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Confessing the Son of God

Whosoever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God, God dwelleth in him, and he in God.

1 John 4:15

This text teaches us that Jesus Christ is very God. Before we look at that great truth, let us consider what the cults think of Jesus Christ. The Mormons have an extremely heretical view of Christ. Jesus, they say, was a pre-existing spirit along with the spirits of all men. The only difference between Christ and us is that He is the firstborn of the Father-God's children. Those who follow Jesus will become His heirs and, like Him, be equal with and one with God. Thus Christ is not *the* God, but He becomes one with Him along with all of mankind.

Jehovah's Witnesses teach that Christ was the highest and first-born of all God's creatures. Even

though he is sometimes designated "a god," he is not "the God." Christ has a brother, Lucifer, who rebelled, while Christ, then called Michael, the Captain of Jehovah's hosts, remained obedient. In the incarnation, Michael was changed into the form of a man. After he died, he became a spirit once again. Even though the Jehovah's Witnesses consider Christ a kind of a god, He is not *the* God, equal with Jehovah.

Christian Science makes a sharp separation between Jesus and Christ. Jesus is the man, and Christ is an impersonal divine idea. Jesus Christ is not God. He is God-like. He is a representative of God, but not in a unique way. Mrs. Eddy is viewed as the feminine representative of God, the motherhood of God, while Jesus is the masculine representative of God, the fatherhood of God. Thus Jesus Christ is not God. At most, the man Jesus possessed a divine idea.

Of the four cults, the Seventh-day Adventists are the only ones who teach that Jesus is God. However, they contradict that truth by

teaching that Christ took a polluted human nature. They say that, in His humanity, Christ partook of our sinful, fallen nature. But how can the person of the holy Son of God take a human nature that is sinful? By their doctrine of the incarnation they deny their doctrine of Christ's deity.

In contrast to all of these false teachings of the cults we have the teaching of the Spirit of God in this text, "Whosoever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God, God dwelleth in him, and he in God." Here it is declared that Jesus is the Son of God. That is the same as declaring that He is God. That is clear from Jesus' confrontation with the high priest. The high priest commanded Him in Matthew 26:63, "I adjure thee by the living God, that thou tell us whether thou be the Christ, the Son of God." When Jesus answered, "Thou hast said..." the high priest rent his clothes and said that Christ had spoken blasphemy. The high priest knew that by confessing that He was the Son of God, Jesus confessed that He was God.

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Notice that the apostle John makes this statement again in the next chapter. In 1 John 5:5 we read, "Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God?" Every place in the Bible where Jesus is called the Son of God, it is declared that He is very God.

In some passages Jesus Christ is called God, not just the Son of God. We read in Romans 9:5, "... of whom as concerning the flesh Christ came, who is over all, God blessed for ever. Amen."

There are other passages that attribute to Christ characteristics which belong only to God. Christ is said to be eternal in Micah 5:2: "...whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting." The apostle Peter ascribes omniscience to Christ when he says in John 21:17, "... Lord, thou knowest all things..." Jesus calls Himself omnipotent in Revelation 1:8: "I am Alpha and Omega ... the Almighty."

Jesus is said to have done works that only God can do. According to John 1:3, He has created the world: "All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made." In Hebrews 1:3, He is said to uphold the world providentially: "Who...upholding all things by the word of his power..." In Luke 5:20, He is said to be the Savior in that He forgives sins: "And when he saw their faith, he said unto him, Man, thy sins are forgiven thee."

In other passages divine honors are ascribed to Christ. We read of Stephen in Acts 7:59: "And they stoned Stephen, calling upon God, and saying, Lord Jesus, receive my spirit." Would a dying believer commend his spirit to anyone but God?

That brings us to the question, "What does it mean that Jesus is the Son of God, very God Himself?" First of all, it means that the only begotten Son of God was God before He became incarnate. It is

important to understand this, because several cults speak of a pre-incarnate spirit. Before His incarnation, Jesus Christ was the only begotten Son of God, the second person of the divine Trinity. He was not an impersonal spirit. He was the person of the Son of God, subsisting in the divine nature with the Father and the Spirit. As such, He was just as much God as the Father and the Spirit. He was not subservient to the Father or the Spirit, but equal to them. He possessed all the divine attributes that they possessed. He was just as infinite, sovereign, and glorious as they were. He participated in all the divine works of the Father and the Spirit. His mind was the divine mind. His will was the divine will. He was not one of three gods. The Son and the Father and the Spirit were and are the one only true God.

