drawings of what this early man must have looked like. He had

long, black hair, protruding jaw — apparently much like a "smart monkey." For almost forty years most scientists agreed that here was real proof for evolution. The picture appeared in many books of science, including textbooks for the students in public schools.

Remember: evolution is presented as proven science. Creation is presented as "religion" and unscientific. That's what makes this

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

"hoax" so interesting. I quote from the article:

In 1912, in an English town called Piltdown, a centuries-old woman and an orangutan became unlikely partners in crime. A cunning trickster had stained and filed her skull and the ape's jaw to make them appear ancient, then planted them in a shallow pit where laborers were doing road work. The workmen took their find to a local amateur paleontologist, Charles Dawson, who showed them to Arthur Smith Woodward, the foremost paleontologist at London's British Museum. He confirmed the bones' prehistoric provenance and the new creature's key position on the evolutionary tree: The big-brained hominid bridged the evolutionary gap between ape and man, all but proving Darwin's theory of common descent. The "missing link" had been found. And it was British....

...Without further evidence, Piltdown fit some people's preconceptions of man's evolution — specifically, that our big brains, and thus, intelligence, developed before other aspects of modern man. Even so, some scientists of that era argued that certain characteristics of the bones, like the absence of the critical joints that connect a cranium with a jaw, proved they were never really joined as one. The critics were generally ignored.

So what did the scientists and educators — experts all — learn from all of this? The article states:

The four-decade hoax still stands as the longest-running paleoanthropological sham. So why did so many scientists take the bait? "Many were just too trusting and gullible," says Chris Stringer, head of human origins at the paleontology department at London's Natural History Museum. Rosenberg uses the Piltdown hoax in class to illustrate the importance of context: Scientists can develop theories based only on how much is known at that

time. But don't discount nationalism and ethnocentricity. Western scientists back then wanted to believe the first humans were Europeans, she says.

Or maybe everyone's just a sucker when it comes to his origins....

It's a striking conclusion: "Everyone's just a sucker when it comes to his origins." One would think that even the greatest evolutionist would have reason to reconsider all of his assumptions. How many other "scientific facts" are possibly also hoaxes? How much of man's reasoning concerning origins are imposed upon his "discoveries" in the realm of creation? Ah, indeed!! "The missing link (wink, wink)." And these same people claim that creationism is unscientific!!

■ The "Vials of the Wrath of God Upon the Earth"

One often wonders about the nearness of the end of this age. Those who have predicted various dates when Christ would surely return have been deceived. Christ Himself declared that the day and hour of His return knoweth no man. But He has provided in His Word the signs of the nearness of the end. The book of Revelation especially reminds of those things which must come to pass. We read in Revelation 16:1-2, "And I heard a great voice out of the temple saying to the seven angels, Go your ways, and pour out the vials of the wrath of God upon the earth. And the first went, and poured out his vial upon the earth; and there fell a noisome and grievous sore upon the men which had the mark of the beast, and upon them which worshipped his image."

That passage came to my mind when I read the article of George F. Will in the November 11, 2002 issue of *Newsweek*. He speaks of the possibility, even probability, of some madman us-

ing nuclear weapons to destroy cities and of the possibility of the spread of infectious diseases such as smallpox. But a horrifying reality is already seen, perhaps a fulfillment already of Revelation 16:1-2. He writes:

But as we focus, quite properly, on ways to prevent the use of infectious diseases as instruments of war, we may be paying insufficient attention to a terrifying phenomenon unrelated to terrorism. It is a phenomenon potentially more destabilizing than any act of terrorism has ever been. And it is no more secret than a steam caliche. It is the coming crest of AIDS in the three largest countries of Eurasia—Russia, India and China.

The onrushing crisis is outlined in an article published this week in *Foreign Affairs*, "The Future of AIDS" by Nicholas Everstadt of the American Enterprise Institute. He says the coming pandemic "threatens to derail the economic prospects of billions and alter the global military balance."

It is a truism that an epidemic requires not only a microbe but also a receptive social context. Eurasia's future may be foreshadowed by sub-Saharan Africa's present. As of a year ago, 28 million of the world's 40 million persons who were HIV-AIDS positive were sub-Saharans, among whom AIDS accounts for one in five deaths — perhaps 20 million so far. The world's reaction to this cataclysm has been mild because the region is of marginal political and economic importance. By many measures, Everstadt writes, it contributes less than Switzerland to the world economy. But Eurasia holds five eighths of the world's population, and its combined GNP exceeds that of the United States.

The writer describes the horror of this disease and its consequences in places such as Russia, China, and India. He writes that "so far, AIDS has killed about 25 million. A mild epidemic would kill 43 million in India, China and

Russia by 2025. Their combined populations would be 90 million fewer than anticipated, absent the epidemic, and 44 million of those deaths would be among the 'economically active' population between the ages of 15 and 64." He points out also that there would be tremendous economic consequences, including the care, for years, of those who suffer from this disease. Life expectancy will likely decrease by ten years from what it is today.

His conclusion?

The eruption of AIDS in developed societies in the 1980s disturbed the emotional equilibrium of those societies because they had come to believe that the control, even the eradication, of infectious bacterial and viral diseases was in sight. Since then, AIDS has been a cruel new teacher of a cruel old truth: life is regressive. That is, people — and societies — with serious problems are especially apt to acquire other, even more serious problems.

The trumpet of the Lord's angel is sounding. And those with the mark of the beast, who worship his image, are especially affected. The economic and social consequences likely will be terrible. But then we can truly look up — for the coming of the Lord is at hand.

■ Christian School Teachers on Strike

It is rather difficult to believe that Christian school teachers would strike — or, for that matter, be unionized. Yet this is what has been reported in the *Banner*, March 25, 2002.

More than 1,000 children in three Edmonton Christian schools had an unexpected vacation from classes Feb. 4-20 when their teachers joined a strike by the Alberta Teachers' Association.

"I know of no instance where any Christian school in our mem-


bership in its 80-year history has withheld services," said Dan Vander Ark, executive director of Christian Schools International, of which the Edmonton Society for Christian Education (ESCE) is also a member.

The unprecedented action resulted from a 1999 decision by the society to join the Edmonton Public School Board as an alternative Christian program, thus becoming a publicly funded school and dramatically lowering tuition fees. As part of the agreement, the society's 61 teachers on three campuses became members of the Alberta Teachers' Association. When teachers in the ATA's Edmonton local joined 21 other Alberta jurisdictions in striking for additional provincial education funding and better pay, Edmonton Christian school teachers were obliged to join the strike.

... Although many teachers were reluctant to join the strike, they had little choice. "We found ourselves in a lose-lose situation," said Brian Doornenbal, who has taught at West Edmonton Christian School for 16 years. "If we broke the strike, it could very well also break our status as an alternative school. That would be hard on the community. But going on strike also hurts teachers and kids."

What conclusions were reached by teachers and principal?

"The strike revealed the weakness of our agreement with the Edmonton Public School Board, but it's not a fatal weakness," Munro said. "The benefits are enormous: we have 250 more kids at our school because of our lower fees; our teachers are leading the development of a Bible curriculum for all of Edmonton's public schools; and our credibility in the community has increased. Our schools are more diverse now, we have children from 72 different churches attending. I'm so glad that my children have the opportunity to go to this school."

One sees the consequences of joining hands with government supported public schools for the sake of obtaining funding from the government. Though the claim is made, "The strike revealed the weakness of our agreement with the Edmonton Public School Board, but it's not a fatal weakness," the facts contradict this. First, none can teach in the Edmonton Christian Schools without first joining the teachers' union. Any who have principle objections to union membership would be excluded from teaching there. Secondly, the low tuition rates allow children from 72 different churches to attend these schools. This raises questions: who controls these Christian schools? How many denominations are represented in these schools? Is instruction relative to the "Christian" part of these schools based on the lowest common denominator? Also the question arises: can those who administer the operations of these schools refuse admittance of any into the schools? Thirdly, there is the interesting statement that the Christian school teachers are "leading the development of a Bible curriculum for all of Edmonton's public schools...." Though it might seem an admirable project, one might ask whether this too is done with enormous compromises. What would this Bible curriculum teach about evolution? What would it teach about Sabbath observance? Would it teach anything concerning the biblical concept of the covenant? Indeed, all of the actions concerning Christian education at Edmonton may indeed have increased the schools' "credibility in the community," but at what a terrible price! We too ought to observe and learn—when government becomes involved in Christian education, one must also bow to the demands of that government. 