In the second place, that Jesus is the Son of God, very God, means that after His incarnation He remained true God. In the incarnation, the person of the eternal Son, with His divine nature, took upon Himself a human nature. Thus we read in verse 14, "...the Father sent the Son to be the Savior of the world." The Father (the triune God) sent the Son (the second person of the Trinity) into this world to be made a man to save man. That human nature of Jesus Christ was a real human nature with a body and soul. That is what John tells us in verse 2: "Hereby know ye the Spirit of God: Every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God." After the eternal Son took a human nature He remained true and eternal God. He did not give up His deity. Thus the man Jesus Christ, who walked upon this earth, preached the gospel, suffered, died, and arose again from

the dead, was and is God come in our flesh. That is what it means that Jesus is the Son of God, very God Himself.



There is a sense in which the cults confess the deity of Christ. Even though it is clear from the writings of the Jehovah's Witnesses that they do not believe that Jesus is the Son of God, they are very reluctant to admit that when they come to your door. They will even say that they believe the same thing about Jesus as you do. But when you question them they reveal the fact that what they mean is that He is a god, not *the* God. He is not equal to the one they call "Jehovah."

The Mormons are the same way. They do not want to deny that Jesus is God if they can help it. They will tell you that Jesus is the Old Testament Jehovah. They will tell you that Jesus is the creator of the world. This leaves the impression that they believe Jesus is God. What they don't tell you, unless you question them, is that Jesus is not the Father-God, but one of His sons. They also do not tell you that you can be god as much as Christ is.

Thus these cults make a confession that Jesus is the Son of God that is not sincere. They make a confession that is meant to leave the impression that Jesus is God, but it is not a true confession.

On the other hand, notice this text, "Whosoever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God..." Our calling is to confess Jesus Christ. Jesus says in Matthew 10:32, "Whosoever therefore shall confess me before men, him will I confess also before my Father which is in heaven." When we confess Jesus Christ, we are to con-

fess that He is the Son of God, very God. Our calling is to acknowl-

The man Jesus Christ, who walked upon this earth, preached the gospel, suffered, died, and arose again from the dead, was and is God come in our flesh.

edge to ourselves and to the world that Jesus Christ is God come in our flesh. We must confess Christ the way the Ethiopian Eunuch confessed Him in Acts 8:37: "...And he answered and said, I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God."

What is more, that confession must be sincere. The Mormons and Jehovah's Witnesses might make false confessions, but a true believer makes this confession from his heart. That John is speaking of a sincere confession is seen from the parallel passage in 1 John 5:5. There, instead of saying, "*confess* that Jesus is the Son of God," he says, "*believeth* that Jesus is the Son of God." This teaches us that confession is to come out of a heart of faith. We are to confess that Jesus is the Son of God because we believe that He is the Son of God. The apostle says in Romans 10:9, "That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved." Behind the confession of the mouth, there must always be the belief of the heart. If the heart does not believe it, the confession is false and not sincere.

We have to remember this when members of a cult come to our door and want to talk to us. They will try to get us to talk about all kinds of things, but they will avoid talking about Jesus Christ. They will talk about Bible study. They will talk about how terrible the world has become and how sinful it is. They will talk about the last days. But they will not bring up the subject of the deity of Jesus Christ. They will look for subjects on which they think you will agree with them. Don't let them do that to you.

Remember your calling. Confess that Jesus Christ is the Son of God. Force them to deal with that issue. Force them to admit that they do not believe that Jesus is God. To do that, you will have to take them to the Scriptures. In so doing, you will be able to show

them that they are a cult and not Christian. You will have to condemn them as false prophets, as antichrists. As John says in verse 3 of this chapter, "And every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God: and this is that spirit of antichrist...." That they do not believe that Christ, the Son of God, is come in the flesh means that they are antichrist. That is what we must confess and testify to the cults.




That brings us to the result of making this confession that Jesus Christ is the Son of God. Before we look at that, let us look at the result of *not* confessing. The Mormons, Jehovah's Witnesses, Seventh-day Adventists, and Christian Science practitioners do not have Jesus Christ. Even though they take the name of Jesus upon their lips, the name is meaningless because they deny who He really is. They speak of Jesus as if He is their Savior, but He is not their Savior. In the great day of judgment, Jesus' reaction to them will be the same as that in Matthew 7:21-23: "Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? And in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity." Jesus does not know those who are members of cults in that intimate way of love as He does His people. When Jesus knows His people in love, they know Him. They know Him as the Son of God. The cults do not know Jesus in that way.

Because they do not have Jesus, they do not have the one only true God. They are not in God and God is not in them. For God does not

deny Christ. Nor does He have anything to do with anyone who does deny Christ. One who denies Christ, denies God. This is the sad thing about the people who belong to cults. They may be "moral" people, but they do not have God.

On the other hand, the one who confesses that Jesus is the Son of God has this great benefit, "God dwelleth in him and he in God." First of all, God dwells in him. That is, the triune God dwells in his heart, through the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit of God. When a person confesses that Jesus is the Son of God and believes it in his heart, it is because He has been regenerated and God Himself has come to live within him. What a great blessing. The infinite, almighty, gracious, merciful God dwells in the heart and life of the true believer. He knows that God is near unto him. He knows God's love and mercy. He knows God's abiding presence that leads him and guides him. The great, sovereign, glorious God dwells with him and shall remain with him both in this life and in the life to come. He does not become God. But throughout eternity God will dwell with him and bless him with all the blessings of salvation.

Not only is God in him, but he is in God. He is safe and secure in the life of God. He is upheld by and lives in the life of His God. That is because he is in Jesus Christ. The believer, confessing that Jesus is the Son of God, is united to Christ and is a member of the body of Christ. Because of this union with Christ, the Son of God, he is united with God. In the way of his faith in the Son of God, he is one with Jesus Christ and the Father.

Let us take care, therefore, that we not be like the Jehovah's Witnesses, Mormons, and other cults who deny the deity of Christ. Let us confess from our hearts that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, very God Himself. 

The Unconditional Covenant in Contemporary Debate— and the Protestant Reformed Seminary* (2)

One of the worst threats to the true church of Christ in the world since the time of the Reformation is the present development of covenant doctrine that denies justification by faith alone. Theologians are working out the implications of the doctrine of a conditional covenant. They are demonstrating that the doctrine of a conditional covenant implies conditional justification. The conditions are faith as a work of man and, therefore, also the good works that faith performs. Thus is destroyed the whole system of doctrine of salvation by the sovereign, particular grace of God, contained in the Reformed and Presbyterian confessions.

This development of covenant doctrine has advocates in many reputedly conservative Reformed and Presbyterian denominations in North America. These advocates are prominent men: ministers, ruling elders, and professors of theology. They are vocal. Unchecked by discipline, the movement is spreading.

Since the movement is the natural, necessary development of the doctrine of a conditional covenant, it is necessary that concerned Reformed Christians know something of the longstanding controversy in the Reformed churches between the doctrine of an unconditional covenant and the teaching of a conditional covenant. The previous editorial sketched the doctrine of the unconditional covenant.

The Conditional Covenant

Opposed to the teaching of the unconditional covenant is the doctrine of a conditional covenant. This is the doctrine that has come to prevail in most Reformed and Presbyterian churches today. Reformed churches and theologians promote this doctrine aggressively. The last few years have seen a veritable spate of books, articles, and conferences defending the conditional covenant.

That the covenant is conditional means that the effectual and lasting establishment of the covenant with a man, a man's enjoyment of the saving intention, power, and blessings of the covenant, and a man's finally receiving everlasting salvation in and by the covenant *depend on something he himself must do*. The covenant depends on a condition. Traditionally, those who have argued for this covenant doctrine have identi-

fied the condition as faith. The modern defenders of a conditional covenant agree, but add, as another condition, the good works that faith performs.

According to the conditional covenant, God on His part initially establishes His covenant with many more than only those who are finally saved. He establishes it by a gracious, but conditional promise to all. Whether the covenant actually avails to the salvation of anyone, whether anyone receives the covenant's blessings, whether the covenant continues with anyone, whether the covenant has its intended end in the everlasting salvation of anyone depend squarely upon his fulfilling the conditions of believing the promise and performing the good works of faith.

The reference in Reformed circles is especially to baptized children. The teaching of a conditional covenant maintains that God makes His covenant with all the children of godly parents alike, graciously promising His covenant and its salvation to them all. But promise, covenant, and covenant salvation are conditional. The child must perform the works of believing and obeying. On this basis, the promise becomes effectual and the covenant is established in a saving way.

* This is the text of the speech given at the convocation exercises of the Protestant Reformed Seminary on September 4, 2002. The first installment appeared in the January 1, 2003 issue of the *Standard Bearer*.

The "Declaration of Principles"

The Protestant Reformed Churches (PRC) have formulated and adopted the doctrine that the covenant of God with His people in Jesus Christ is unconditional. In 1951, they adopted the doctrinal statement known as the "Declaration of Principles." Surprisingly, the "Declaration" does not contain the explicit statement that the covenant is unconditional, although this was the issue in drawing up the document and the intent and force of the content of the document. The "Declaration" declares the covenant to be unconditional by stating that the covenant promise is unconditionally for the elect children of believers only.