Federal Court Declares Pledge of Allegiance Unconstitutional

"In the context of the Pledge of Allegiance, the statement that the United States is a nation '*under God*' is an endorsement of religion. It is a profession of a religious belief, namely, a belief in monotheism. The recitation that ours is a nation '*under God*' is not a mere acknowledgement that many Americans believe in a deity. Nor is it merely descriptive of the undeniable historical significance of religion in the founding of the Republic. To recite the Pledge is not to describe the United States; instead, it is to swear allegiance to the values for which the flag stands: unity, indivisibility, liberty, justice, and — since 1954 — monotheism.* * * The Pledge is an impermissible government endorsement of religion...."

Newdow v. U.S. Congress,
U.S. Court of Appeals (9th Cir. June 26, 2002)
(majority opinion).

"But, legal world abstractions and ruminations aside, when all is said and done, the danger that '*under God*' in our Pledge of Allegiance will tend to bring about a theocracy or suppress somebody's beliefs is so miniscule as to be de minimis. The danger that phrase presents to our First Amendment freedoms is picayune at most.

Newdow v. U.S. Congress,
U.S. Court of Appeals (9th Cir. June 26, 2002)
(dissenting opinion).

History of the Pledge

During the early months of World War II, the U.S. Congress on June 22, 1942, codified the Pledge of Allegiance into federal law: "I pledge allegiance to the flag of the United States of America and to the Republic for which it stands, one nation indivisible, with liberty and justice for all." Then on June 14, 1954, during the height of the Cold

War, Congress amended the law to add the words "*under God*" after the word "nation." The recorded legislative history of the 1954 amendment informs us of the reason why Congress amended the law:

At this moment of our history the principles underlying our American Government and the American way of life are under attack by [communism] whose philosophy is at direct odds with our own. Our American Government is founded on the concept of the individuality and dignity of the human being. Underlying this concept is the belief that the human person is important because he was created by God and en-

dowed by Him with certain inalienable rights.... The inclusion of God in our pledge therefore would further acknowledge the dependence of our people and our Government upon the moral directions of the Creator. At the same time it would serve to deny the atheistic and materialistic concepts of communism....

Moreover, the recorded legislative history also reveals that the sponsors of the 1954 amendment to the Pledge, perhaps anticipating 1st Amendment challenges, tried to avoid religious establishment objections by including the following in the legislative record:

Mr. Lanting, a member of Cornerstone Protestant Reformed Church of Schererville, Indiana, is a practicing attorney.

This is not an act establishing a religion.... A distinction must be made between the existence of a religion as an institution and a belief in the sovereignty of God. The phrase 'under God' recognizes only the guidance of God in our national affairs.

Newdow's Challenge

Michael Newdow is an atheist whose daughter attends a public elementary school in Elk Grove, California. The California Educational Code requires that public schools begin each school day by having each class recite the Pledge of Allegiance once each day. Even though his daughter was never required to recite the Pledge, Newdow filed suit in federal court claiming that his daughter is injured when she is compelled to "watch and listen as her state-employed teacher in her state-run school leads her classmates in a ritual proclaiming there is a God, and that ours is 'one nation under God.'" Newdow's suit challenged the constitutionality of the "under God" phrase of the pledge, arguing it constitutes prohibited governmental establishment of religion.

The U.S. District Court had dismissed his case, but on appeal Newdow gained instant national notoriety when the 9th Circuit Court of Appeals in California ruled the "under God" phrase of the Pledge to be unconstitutional. The controversial California ruling incited a storm of nationwide protest against the decision. President Bush immediately discounted the ruling as "nonsense," and the following day a defiant Congress recited the Pledge on the Capitol steps for a national television audience.

The Majority Opinion

In accordance with state law and a school district rule, the Elk Grove teachers begin each day by leading their students in a recitation of the Pledge. Newdow did

not allege that his daughter's teacher or school district required his daughter to participate in reciting the Pledge. Rather, he argued that his daughter is "injured" when she is forced to observe her state-employed teacher guide her classmates while reciting a God-proclaiming ritual that, he insisted, violates the Constitution, which forbids governmental establishment of religion. In its majority opinion favoring Newdow, the federal appellate court reviewed the last three decades of church/state jurisprudence and determined that the Supreme Court has used three interrelated tests to analyze alleged violations of the Establishment Clause in the realm of public education: (1) the Lemon test; (2) the "endorsement" test; and (3) the "coercion" test.

The Lemon test, first articulated by the Supreme Court in 1971, requires the challenged legislation to have a "secular purpose." After reviewing the legislative history of the 1954 amendment that added the words "under God" to the pledge, the court found that the sole purpose of Congress was to "advance religion, in order to differentiate the U.S. from nations under communist rule."

The Act's affirmation of "a belief in the sovereignty of God" and its recognition of "the guidance of God" are endorsements by the government of religious beliefs. The purpose of the 1954 Act was to take a position on the question of theism, namely to support the existence and moral authority of God, while "denying atheistic and materialistic concepts." Such a purpose runs counter to the Establishment Clause....

The Court also ruled that the 1954 federal law amending the Pledge likewise failed the "coercion" test, formulated by the Supreme Court in 1992 in striking down "nonsectarian" prayers at public school graduation ceremonies,

because "the graduation prayers bore the imprint of the State and thus put school-age children who objected in an untenable position," putting "impermissible pressure on students to participate in, or at least show respect during, the prayer." The 1954 Pledge, argued the *Newdow* appellate court, is not unlike the banned prayers, even though the children are not required to recite the Pledge:

... even without the recitation requirement for each child, the mere fact that a pupil is required to listen every day to the statement "one nation under God" has a coercive effect.

Finally, the appellate court ruled that the amended Pledge likewise failed to survive the "endorsement" test, first articulated in the 1984 case of *Lynch v. Donnelly*, where the Supreme Court held that inclusion of a crèche or nativity scene in a city's Christmas display was not governmental endorsement of religion. Unlike the nativity scene in the town square, the California appellate court held:

The Pledge, as currently codified, is an impermissible government endorsement of religion because it sends a message to unbelievers "that they are outsiders, not full members of the political community, and an accompanying message to adherents that they are insiders, favored members of the political community."

Thus the Court ruled that the current Pledge containing the phrase "under God" fails all three Establishment Clause tests generated in recent decades by the U.S. Supreme Court, and therefore the Pledge must be struck down as unconstitutional. Rejecting the distinction made by the sponsors of the 1954 amendment between "the existence of a religion as an institution" and "a belief in the sovereignty of God," the court ruled

that the Establishment Clause is not limited to institutional religion:

The Establishment Clause guards not only against the establishment of "religion as an institution," but also against endorsement of religious ideology by the government.

The Dissent

The dissent issued a spirited opinion arguing that the 1954 Pledge did not violate the religion clauses of the Constitution, which were "not designed to drive religious expression out of public thought." The various religion clause tests were constructed, argued the dissent, to assure that government will neither discriminate for or against a religion or religions.

Accordingly, the dissent essentially ignored the majority opinion's religion clause tests, and found that the constitutional danger to phrases such as "under God" are negligible:

Such phrases as "In God We Trust," or "under God" have no tendency to establish a religion in this country or to suppress


anyone's exercise, or non-exercise, of religion, except in the fevered eye of persons who most fervently would like to drive all tincture of religion out of the public life of our polity. ***... we will soon find ourselves prohibited from using our album of patriotic songs. "God Bless America" and "America the Beautiful" will be gone for sure....

Comment

This case is extremely noteworthy for Reformed Christians because it clearly demonstrates that even after decades of religion clause jurisprudence by the federal judiciary, it is painfully obvious that the judicial doctrine of church/state separation is as ambiguous and confusing as it always has been. Because the U.S. Supreme Court has generated three or four different religion clause "tests" over the past fifty years, the lower courts remain confused and bewildered when confronting establishment clause challenges.

Moreover, the *Newdow* decision from the 9th Circuit Court of Appeals in California has little likelihood of clarifying the ongoing confusion in the debate over "the wall of separation" between church

and state. There are several reasons for this. First of all, the 9th Circuit ruling is binding in only a few western states. Secondly, in 1992, the 7th Circuit Court of Appeals in Chicago also addressed the very same issue of the constitutionality of the Pledge and ruled the opposite way, finding the phrase "under God" to be devoid of any significant content, and therefore constitutional.

Finally, the court records indicate that the U.S. government has recently filed a petition for a rehearing in the *Newdow* case, and some constitutional scholars are predicting that the *Newdow* opinion may be changed after the rehearing, or later overruled by the U.S. Supreme Court. The *Newdow* case illustrates the obvious impossibility of government achieving "complete neutrality toward religion" as certain justices seemingly require. Apparently these same justices would require elimination from the public square anything that is "normative and ideological," a state of affairs that would indeed be frightening, creating a government arguably very much unlike the nation our founders originally contemplated. 

Go Ye Into All the World

Rev. Arie denHartog

Two of the Most Interesting Parts of Our Work in Singapore

We have been in Singapore now for almost a year again, after arriving in January 2002. Our work is not the same as it was dur-

ing our first, seven-year stay in Singapore as missionary pastor. We are not directly involved in pastoring one of the congregations. We are thankful that we are still called upon to do a lot of work in the two congregations of ERCS. We preach at least once almost every Lord's Day. There are also

many special events to give speeches for, sometimes even more than one speech at a single event. We have spoken at mission seminars and family seminars and a number of youth meetings. We are thankful that we are getting into the life and the communion of the saints in the two congregations. Sherry

Rev. denHartog is the Protestant Reformed minister-on-loan to Singapore.

has worked hard to open our home for groups of guests on several occasions on Friday evenings. We are getting reacquainted with the members of ERCS that were already part of the church when we were here last time, and we are getting to know some of the many new members. First Church now has more than 300 members and Covenant has between 80 and 90.

The major focus of our work in Singapore during the past year has been on teaching in the Bible school, called Asian Reformed Theological School of Singapore (ARTS) and mission work in Myanmar. There have been exciting developments in both of these areas of our work, and we will concentrate on telling you about these to keep this article short enough.

ARTS has successfully completed its first year. This has included two semesters of training. The student body was small, usually three students for the regular classes. This included Paul Raj from India. His wife, Kasthuri, also attended the classes. Two brothers from ERCS sat in on the classes. There were four lecturers, including the two pastors from the churches in Singapore, Pastor Lau and Pastor Cheah, and the two ministers from the PRCA, Pastor Kortering and me.

In our first year we were able to teach several courses such as theology, homiletics, hermeneutics, pastoral counseling, church history, and the study of the Reformed creeds. On Thursday evenings I taught a course on missions that was regularly attended by about 20 or more members of ERCS besides the students of ARTS. Though the classes were small, the lecturers had to work extra hard because this was the first year of teaching for all of us and we had to prepare class lessons for each class for the first time.

The Theological School Committee continues to work hard at bringing prospective students to ARTS from other countries. We are

hoping to have five or six students for next year. This will include two or three men from Myanmar, the Lord willing. Because our outside students are from third world countries, they must be fully supported while they are here in Singapore.

There are lots of details involved in sponsoring and supporting them that keep quite a few people busy. The financial resources needed to run ARTS come largely from gifts and donations taken in the PRCA. We are very thankful for this, realizing that our work would, humanly speaking, be impossible without the continual receipt of such gifts. Expenses incurred are major, even though all the lecturers receive their support from being pastors in the churches and not from ARTS.

We are making plans and preparations for our next school year. We are especially thankful to the Lord that Pastor Kortering has preliminary plans to return to Singapore, especially to help with teaching at ARTS. This he will be doing even though he is now officially retired. The Korterings are deeply loved and respected in Singapore for their many years of labors in the churches here.

We just recently returned home from our trip to Myanmar. There is so much to write about our recent trip to Myanmar that I could

write a book. We were there from October 5 to 25. Our main working in Myanmar was teaching a thirteen-day seminar. The seminar was especially for leaders in two Reformed denominations in Myanmar that the ERCS has been working with now for several years. The names of these denominations are the United Reformed Churches of Myanmar (URCM) and the Protestant Reformed Churches of Myanmar (PRCM). The participants at the seminar were all pastors, elders, or deacons of these two denominations. Classes every day had from 40 to 45 men in attendance. The classes were held in a rented room at the School for the Blind in Yangon.

The morning teaching was on the general theme "All of Grace." The afternoon sessions were on the theme "The Reformed Pastor." We tried to strike a balance, with more doctrinal subjects in the morning and more practical subjects in the afternoon. At the morning sessions we showed how our salvation is all of the wonderful grace of God, having its source in God's election of His people from before the foundations of the world and having its end in our everlasting glorification in the presence of God and His Son Jesus Christ in the new heavens and earth. We had opportunity to deal with all the great doctrines of grace so central and so precious to



Participants in the Myanmar seminar

the Reformed faith. At the afternoon sessions instruction was given in subjects like: the qualifications necessary to be a Reformed pastor, dealing with the text of scripture to make a truly biblical sermon, counseling various groups of people in the congregation, preserving God's holy institution of marriage in the church, and nurturing and caring for the covenant youth in the congregation. All the lectures were interpreted into one of the Burmese dialects called the Chin dialect.

The men in the class listened attentively to the lectures. Each presentation was followed by a time for questions and answers. In these sessions we could determine whether the main concepts being dealt with in the lectures were being understood. The question and answer sessions showed that the men at the seminar were growing in their understanding and love for the Reformed faith and its practice in the churches. ERCS has for several years sponsored two of these seminars annually. We concluded the seminar with a sermon on Philippians 1:27 and 28, in which we exhorted the men to strive together for the faith of the gospel of Jesus Christ, emphasizing that the great doctrines of sovereign grace are central to the truth of this gospel. We appreciated the times of fellowship which we had with the men at the seminar, though this was limited somewhat by language differences. Even learning all the Burmese names was very difficult.

All in all we had a wonderful time. After giving twenty-six lectures in thirteen days of classes we ended the seminar with an earnest prayer to the Lord that the truths which were presented in the lectures might continue to be known and loved by the men at the seminar. Our prayer is that these men may return to their congregations to teach and preach and maintain these truths in their congregations. Our prayer is that the churches of Myanmar may grow more and

more strong in the truth of the Reformed faith.

Besides the seminar there were six meetings with the elders and pastors of the two denominations. There were also individual meetings with some of the leading pastors. We interviewed four young men who are possible candidates to become students in ARTS in Singapore next year. This too was serious work, since bringing these men into Singapore is a major endeavor, and we need as much as possible to choose the right men. We hope that the men chosen will, after being trained in ARTS, return to the churches in Myanmar to become leaders in the two denominations to guide them in their development as Reformed churches. One has to experience life in both countries to realize how difficult it would be to go back to Myanmar after living for a short time in Singapore. Men who do this must be very committed to serving the churches in their home country and be ready to make great sacrifices and endure great hardships to do the work of the preaching the gospel in a land of poverty and many great hardships.