This article [Canons of Dordt, II/8] very clearly teaches: 1. That all the covenant blessings are for the elect alone. 2. That God's promise is unconditionally for them only: for God cannot promise what was not objectively merited by Christ. 3. That the promise of God bestows the objective right of salvation not upon all the children that are born under the historical dispensation of the covenant, that is, not upon all that are baptized, but only upon the spiritual seed.

The "Declaration of Principles" goes on to strike a fatal blow against the teaching that is fundamental to the doctrine of a conditional covenant, namely, the teaching that faith is a condition: "Faith is not a prerequisite or condition unto salvation but a gift of God, and a God-given instrument whereby we appropriate the salvation in Christ."

That the covenant of grace is unconditional has been the stand of the PRC from the beginning of their history, although they did not make the doctrine official church dogma by synodical decision until 1951. Already in 1927, Herman Hoeksema wrote a series of articles in the *Standard Bearer* (later published as *Believers and Their Seed*) explaining and defending the doc-

trine of the unconditional covenant. The truth of the unconditional covenant, Hoeksema insisted, is fundamental to the gospel of grace. Adherence to and development of this doctrine are fundamental to the existence of the PRC. It was the teaching of a conditional covenant, especially by Prof. William Heyns, that lay behind the Christian Reformed Church's adoption of the doctrine of universal, saving, resistible grace in the preaching of the gospel—the "well-meant offer of the gospel"—in the first point of common grace of 1924.

Because the "Declaration of Principles" continues to draw sharp criticism from Reformed churches and theologians and because this year is the fiftieth anniversary of the schism in the PRC over the doctrine of the unconditional covenant, I want, in passing, to speak a deliberate word in defense of the "Declaration."

First, a denomination of churches has every right, indeed a solemn duty, to decide doctrinal controversy by binding synodical decision. The only stipulation is that the churches decide the controversy on the basis of the Reformed creeds. That the "Declaration" is synodical appeal to the confessions is plain on the very face of it. The document is hardly more than an exposition of the "Three Forms of Unity" and the Reformed form for baptism with regard to the conditionality or unconditionality of the covenant. The refusal of Reformed and Presbyterian churches today to decide doctrinal controversy over creation, eschatology, marriage, and, of late, justification is not a virtue. This refusal does not preserve the truth of the Word of God in those churches, nor does it serve the unity of the churches.

Second, contrary to the re-

peated charge that the "Declaration of Principles" adds a new creedal document to the "Three Forms of Unity"—a fourth confession—the "Declaration" only derives the truth of the unconditional covenant from the Reformed confessions. The "Declaration of Principles" applies the theology of the Canons of Dordt to the doctrine of the covenant.

Third, insofar as the "Declaration" does make explicit what is implicit in the "Three Forms of Unity," does apply to the doctrine of the covenant truths that the "Three Forms of Unity" apply to the gospel of salvation, and does formulate and systematize concerning the covenant that which is scattered unsystematically throughout the "Three Forms of Unity," it *develops* the biblical and Reformed doctrine of the covenant. There is legitimate place in the life of Reformed churches for the development of dogma. Development of dogma is healthy. The PRC do not hesitate to claim that the Spirit of truth has significantly developed the important doctrine of the covenant in the theological work of the PRC and in the life of the members of these churches.

Fourth, to the critics who always complain that the "Declaration" is "extra-confessional binding," I put the question: "What about the *content* of the Declaration"? Is the "Declaration" right in its *argument*, regardless whether it is "extra-confessional binding"? Is it right when it contends and claims to demonstrate that the Heidelberg Catechism, the Belgic Confession, the Canons of Dordt, and the Reformed baptism formula teach the unconditional covenant? If the "Declaration" is wrong about this, show the error. This should not be difficult. And then demon-

The PRC do not hesitate to claim that the Spirit of truth has significantly developed the important doctrine of the covenant in the theological work of the PRC and in the life of the members of these churches.

strate that the creeds teach a conditional covenant.

Denial of Grace

By the adopted "Declaration," the PRC officially condemn the teaching of a conditional covenant. They condemn it as nothing less than the denial of the gospel of grace. The PRC charge that the doctrine of a conditional covenant is the introduction of the Arminian heresy into the theology of the covenant: conditional salvation; salvation dependent upon the sinner.