ERCS is doing a lot of benevolence work in Myanmar. This work is investigated and supervised by a team of men that comes along each time we hold a seminar in Myanmar. This team includes deacons from ERCS. The team not only visits the churches in Yangon but also travels especially to places in the Chin State where most of the churches are found. In the past the ERCS deacons have given instruction to large groups of deacons from the churches. At one of them there were 90 deacons present. Regular benevolent help is given to the churches of Myanmar, and the money given is distributed by the deacons of the churches of Myanmar. All of this is very difficult work, which takes a lot of wisdom and carefulness.

The poverty in Myanmar is tragic. More even than in Yangon,

in the villages in Chin State and in other states of Myanmar as well, one is constantly confronted with the reality of this poverty. Poverty severely limits people in every area of their lives. Most of the common people do not own cars. Transportation is very difficult for them. Some of those attending the seminar walked 70 miles to come to the seminar. There are few jobs available for the men who must support their households. The state of agriculture in the country is such that farms are mostly only subsistence farms. Some do not have more to eat than a bowl of rice a day with a few greens, and sometimes even these greens must be obtained from the wild.

The most difficult situations we faced were those relating to sickness and disease among the people. Nearly half of the homes have members of the family that are sick with diseases such as TB and malaria and typhoid. Many diseases that these people commonly face in life, and that too many even die of, could be rather easily cured with the modern medicine readily available in our own countries. They get diseases more easily and cannot resist the effects of these diseases because of poor immunity systems. Many families cannot afford the necessary medical care to help overcome these diseases. Some live in villages that are far from medical clinics. Even when ERCS gives regular benevolent help to the churches in Myanmar, there are many cases in families of church members where they cannot help. When a church gains a reputation for helping in a community, there is of course the "danger" that people will join such a church not because of the gospel and faith in Jesus Christ but because of the possibility of getting help for the real problems of their poverty.

We could include a series of accounts of tragic situations we have encountered in the families of church members. How does one

help with such overwhelming human need? At the same time it must be remembered that the greatest need for mankind is salvation through faith in Jesus Christ declared through the preaching of the gospel. We are struggling with many questions and learning a lot about trying to maintain the proper relationship between preaching the gospel and distributing benevolence to demonstrate the mercies and compassion of Christ. Without the latter, our preaching may seem hollow and hypocritical.

On the three Lord's Days on which I was in Myanmar, I preached each time in one of the churches in Yangon. This was an experience in itself, hard to describe in words. Most of the churches are small. Their meetings are held in very humble circumstances. Sometimes part of the audience sits on the floor. Men and women sometimes sit separately. Doors and windows sometimes have to be kept closed because of sensitive issues in the neighborhoods where the churches meet. The temperature inside can be very hot, and there are not even any fans to cool things down a bit. The whole service was, of course, in a language foreign to us. Only the sermon was in English, and this was interpreted for the benefit of the congregation, into their language. In one case the sermon was interpreted into two dia-

lects. Preaching itself is a very different experience in such circumstances. In some cases we heard familiar Psalter numbers being sung in the Burmese. This was made possible by the efforts of men in the denominations who have translated Psalter numbers into the Burmese dialects.

Living in a country like Myanmar for three weeks gives one all kinds of interesting things to write about. Daily life is always full of so many new sights and experiences it is hard to take it all in. Yangon is a city of five million inhabitants. It has a very unusual culture. Travel in the states is very restricted for Westerners. One cannot go any farther than five kilometers from the city limits. In the poorer areas people are living in homes made mostly of bamboo and with thatched roofs. Sometimes the homes do not even have four walls. Restrictions in the country make the importation of new cars very difficult. Most of the cars on the road are twenty and even thirty years old and in a state of very serious disrepair. Lots of them are belching clouds of black smoke that fills the air wherever you go. Many roads are unpaved and sometimes dusty. There are frequent tropical rains that flood the streets and leave garbage strewn all over the streets when the water stops flowing. There are also sometimes ox-driven

carts on the road, and carts and wagons towed or pushed by man. Few of the common people own their own cars. Most must travel by public transport. Public buses often wait at bus stops long enough for the conductors to make sure they are always jammed full of riders. Many of the buses are actually open trucks, so crowded that people on them are sometimes hanging on the back or sitting on the top.

Men and women in the streets wear "longees," a skirt unique to Burma. Many of the women you meet on the streets, and also the children, have their faces painted with a light brown paste that is supposed to help them keep cool and is also perhaps considered cosmetic.

The currency exchange is 1,100 kyats (pronounced chets) to one American dollar. The largest denomination in common usage is 1,000 kyats. So one is always dealing in large denominations and with many bills. None of the taxis have meters. A taxi ride always begins with a haggle over the price. One is often approached by beggars on the street, and many of these have the appearance of a very hard and deprived life. We want badly to give to such desperate people, but this is not always the wisest thing to do.

In the shopping areas there are lots of street vendors selling many inexpensive wares, strange fruits and vegetables, and foods that most of us Westerners hardly dare to eat. The streets are lined with rows of curious shops, many of which are eating places. However, one has to be very careful in stopping for a meal at one of these. It is easy to get sick from food that has been prepared in ways that are unsanitary by our standards. We are hopelessly defenseless against the many germs and diseases around in the country. The tropical weather makes this worse. In fact, it is to be expected that if you are in Myanmar for a few weeks you will quite likely get sick at some time, or you will maybe be




Rev. denHartog preaching with two interpreters

sick for the first few days after you return home. I am very thankful to the Lord for keeping me in good health all the time to be able to speak at the seminar.

We learned to know God's people in the midst of all of these experiences, God's people from a strange land and with a culture very different from ours. We count it a very great privilege to have lived and walked among them and to have learned about the hardships and difficulties of their daily lives. Especially we count it a great privilege to have taught the truth of the gospel of Jesus Christ among

them. We hope that we have by the grace of God deepened their love for this truth and the blessed hope in Jesus Christ it proclaims. In spite of language differences, we have enjoyed Christian fellowship with them. We can now pray for them with much greater understanding and concern.

We have also learned in new and deeper ways how blessed we are in the lands where we live. In the providence of God we enjoy so many blessings in our everyday life — the freedoms we have, the comforts we enjoy, the ease of travel-

ing from place to place, the opportunities we have, the modern medical care that is so readily available. All these things we often take so much for granted. May God also make us every day profoundly aware of the truth that He declares in His Word: to whom much is given, from him much is also required. May He give daily the grace necessary to use our great wealth for His glory and also with care and compassion for so many others in the world who have so very much less than we do, and for whom life is such a daily struggle filled with so many hardships. 

Decency and Order

Rev. Ronald Cammenga

Reconciliation of Secret Sins

"Secret sins of which the sinner repents, after being admonished by one person in private or in the presence of two or three witnesses, shall not be laid before the consistory."
Church Order, Article 73.

Introduction

This is the section of the Church Order that deals with Christian discipline. The opening articles of this section make plain the conviction of our Reformed fathers that Christian discipline does not begin with the consistory, but with the members of the congregation mutually. They were convinced of this because this is the clear teaching of Scripture. A number of passages can be cited. I Thessalonians 5:14 underscores the duty of believers mutually:

"Now we exhort you, brethren, warn them that are unruly, comfort the feebleminded, support the weak, be patient toward all men." In Romans 5:14 the apostle writes, "And I myself also am persuaded of you, my brethren, that ye also are full of goodness, filled with all knowledge, able also to admonish one another." In Galatians 6:1 he exhorts the saints, "Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted." But the passage that most clearly emphasizes the calling of the individual believer with respect to a fellow believer who has sinned against him is Jesus' well-known instruction in Matthew 18:15-17: "Moreover if thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and

tell him his fault between thee and him alone; if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother. But if he will not hear thee, then take with thee one or two more, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established. And if he neglect to hear them, tell it unto the church: but if he neglect to hear the church, let him be unto thee as an heathen man and a publican."

The discipline of the elders ought ordinarily to follow the mutual discipline of the members of the church. Official church discipline is really only the continuation of the discipline of the members among themselves. Ecclesiastical censure ought to begin only after individual discipline has failed to bring about repentance and reconciliation.