The PRC make this charge against the doctrine of a conditional covenant even though the proponents seek to escape the force of the charge by responding that God must enable the children and others to fulfill the conditions. Even though it is God who gives men the ability to fulfill the conditions, the fact remains that, according to the defenders of the conditional covenant, the covenant with its blessings and salvation *depends*

upon an act of man. Granted that God gives the power to believe and to perform good works, the teaching is still that one gets or keeps the covenant, or renders it effectual, *because* he believes and *because* he performs good works. Man's faith and obedience are now the *cause* of the covenant, not the instrument and fruit.

What makes the charge of the PRC against the conditional covenant even more convincing is that the conditional covenant teaches that God gives the gracious promise of the covenant to all alike. The explanation why some enjoy the blessings of the covenant, and are saved, is not the promise, for the promise is given to all alike. The explanation is rather that some fulfill the conditions, without which the promise fails, whereas others do not fulfill the conditions. The explanation of the realization of the covenant with a man and of his enjoying the covenant unto life eternal is not the promising God, but the working man.

The doctrine of a conditional covenant is the teaching of universal, conditional, resistible, losable grace — universal, conditional, resistible, losable, *saving* grace.

The charge of the PRC against the conditional covenant is that it is, in principle, the denial of all the doctrines of grace. It militates against the entire system of doctrine contained in the "Three Forms of Unity" and in the Westminster Standards.

And this is the doctrinal development that is taking place today. This is the "contemporary debate" regarding the issue whether the covenant is conditional or unconditional. Prominent theologians in many of the reputedly conservative Reformed and Presbyterian churches in North America are attacking the cardinal truths of salvation by grace alone — *all* of them — *on the basis of the doctrine of a conditional covenant.*

— DJE
(to be continued) 

Marking the Bulwarks of Zion

Prof. Herman Hanko

Jerome Bolsec and Predestination (1)

Introduction

Because of Calvin's prominence in the work of the Reformation and because of his influence throughout the continent of Europe, no single reformer was attacked so fiercely by innumerable opponents as the reformer of Geneva. And, although many doctrines of the reformers came under the furious attacks of enemies of the Reformation, and al-

though many doctrines taught by Calvin himself were opposed by heretics of every sort, no single doctrine was more bitterly hated than Calvin's teaching of sovereign predestination, including both election and reprobation.

The passing of the centuries has not brought an end to these attacks. One would have some difficulty counting the supposed Calvinists who are resentful of Calvin's teaching on predestination. Sometimes this doctrine is forthrightly denied. Sometimes, in a more subtle way, heretics claim to agree with Calvin, but insist that he never taught sovereign and double predestination. Sometimes Calvin's doctrine is de-

stroyed by silence — professed Calvinists refuse to speak of it or to preach it.

And if there are those who will, in a somewhat grudging way, express a cool loyalty to Calvin's doctrine of election, they express violent disagreement with Calvin's doctrine of reprobation. In fact, no single doctrine of all Calvin's teaching has been so frequently repudiated as the truth of sovereign reprobation. So true is this that one can very well make this one doctrine the dividing line between true Calvinists and pseudo-Calvinists. Indeed, every claim that Calvin taught a universal atonement, a well-meant gospel offer, a grace

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common to all men, a free will of man, is a claim smashed on the rock of Calvin's insistence on the biblical truth of sovereign predestination, including sovereign reprobation.

Perhaps no single controversy in the life of Calvin brought out more clearly Calvin's insistence on the absolute sovereignty of God in election and salvation, but also in reprobation and damnation, than the controversy that Calvin had with Jerome Bolsec. To that controversy we now turn.

Bolsec's Life and Teaching

Not much is known of Bolsec's early life. He was probably born in Paris in the early part of the sixteenth century. He entered the Carmelite monastic order but soon began a pattern which was to characterize his entire life. He had a quarrelsome and turbulent character and was bold beyond the boundaries of discretion. These characteristics came out in his sermons, and he was soon expelled from the monastery.

Embittered by the treatment he received, he left the Romish Church and embraced Protestantism. Strangely, he sought refuge with the Duchess of Ferrara. It was at her home that John Calvin also stayed for a few months. She was an extremely interesting lady. Schaff writes of her:

She was small and deformed, but noble, pious, and highly accomplished lady.... She gathered around her the brightest wits of the Renaissance, from Italy and France, but she sympathized still more with the Spirit of the Reformation, and was fairly captivated by Calvin. She chose him as the guide of her conscience, and consulted him hereafter as a spiritual father as long as he lived.

Things did not go so well with Bolsec, however. The Duchess of Ferrara admitted him to her home as an almoner, i.e., one who distributes money to the poor on the

behalf of others, whether a king or queen, a rich member of the nobility, or a monastery. During his stay with this gracious woman, Bolsec acquired an education in medicine and proudly bore the title of "Doctor of Medicine" the rest of his life. But again his temperament got him into trouble and he was forced to leave her home. Theodore Beza, the colleague and successor of Calvin and author of Calvin's biography, claims that Bolsec was guilty of deception. Whether it was in connection with his position as almoner or involved something else, Beza does not say.