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

The members of the church must continually be reminded of their calling according to Matthew 18. Through the preaching of the Word and the instruction of the elders the members must be confronted with their responsibility to admonish personally those who have sinned against them. The neglect of this calling leads inevitably to hierarchy in the church. Anyone who refuses to do his duty in this regard makes himself worthy of Christian discipline.

Ecclesiastical censure ought to begin only after individual discipline has failed to bring about repentance and reconciliation.

History of Article 73

Already the Synod of Wesel, 1568, decided that

As far as censure and punishment concerning a person's way of life is concerned, the institution of Christ ought to be observed in everything so that in the case of secret sins, which are not accompanied by public offense, no one be hauled before the tribunal of the consistory, unless he has with a stubborn heart despised and rejected the frequently repeated admonitions.

The first general synod of the Dutch churches, the Synod of Emden, 1571, included the following article in its church order:

Secret sins, for which the sinner having been admonished in private or with two or three witnesses shows sorrow, shall not be brought to the attention of the consistory; but secret sins which might bring harm and ruin to the general welfare or to the churches, such as treason, or seducing of souls, shall be reported to the minister so that after his advice it may be determined what must be done.

Emden maintained the provision of Christ set down in Matthew 18. But in addition it ruled that secret sins that constituted a great threat to the state or church, like treason

or heresy, should be reported to the minister of the church. Undoubtedly it was to be disclosed to the minister so that his counsel might be sought regarding whether or not the matter should be reported to the civil authorities or the consistory. There are sins so serious in their nature that, even though they were not widely known, because of the potential damage to state or church, they warranted, in the mind of the synod, alerting the proper authorities.

Our present Article 73 is substantially that which was drafted by the Synod of Dordt, 1574: "Secret sins of which the sinner repents, having been admonished in private by two or three witnesses, shall not be brought to the consistory." The Synod of Dordt dropped the second provision of the Synod of Emden. Neither was that second provision reinserted in any of the following redactions of the Church Order.

"Secret" Sins

The Dutch word *heimelijk* is used in both Article 72 and Article 73 of our Church Order. In Article 72 it is translated "private," and in Article 73 it is translated "secret." There is a difference, however, between private and secret. From a certain point of view there is seldom a sin that is strictly private, that is, a sin that concerns the sinner himself only. Inevitably and invariably the sinner's sin affects not only himself personally, but others as well. Sin always results in collateral damage. The consequence of sin is that it affects others to whom the sinner is related — wife or husband, children or parents, brothers and sisters in the congregation. There are, nevertheless, sins that are committed secretly, not openly and in public. Secret sins that are repented of and for which reconciliation has been

accomplished are not to be laid before the consistory for its action.

What is the difference between secret sins and public sins? It is impossible strictly to differentiate between secret and public sins. What may be judged to be a secret sin, or at least not a public sin, in one congregation may be judged to be a public sin in another. The nature of the sin and the circumstances surrounding the sin must be taken into consideration in any determination. A sin not widely known in a larger congregation may be considered a private sin. That same sin committed by a member in a smaller congregation, just because of its smaller size, may be judged to be a public sin because although only a few have knowledge of the sin, those few constitute a significantly larger proportion of the congregation. Careful judgments must be made by individual believers and by consistories in making such determinations.

Even though no definitive list of secret and public sins can be made, it is possible to establish general guidelines. Generally it may be said that sins are to be regarded as secret sins when they have been committed in secret and when subsequently the sin has not become widely known either in the church or in the community at large.

A sin is to be regarded as a public sin under the following circumstances.

1. The sin has been committed in public and is a matter of common knowledge, or at least has the potential of being known publicly.
2. The sin has been committed in secret, but its consequences are destined to become known publicly. This would be the case, for example, of the sin of fornication that results in pregnancy.
3. Sins that are reported in the public media, such as the newspaper or television.
4. Sins that are reported to the consistory after brotherly admoni-

tion has run its course and not resulted in repentance and reconciliation.

5. Secret sins that are wrongly publicized or wrongly brought to the attention of the consistory.

It stands to reason that secret sins are not to be dealt with by means of public censure. Secret sins do not give occasion for the world to blaspheme the name of Christ. Secret sins do not defame the name of the church before unbelievers. Since there is no danger that the honor of Christ and the holiness of the church will be attacked, there is no necessity for public censure to defend Christ's honor or the church's holiness. Secret sins do not either pose a threat to other members of the church who might be tempted to the same sin. Since no stumbling block is placed before the other members of the church, there is no need for public rebuke before the congregation.

A word needs to be said about secret sins that are wrongly made public or wrongly brought to the attention of the consistory. It may happen that the consistory becomes aware of the sin of a member through gossip or because the matter is prematurely reported to the consistory. When a secret sin has been wrongly publicized, the sinning brother cannot be dealt with privately. Through no fault of his own, he must submit to public censure. But in this case, the consistory must hold the person or persons accountable who divulged a secret sin. Such an individual exposes himself to the exercise of Christian discipline for not following the rule of Christ laid down in Matthew 18.

Reconciliation of Secret Sins

Secret sins that are repented of are not to be brought before the consistory. Article 73 very clearly states that secret sins that have been dealt with according to Christ's rule in Matthew 18 and of which the sinner has repented are

not to be reported to the consistory. No consistory may receive the report of a secret sin that has been repented of and for which reconciliation has been accomplished. Only if the sinner obstinately refuses to repent of his sin must the matter be brought to the attention of the consistory for its action. Only the sinner's stubborn persistence in his sin makes the revelation of his sin necessary.


Article 73 implies that when a member comes to the consistory to lodge an accusation of sin against another member of the congregation, the consistory must immediately inquire of the accuser whether he has followed the way of Matthew 18. The accuser must be able to verify that he has indeed followed the prescribed way. This must also be verified by those who have served as his witnesses in admonishing the erring brother. No consistory may act on an accusation without making this definite determination. If it becomes plain that the accuser has not followed any or all of the steps of Matthew 18, he must be admonished and shown the door.

The article makes clear that one must not only remain silent while carrying out the steps of Matthew 18, but he must also remain silent after his going the way of Matthew 18 results in the sinner's reconciliation. For all time he is bound by the rule of Christ to be silent about the secret sin committed by the brother in the past. Not to the consistory, but not either to anyone else, is the brother's sin ever to be disclosed. This is the rule of love in the congregation, the love that covers a multitude of sin. This is the rule of love that aims at protecting the brother's name and reputation in the church. Love is concerned not to tarnish the brother's standing in the congregation and unnecessarily to bring shame on him.

Secret sins of which the sinner "repents" are not to be brought before the consistory. There must be genuine repentance. It is not enough that the brother acknowledges his sin. He must repent of his sin. He must confess his sin and he must express real sorrow over his sin. Only then can reconciliation properly be affected.

But when there is genuine repentance, that is the end of the matter. That is the end of the matter because the purpose of Christian discipline, whether it is private admonition or ecclesiastical censure, has been achieved. That purpose is the restoration of the brother. When that end has been attained, the discipline ceases. Only if the sinner refuses to repent may Christian discipline proceed.

It must be the fervent desire of the one who follows the course of Matthew 18 to resolve the matter before it becomes necessary for him to inform the consistory. The steps of Matthew 18 may not be followed formally so that as quickly as possible the matter may be reported to the consistory. The one following the way of Matthew 18 must be desirous of avoiding, at all costs, the necessity of bringing the matter before the elders of the church. Not just the letter of Matthew 18 must be followed, but the spirit of Matthew 18.

Articles 72 and 73 of our Church Order uphold the will of Christ in Matthew 18. In doing so, they promote the unity of the church, as well as the honor of God in the lives of the members. For the sake of God's glory and for the sake of the church's peace, every believer ought to be committed to follow the way of Matthew 18. And every consistory ought to be determined to maintain the way of Matthew 18 in the life of the congregation committed by Christ to their care. 