In 1550 Bolsec settled in Geneva, became the private physician of M. de Falais, and claimed to be an ardent admirer of Calvin. M. de Falais was a nobleman who lived in Geneva and was a personal friend of Calvin.

If Bolsec had left well enough alone and stuck to his profession, things might have been different. But he was too proud for that, and his pride led him to dabble in theology. The more he became acquainted with what Calvin taught, the more he came to question Calvin's doctrine of predestination. But he was not content to learn more at the feet of one of the pastors in Geneva; he openly launched a frontal attack on Calvin and the truth of predestination, especially reprobation. He publicly asserted that Calvin's god was a liar and a hypocrite, who encouraged the basest criminals and operated as Satan.

Such blasphemy could not go unpunished. The Venerable Company of Pastors admonished him for such folly, and Calvin attempted to instruct him on the biblical teaching concerning this doctrine. But it is impossible to teach God's truth to a proud man. Although he seemed for a time to submit, he soon reverted to his public opposition and blasphemy against God. The Venerable Company of Pastors brought him before their body. They examined him concerning his views, and in

their assembly he boldly expressed what he believed. Schaff sums up his position in these words:

He acknowledged that a certain number were elected by God to salvation, but he denied predestination to destruction; and, on closer examination, he extended election to all mankind, maintaining that grace efficacious to salvation is equally offered to all, and that the cause, why some receive and others reject it, lies in the free-will, with which all men were endowed. At the same time he abhorred the name of merits. This, in the eyes of Calvin, was a logical contradiction and an absurdity; for he says, "If some were elected, it surely follows that those who come to Christ are drawn by the Father through the peculiar operation of the Holy Spirit on the elect, it follows either that all must be promiscuously elected, or that the cause of election lies in each man's merit."

It is of more than passing interest what Calvin has to say about the relation between Bolsec's position and the whole concept of merit. Bolsec, as so many others who have followed him in his views, piously repudiated the idea that man could merit with God. But Calvin says, correctly, that the position that Bolsec took necessarily implies merit. If Bolsec wanted an election dependent upon the choice of man's will whether to take God's gracious offer of the grace of salvation or reject it, then those who chose to receive that grace merited with God, all their pious protestations to the contrary notwithstanding.

The Resolution to the Conflict

It seemed for a time that Bolsec was willing to accept the admonition of the Venerable Company of Pastors who exhorted him to be silent about his views and submit to the discipline of the church. But Bolsec was a proud man. He did not alter his position, and he refused to listen to his pastors.

The episode in his life that really brought his case to a head was a very dramatic one. It seems that it was the practice in Geneva to hold a meeting on Friday of every week in St. Peter's Church to instruct the people more fully in the truths of God's Word. It was conducted much like a worship service. At the meeting held on October 16, 1551, John de St. André was preaching. His text was John 8:47: "He that is of God heareth God's words: ye therefore hear them not, because ye are not of God." It is clear on the surface that this text teaches sovereign reprobation in that it ascribes the unbelief of the Jews to the fact that God has not chosen them to be His people. St. André understood the text. He explained it to mean that those who are not elect will never believe God's words, but will oppose God until they die because God gives His grace only to the elect.

Bolsec could not restrain himself. While St. André was preaching, Bolsec suddenly arose and began a long harangue against the preacher. He shouted that the everlasting destination of all men was not decided by God before they were born, that God did not determine that some go to hell and others to heaven, but that man's eternal fate is in his own hands and God willed to punish only those who refused His overtures of love, while blessing only those who accepted His promises. Bolsec heaped verbal abuse upon the clergy of Geneva and, turning to those who were present, warned them to reject the false teachings of their pastor.

What Bolsec did not know was that, near the beginning of his harangue, Calvin had walked into the sanctuary and was standing in the doorway listening to everything Bolsec said. Calvin permitted Bolsec to speak his piece, but then he stepped forward and began an address to those present in which he refuted every argument of Bolsec with Scripture, demonstrated with

many quotes that he made from memory that the truth of sovereign predestination was not an innovation but was the teaching of the venerable church father Augustine, and showed that Scripture itself taught reprobation. Beza, in commenting on this event, wrote that so complete was Calvin's address that "all felt exceedingly ashamed for the brazen-faced monk, except the monk himself."