*When there is
genuine
repentance,
that is the end
of the matter.*

What God Is This?

Dave Hunt's Accurate Representation of the God of Arminianism

What Love Is This? Calvinism's Misrepresentation of God, by Dave Hunt. Sisters, OR: Loyal Publishing, 2002. 436pp. \$15.99 (paper).

To the long list of human hammerers who have shattered themselves on the anvil of the gospel of God's sovereign grace, add Dave Hunt. *What Love Is This?* is not so much an attempted refutation of "Calvinism" as it is a deliberate resurrection of all the misrepresentations and slanders with which the enemies of the gospel of grace through the ages have thought to destroy it. The book is a 400-page elaboration of the "calumnies" of "the doctrine of the Reformed churches concerning predestination and the points annexed to it" briefly outlined in the "Conclusion" of the Canons of Dordt. Upon Dave Hunt now falls the warning of the Synod of Dordt: "the synod warns calumniators themselves to consider the terrible judgment of God which awaits them for bearing false witness against the confessions of so many churches, for distressing the consciences of the weak, and for laboring to render suspected the society of the truly faithful."

Hunt repudiates and blasphemes all five of the leading doctrines that make up the gospel of salvation by grace alone as confessed by the Synod of Dordt, the doctrines popularly remembered in "TULIP."

Misrepresentation of Calvinism

He persistently misrepresents the Reformed faith. According to Hunt, the Reformed faith teaches, "God created [people] totally depraved, caused [people] to sin, then withheld the grace [they] needed for salvation." The result is that people cannot be justly held accountable (p. 287). It escapes Mr. Hunt's notice that his response to the Reformed faith is precisely that which the apostle says will always be the response to the gospel of sovereign grace by the enemy of the gospel. "Thou wilt say then unto me, Why doth he yet find fault? For who hath resisted his will?" (Rom. 9:19).

With the shrewdness that the enemies of grace have always shown in their public attacks upon the gospel, Hunt makes the Calvinistic doctrine of reprobation the main issue. If we are to believe Hunt, the central message of Calvinism is God's predestination of multitudes to hell.

Arminians put the blame for man's eternal punishment upon man himself for rejecting, by his own free will, the gospel, which he could have accepted through God's gracious enabling; whereas the Calvinists laid sin itself and the damnation of man totally upon God who simply predestined everything to turn out that way (p. 84).

Recurring with monotonous regularity is the line, "God, according to Calvinism, is pleased to damn billions" (pp. 42, 403). Hunt misrepresents the Calvinistic doctrine of reprobation as the arbitrary decree of a cruel tyrant that does not have the least respect or view to any sin. And Hunt solemnly assures the readers that this doctrine was invented by Augustine and refined by John Calvin.

The truth is radically different in every point. The main message of Calvinism in contrast to Arminianism is not reprobation but election. In sovereign love, God has graciously chosen unto eternal life multitudes out of all nations and peoples who "lie under the curse, and are deserving of eternal death" (Canons of Dordt, I/1). Arminianism, in contrast, teaches that God chose those whom He foresaw would distinguish themselves as worthy of election and salvation by believing.

In their well known creed, the Canons of Dordt, Calvinists have

Prof. Engelsma is professor of Dogmatics and Old Testament in the Protestant Reformed Seminary.

The major difference [between the Canons of Dordt and the doctrine of the Arminians] is obvious: the

publicly and officially declared that they do not acknowledge, but “detest with their whole soul,” the notion that “God, by a mere arbitrary act of His will, without the least respect or view to any sin, has predestinated the greatest part of the world to eternal damnation, and has created them for this very purpose.”

And the author of the doctrine of reprobation is neither Augustine nor Calvin. It was Jesus who taught that there are certain persons who are not His sheep by divine election and that this is the reason why they do not believe in Him (John 10:26). It was Jesus who taught that some men were not given to Him by the Father in eternal election and that He does not intercede for them as sympathetic high priest (John 17:9). Faithful to their Lord, it was the apostles of Christ who taught that God hardens those whom He has fitted to destruction and that God appointed some to stumble at the Word, being disobedient (Rom. 9:17-22; I Pet. 2:8). In confessing reprobation as forming one decree with biblical election, which is the choice to eternal life of *some only*, Augustine and Calvin honored the Word of God and proved themselves pastors and teachers sent by the exalted Christ. Hunt, on the other hand, by raving against the Word of Christ and His apostles, shows himself to be a false prophet.

As for Hunt's repeated assertion that Calvinism teaches it was God's good pleasure to damn billions, as though this reflects badly on Calvinism, the difference between Hunt and Calvinism is this. Calvinism teaches that God damns “billions” on account of their own unbelief and other sins according to His eternal good pleasure. Hunt teaches that God damns “billions” on account of their unbelief *contrary to and in spite of* His good pleasure. Hunt's gospel delivers not one of the damned “billions.” But it does lose the biblical God,

for the God of Scripture does all His good pleasure (Ps. 115:3; Is. 46:10; Eph. 1:11).

Defense of Arminianism

No Reformed theologian will take Hunt's book seriously as an argument against Reformed Christianity. Hunt denies that Romans 9 refers to salvation and damnation (pp. 261ff.), that Exodus 33:19 proclaims the particularity of divine grace (p. 312), and that Acts 13:48 teaches election as the source of faith (p. 210; Hunt changes the word “ordained” to “disposed”).

When Hunt denies that he is defending Arminianism, he is disingenuous. As his hatred for Calvinism is unmistakably that of historical Arminianism, so the doctrines he maintains against Calvinism are exactly those held by that form of Pelagianism. Hunt defends election conditioned by God's foreknowledge of those who would believe; the natural ability of every sinner to believe when presented with the gospel; Christ's death as payment for the sins of every human, but effectual for actual redemption only upon the condition of faith; and grace dependent upon the sinner's own acceptance of the offered grace by his alleged free will and therefore resistible.

Although Hunt differs from traditional Arminianism by confessing “eternal security,” his doctrine is not the Reformed and biblical truth of perseverance. For Hunt, one who believes with the cheap decision for Christ of his Arminian theology is guaranteed heaven even though afterwards he lives a completely wicked life without performing even one good work (p. 412). This antinomism of modern Arminianism is more than interesting. It is the tacit acknowledgment by the Arminians that the salvation offered by their theology is not the salvation of Jesus Christ by His Spirit. Jesus Christ does not save only from the punishment of sin; He saves from sin.

The Issues in the Controversy

Hunt is a knowledgeable Arminian. He knows the issues between Arminianism and the Reformed faith and states them clearly. The issue is the universality or particularity of the love of God: “The issue is whether God loves all without partiality and desires all to be saved. Unquestionably, Calvinism denies such love” (p. 301). The issue is the resistibility or sovereignty of grace: “Here we must agree with Arminius, who said, ‘Grace is not an omnipotent act of God, which cannot be resisted by the free-will of men’” (p. 291). The issue is the freedom or the bondage of the will: “Nor is there any reason ... why man ... could not also choose between good and evil, God and Satan, and genuinely open his heart to Christ without first being regenerated”; “no one ... is made willing against his will but must have been willing to be made willing”; “there is only one biblical explanation for God taking some to heaven and sending others to hell: Scripture declares that salvation is a genuine offer, that men may *choose* either to receive or to reject Christ, and that God in His omniscient foreknowledge knows how each person will respond” (pp. 131, 183, 266).

Contrary to the impression Hunt works hard to leave with the reader, the main difference between Hunt's Arminian theology and Calvinism is not Calvinism's doctrine of the perishing of many. The main difference is their doctrine of salvation. Hunt's gospel is a command to sinners to save themselves by willing in the day of their power; Calvinism's gospel is the promise that God will save unwilling sinners according to His gracious will, making them willing in the day of His power. Hunt's gospel has a helpless God depending upon the will of the sinner; Calvinism has helpless men and women depending upon the will of God. The vaunted love

of God of Hunt's gospel saves not one sinner—it merely makes possible that sinners save themselves; the love of God of Calvinism saves—actually *saves*—a multitude that no man can number. Hunt's gospel has all the saved in Hunt's (mythical) heaven shouting, "Hallelu—MAN"; Calvinism's gospel has the redeemed, in God's heaven, confessing and singing, "Salvation is of the Lord; Hallelu—JAH."

Hunt is plainly and utterly refuted, though he refuses to be silenced, by one Word of God: "So then it [salvation] is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy" (Rom. 9:16). "*Not of him that willeth*"—this is the anvil that shatters all proud free-will hammers.

Interest of the Book for the Reader of the SB

Despite its wretched content, the book will be of some interest to the readers of this magazine. First, the book clearly, and even violently, displays the lie of salvation by the free will of the sinner as an enemy of the gospel of grace. Arminianism is a false gospel.

Second, Hunt repeatedly cites a number of Protestant Reformed men as representatives of the gospel of grace that he opposes.

Third, Hunt bases his opposition to the gospel of grace on the texts that are commonly appealed to in Calvinistic circles in support of the well-meant offer against the Protestant Reformed confession of particular grace in the preaching of the gospel: Ezekiel 18:23; 33:11; Matthew 23:37; John 3:16; I Timothy 2:4, and others. The interpretation given these texts by Calvinistic defenders of the well-meant offer is grist for the mill of Dave Hunt and outright Arminianism.

Support for Hunt in the Well-Meant Offer

Fourth, one of Hunt's most

devastating arguments against Calvinism is the concessions that some of the leading Calvinist theologians themselves make to Arminian universalism and free will in their defense of the well-meant offer of the gospel. Cor-

*"Not of him
that willeth"—
this is
the anvil
that shatters
all proud
free-will
hammers.*

rectly, Hunt identifies a loving desire of God for the salvation of all without exception as a hallmark of the Arminian theology he opposes to Calvinism. Hunt finds this desire of God in I Timothy 2:4: "who will have all men to be saved."

Hunt then notes that John Piper, reputedly a defender of Calvinism, both concedes Arminianism's fundamental tenet and is guilty of sheer contradiction in his handling of this significant passage.

In trying to handle this passage Piper contradicts himself. He confesses that Paul is saying that "God does not delight in the perishing of the impenitent and that he has compassion on all people." Admitting that this sounds like "double talk," he sets out to show that there are "'two wills' in God ... that God decrees one state of affairs while also willing and teaching that a different state of affairs should come to pass."

About this teaching of two wills, Hunt judges, rightly: "This is double talk" (p. 273).

Hunt does not let Piper and his two wills of God off the hook with this condemnation. He comes back to Piper's doctrine a few pages later. Piper has written that he "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. Yet I also affirm that God has chosen from before the foundation of the world whom he will save from sin." Hunt calls this idea, namely, "that God has *two wills* which contradict one another, yet are not in

conflict," "an ingenious but unbiblical and irrational solution." In fact, writes Hunt, this idea of two wills is an "unblushing contradiction." Hunt exposes the folly of this popular attempt by professing Calvinists to hold both the well-meant offer and Calvinist particularism:

Let us get this straight: Piper's God desires the salvation of all men; in His sovereign imposition of Irresistible Grace he *could* save all, but doesn't because it is His "secret will" not to do so. Here we have the clearest contradiction possible. How can the Calvinist escape? Ah, Piper has found an ingenious way to affirm that God loves and really desires to save even those whom He has predestined to damnation from eternity past: God has *two wills* which, though they contradict each other, are really in secret agreement. Are we going mad? (p. 296)

In support of the fundamental Arminian doctrine of God's loving desire to save all without exception, Hunt, with every Pelagian, semi-Pelagian, Roman Catholic, and Arminian in the long history of the heresy of conditional salvation, appeals to II Peter 3:9: "not willing that any should perish." In fact, he appeals to it again and again. Against the Calvinist objection, that the text, which directs God's longsuffering "to usward," does not teach a desire on the part of God to save all men, Hunt triumphantly quotes the Presbyterian John Murray from Murray's defense of the well-meant offer, *The Free Offer of the Gospel*:

John Murray, former Westminster Seminary professor, whom Cornelius VanTil called "a great exegete of the Word of God," declared, "God does not wish that any men should perish. His wish is rather that all should enter upon life eternal by coming to repentance. The language in this part of the verse is so absolute that it is highly unnatural to envisage


Peter as meaning merely that God does not wish that any believers should perish (p. 278).

With its teachings of a resistible (saving) grace of God in the gospel for all and a loving desire of God to save all, the well-meant offer makes a defense of Calvinism against the Arminian onslaught

impossible, renders Calvinism absurd to the judgment of its foes, and concedes the truth of Arminianism in the basic articles.

What God Is This?

The gospel propounded by Dave Hunt leaves as many in hell as does the Calvinist gospel Hunt detests. Hunt's gospel, however,

adds one to the number of those who will be everlastingly miserable: God. Hunt's god is forever grieved to his heart that many whom he loved (and loves), for whom Christ died, and whom he desired (and desires) to save, perish. What god is this? Hunt's accurate representation of the god of Arminianism. 

Book Reviews



Puritan Papers, ed. D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones, vol. 1. Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2000. Pp. xii + 320. \$14.99 (paper); *Puritan Papers*, ed. J. I. Packer, vol. 2. Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2001. Pp. xii + 334. \$14.99 (paper); *Puritan Papers*, ed. J. I. Packer, vol. 3. Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2001. Pp. xii + 258. \$14.99 (paper). [Reviewed by the editor.]

The denDulk Christian Foundation in Kingsburg, California has put Reformed ministers, as well as reading laypeople, in their debt by publishing the series, *Puritan Papers*. Three volumes are out. More will be forthcoming.

The books contain the papers read and discussed at the annual conference in London, England known first as "The Puritan Conference" and after 1971 as "The Westminster Conference." The subject of the papers is mainly the many aspects of Puritanism, including history, biography, theology, controversy, worship, preaching, church government, the Christian life, and more. This alone makes the publishing of the papers worthwhile. The Reformed reader with neither the time nor the inclination to study the Puritans themselves, many of whom were wordy, can now benefit from the research and knowledge of such Puritan scholars as Iain Murray, J. I. Packer, E. F. Kevan, O. R. Johnston, and D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones.

Volume one, covering the first few conferences, 1956-1959, contains, among others, succinct essays on "The Puritans and the Doctrine of Election"; "The Witness of the Spirit: The Puritan Teaching"; "The Puritans and the Lord's Day"; "The Puritan Principle of Worship"; "The Life and Work of a Minister According to the Puritans"; "The Puritan View of Preaching the Gospel"; and "Discipline in the Puritan Congregation."


Puritanism was Calvinistic. The best of the Puritan preachers were able interpreters of the Word, generally sound theologians, and ardent seekers after the glory of God in a faithful church.

The subjects treated in the papers published in this series are not limited to the Puritans. Half of volume three is devoted to John Calvin—the man, his doctrine, and certain of his works.

Of particular interest to the Protestant Reformed reader will be the examination in various of the papers and volumes of the relation between the Reformed doctrine of election and the promiscuous preaching of the gospel with its external call to all and sundry, to repent and believe. Again and again, the speakers at the conference returned to this issue. T. E. Watson's contribution in volume one, "Andrew Fuller's Conflict with Hypercalvinism," will help explain why the Protestant Reformed rejection of the "well-meant offer of the

gospel" meets with such violent opposition from some Calvinists in Great Britain. The same article shows Fuller's and his followers' fatal compromise of the gospel of sovereign grace in their effort to defend promiscuous preaching against the English hyper-Calvinists. Fuller asserted the natural ability, as distinguished by Fuller from the moral ability, of unregenerated sinners to repent and believe. The inability of the sinner to believe, which Fuller designated "moral inability," is merely the sinner's "disinclination" to believe the gospel.