The lieutenant of the police was also present. He arrested Bolsec and put him in prison for publicly abusing the ministers and for disturbing a worship service and the public peace.

Preparations for Bolsec's trial were made the same afternoon. The Venerable Company of Pastors drew up a summary of Bolsec's theological position. They submitted this to the Council, the ruling body in the city, responsible for the enforcement of civil law. They requested the Council to try Bolsec and require that he give an account of himself. Bolsec also shortly prepared his defense, in which he defended his theological position and asked the Council to place Calvin and the pastors before questions to which they were to give specific answers.¹

But the Venerable Company of Pastors also decided to ask the Council to seek the advice of the other cantons in Switzerland, which had, primarily under the influence of Zwingli and Bullinger, become Protestant. The attempt to do so, however, served only to reveal that the truth of sovereign predestination was not widely accepted. The advice from the cantons was disappointing, to say the least.

The errors as defined by the Council and on which they wanted the cantons to decide were, as outlined by Schaff:

1. That faith depends not on election, but election on faith.
2. That it is an insult to God to say that he abandons some to blindness, because it is his pleasure to do so.

3. That God leads to himself all rational creatures, and abandons only those who have often resisted him.

4. That God's grace is universal, and some are not more predestinated to salvation than others.

5. That when St. Paul says (Eph. 1:5), that God has elected us through Christ, he does not mean election to salvation, but election to discipleship and apostleship.

The Venerable Company of Pastors also sent a letter to the churches outlining the errors of Bolsec's position. But the other Swiss churches demonstrated their own weaknesses with respect to the truth of sovereign predestination. For the most part the churches advised the church of Geneva to be more tolerant of the views of others and to deal more gently with those who denied what they called a mysterious and perplexing doctrine. For the most part, these churches agreed with the ministers in Geneva on the doctrine of unconditional election; but they wavered on the question of reprobation and wanted no condemnation of those who opposed it.

Bullinger, perhaps the greatest theologian among the Swiss churches (other than Geneva) and the author of the Second Helvetic Confession, was more emphatic. He took exception entirely to the doctrine of reprobation and expressed displeasure with the position Geneva had adopted. He too warned against the conclusions that could be drawn from the position that God is sovereign also in reprobation. Bullinger's unwarranted criticism of the position of

1. If one would inquire how the civil government could involve itself in religious and doctrinal questions, the answer is to be found in the unique relation between the state and the church in Geneva, but also in many other Protestant countries, such as the Netherlands and the British Isles. The civil magistrate was required in this concept to "promote the true religion."

Calvin and the other Genevan pastors was the occasion for a disruption of the otherwise cordial relations between Calvin and Bullinger, although their relationship was restored before Calvin's death, when Bullinger moved closer to Calvin's position.

It is not surprising that Luther's colleague Melanchthon also took vehement exception to Calvin's position. But Melanchthon's position was synergistic,² and not at all in agreement with Luther himself, who in his great work, *The Bondage of the Will*, took

a position almost identical to that of Calvin.

...to be continued. 

2. Synergism, as we noted in an earlier article on Melanchthon, is the view that salvation is a cooperative effort between God and man.

In His Fear

Rev. Daniel Kleyn

Worship Acceptable in God's Sight

Worship of God is a big part of our lives as God's people.

In reality, the whole life of a child of God is worship. The believer is constantly in God's presence, and the whole purpose of his life is to praise and glorify God through all he thinks, says, and does. To do that is to worship God. Worship in this sense is a full-time calling and responsibility.

But when we say that worship is a big part of our lives, we have in mind our formal worship. We have in mind the time we spend reading the Scriptures, singing God's praises, and praying. We have in mind the fact that we do this privately as well as publicly; that we do it on our own, with our families, and with fellow believers. Much time is (or at least ought to be) devoted to such worship of God.

We must know, therefore, what kind of worship is pleasing to God. And one who is spiritually minded wants to know this, for he desires to worship God as He has commanded in His Word. For that reason he approaches all worship,

whether private or public, at home or in church, with this prayer in his heart: "Let the words of my mouth, and the meditation of my heart, be acceptable in thy sight, O LORD, my strength, and my redeemer" (Ps. 19:14).



To worship God is to enter God's presence in order to have fellowship with Him.

It is true that we are always in God's presence. We can never hide from Him. He is always near. But the act of worship involves consciously entering God's presence. We stop doing other things. We put aside other objects and other thoughts. And we think of and concentrate only on God. We do all this in order to have conscious fellowship with Him.

This fellowship with God is characterized especially by speech. That is true of fellowship on an earthly level, too. A husband and wife, or friends, cannot have fellowship without good communication. In order to share their joys and sorrows they must converse with each other. The same is true of our fellowship with God. We have fellowship with God by His speaking to us, and our speaking to Him.