Any defense of the call of the gospel to the reprobate unconverted, or for that matter of the saving call to the elect, in terms of some ability of the sinner himself is denial of total depravity and, in principle, the corrupting of the gospel of salvation by sovereign grace. There are reasons why the call of the gospel, repent and believe, goes out indiscriminately to elect and reprobate, converted and unconverted, believers and unbelievers, but some inherent ability of the sinner himself is not one of them.

In their commendable effort to promote the Reformed faith, the denDulk Foundation is giving these books to all seminarians and professors in Reformed seminaries in North America, if not throughout the world. The Protestant Reformed Seminary is also a grateful beneficiary of this denDulk generosity. 

Evangelism Activities

We continue now with more "news" regarding recently sponsored Reformation lectures by various of our churches.

The Evangelism Committee of Hope PRC in Redlands, CA sponsored a Reformation Day lecture on October 31 in their church auditorium. Rev. M. VanderWal, their pastor, spoke on "Justification by Faith Alone versus the New Legalism."

The South Holland, IL PRC's Evangelism Committee sponsored a Reformation lecture by Rev. W. Bruinsma on November 1 on the subject, "Will There Be Faith? — The Reformation and the Next Generation." This lecture promised to answer such questions as: Are we losing the doctrines that were re-established in the Reformation? Is there a lack of zeal and enthusiasm for them? And how can we renew that Reformational spirit in our homes and churches?

The Reformed Witness Hour Committee, made up of members of Doon and Hull, IA PRCs, along with members from across the border in the Edgerton, MN PRC, sponsored their annual Fall Lecture in the Dordt College Chapel, October 25. Prof. R. Decker spoke on the topic of "Christ's Real Presence in the Preaching of the Gospel."

In an effort to expand their Christian witness in their community, the congregation of Immanuel PRC in Lacombe, AB, Canada hosted a lecture to coincide with Reformation Day on October 31. Prof. D. Engelsma spoke on the topic, "The Freedom of the Christian."

Evangelism efforts this fall also

included a Reformation Day lecture for the congregation of First PRC in Holland, MI. Their pastor, Rev. C. Terpstra, spoke on the first and foundational principle of this great work of God, "*Sola Scriptura* — Scripture Alone," at a gathering in their church on November 1. The Evangelism Committee of First in Holland has also recently received several requests for some of their Spanish material. One request came from a prison chaplain in Kansas, and another came from a young man in a Presbyterian church in Texas.

Congregation Activities

The ladies of Hull, IA PRC invited the ladies from both the Doon, IA PRC and the Edgerton, MN PRC to their annual Fall Ladies League meeting. The ladies met together November 13 at 7:00 P.M. to hear Rev. S. Key, Hull's pastor, speak on the topic, "The Angel World," taken from various passages of Scripture.

A special invitation was issued to the congregation of Immanuel PRC in Lacombe, AB, Canada, to join with their neighbors and fellow church members in First PRC in Edmonton for their annual Car Rally and Soup Supper at First of Edmonton on Remembrance Day, Monday, November 11.

Members of First PRC in Grand Rapids, MI were invited to support their church's Request Night program scheduled for Sunday evening, October 27. There was participation by the children of First, along with numbers from young people and adults, with both instrumental and vocal numbers. A light supper was served before the program.

A "Fall Harvest Dinner" was held on October 31 at Holstege Greenhouses for the members of Georgetown PRC in Hudsonville, MI. Chicken and hot dogs were

provided. Hayrides followed the dinner.

On October 11 everyone in the congregation of the Lynden, WA PRC was invited to a night of "Irish Slides" in their church auditorium, presented by their pastor, Rev. R. Hanko, who spent several years there as missionary pastor.

The adults of Hope PRC in Redlands, CA were invited to an evening of food and fellowship on October 25. Activities centered in a night of board games and a dinner of chicken with all the fixings.

The Loveland, CO PR Children's Choir, the same choir with a CD/cassette entitled, "Songs of the Covenant," presented a concert on Friday, November 8. Special numbers were provided by the young people and young adults of Loveland as well. A collection was taken for the 2003 Y.P. Convention to be hosted by Loveland in Estes Park. The consistory of Loveland, CO PRC has also approved a proposal for their church to support a Protestant Reformed orphanage in India. Members were asked to consider prayerfully this opportunity to support the Reformed education of Indian orphans. The financial commitment will be monthly, but very small if enough sign up.

Young Adult and Young People's Activities


Christianity on Campus, an Evangelism outreach of Grace PRC in Standale, MI, continues to witness to students at Grand Valley State University in Allendale, MI. Mr. Deane Wassink, a member of First PRC in Holland, MI, spoke to students in mid-November on the subject, "Discussing a Christian Vocation."

The young people of First in Holland, MI met for their monthly

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

special meeting early November to hear Prof. R. Dykstra talk about the Seminary and its work.

The young people of Peace PRC in Lansing, IL invited the young people from South Holland,

IL PRC and Cornerstone PRC in Schererville, IN to a bonfire and cookout on October 25. 

Announcements

YEARBOOK CHANGES

New address for Rev. and Mrs. Kenneth Koole:
4300 Pineway
Grandville, MI 49418
Phone: (616) 538-2575 (home)
(616) 538-6176 (study)

and a telephone change for Rev. Spriensma: 011 63 0920 210 5262.

REMINDER:

Heritage Christian High School in South Holland, IL is now in its second year of operation, teaching freshmen, sophomores, and juniors. As we plan for the addition of a senior class for 2003-2004, we ask qualified Protestant Reformed teachers to consider our need of two additional staff members. Interested individuals, please contact our Administrator, Ralph Medema, at (708) 339-1733 [rmedema@earthlink.net] or Education Committee Chairman, Bill DeJong, at (708) 946-6126 [bill@dejongequipment.com].

RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The Martha Society of the Doon PRC express their Christian sympathy to Ann Miersma in the death of her husband,

MR. HENRY MIERSMA.

May she and her family find comfort in the words from Lord's Day 1, "What is thy only comfort in life and death? That I with body and soul, both in life and death, am not my own, but belong unto my faithful Savior Jesus Christ...."

Rev. R. Smit, Pres.
Geraldine Blankespoor, Sec.

RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The Martha Society of the Doon PRC expresses Christian sympathy to Wilmina VanDenTop in the loss of her brother,

MR. HARRY BUMA.

May our heavenly Father strengthen her by His Spirit and word, "Blessed be God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort" (II Corinthians 1:3).

Rev. R. Smit, Pres.
Geraldine Blankespoor, Sec.

RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The Men's Society of Trinity PRC expresses their Christian sympathy to Jerry VanderKolk and his family in the death of his father,

MR. HENRY VANDER KOLK.

May they find comfort in the words of Psalm 116:15, "Precious in the sight of the LORD is the death of his saints."

Rev. Rodney Kleyn, President
J. Kalsbeek, Secretary

RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

It pleased our heavenly Father to take unto Himself

MR. CHARLES HUIZENGA

on November 5, 2002 at the age of 75 years. The Men's Society of the Hudsonville PRC expresses its Christian sympathy to his brother and our member, Mr. Henry Huizenga. May the family find their hope and comfort in the words of Psalm 73:23, 24, "Nevertheless I am continually with thee; thou hast holden me by my right hand. Thou shalt guide me with thy counsel, and afterward receive me to glory."

Erv Kortering, Secretary

RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The Adult Bible Society of Doon express their Christian sympathy to members Gene and Daris VanBommel in the death of Daris' father,

MR. HENRY MIERSMA.

May they and their children find comfort in the words of Psalm 27:26: "My flesh and my heart faileth: but God is the strength of my heart, and my portion for ever."

Rev. Richard Smit, Pres.
Mary VanDenTop, Vice-All

NOTICE!!!

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

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

NOTICE!!

Classis East will meet in regular session on Wednesday, January 8, 2003, at the Faith Protestant Reformed Church, Jenison, Michigan.

Jon J. Huisken
Stated Clerk