In all true worship, God's speech comes first. In our private worship, God speaks to us through the Scriptures we read and through the words of the Psalms we sing. And in church, God speaks to us in a special way. He speaks to us through Christ. He does that first of all through the benedictions. We come into His holy presence and He says: "Beloved in the Lord Jesus Christ, grace, mercy, and peace be to you!" He also and especially speaks to us through the preaching of the gospel. We hear Christ's voice. He speaks words of comfort to our souls. Wonderful it is to hear God's speech in worship!

But in worship we also speak to Him. We do so when we sing. We do so when we pray. And we do so through the confessions we make. God gives us, by means of such conversation with Him, the opportunity and privilege of enjoying sweet fellowship with Him.

All of this shows that worship is possible only for the true believer.

The unbeliever cannot worship God. He cannot because he does not want to hear God's speech. He cannot because, even if he hears God's speech with his ears, he does not understand it. He is unable to worship because he does not know,

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and does not care to know, the proper words to speak, or the proper response to give to God's speech. He cannot converse with God, for He is not God's friend, but God's enemy. Sin causes a separation between him and God. God cannot and does not have fellowship with sinners.

Only we who are true believers can properly worship God. And we can do so only because of Christ. Through Jesus Christ we are cleansed from sin and thus acceptable in God's sight. Through Christ God receives us into His holy presence and speaks lovingly and kindly to us in worship. Also, we have been given the Spirit, who makes us spiritually minded so we want to hear what God says to us, so we understand that speech of God, and so we respond with proper praise.

Worship is the holy activity of a believer who is righteous in Jesus Christ. Only the words of *his* mouth and the meditation of *his* heart are acceptable in God's sight.



To worship God properly, we must have a proper awareness of whose presence we are in, namely, the presence of the great and the only God. We, creatures of the dust and sinners, stand before the holy and glorious God who is infinitely exalted above us. He is so holy that even the angels hide their faces from Him (Is. 6:1-4). He is so great that He holds our very lives in His hands.

This does not mean we have to be afraid of God, for we are able boldly to enter His holy presence through our Lord Jesus Christ (Heb. 4:16). But we may never forget whose presence it is that we are entering when we worship. God is not just a man. God is God.

For this reason, we must enter His presence in humility. When

we worship, we are not only to be aware of who God is, but also of what we are in comparison to Him. Even apart from the fact that we are sinners, we are nothing compared to God. He is the Creator, we are creatures. He is the eternal One, we are finite. He is the almighty God, we are weak. He is the completely independent One, we are dependent on Him for everything. There is a vast difference between God and us.

That we are sinners makes that gulf between God and us greater still. God is holy, we are unholy. God is righteous, we are unrighteous. God is good, we are by nature evil.

Therefore we may not come to God in worship with any pride. The child of God approaches God with reverence and godly fear. He is filled with awe and wonder at the fact that the great and holy God of heaven and earth allows him to approach and to speak to Him. He knows he brings nothing to God that makes him worthy of this. He approaches God through Christ, filled with humble thanks and praise.

If we fail to worship God in humility, we show that we have a very small conception of who God is. Acceptable worship requires humility.

This humility of the heart shows itself in our outward behavior. It is reflected in how we conduct ourselves in worship. It is seen, for example, in how we sit. If one slouches in his chair at home or in the pew at church, he indicates that he has a careless attitude toward being in the presence of God.

Humility of heart is also reflected in how we dress for church. Often we are tempted to dress casually, instead of in our "Sunday best." Men and boys wear jeans and tennis

shoes and have their shirts hanging out. Women and girls come casually, wearing, for example, something other than a dress. It seems this often happens on special services, as though these services are less important than worship of God on Sunday.

When we do this, it seems that we are thinking about ourselves instead of about God. It appears that we are more concerned with our own personal comfort, or with being fashionable and trendy, than with recognizing that in worship we enter the holy presence of a holy God.

The child of God should strive to reflect, both in his conduct and in his appearance, the attitude of humility that characterizes true worshippers of God.



We must also remember in all our worship of God that God is a Spirit.

Because God is a Spirit, we do not and cannot see Him with our physical eyes. As a result, we are tempted to overlook and forget who God is when we worship Him. Whenever we worship, we need to make a point of reminding ourselves who it is that we speak to, and who it is that speaks to us – God! That is necessary in family worship, in private worship, and in worship in church. It will lead us to worship God in a way that is pleasing to Him.

This means our worship will be spiritual. We are to worship God "in spirit" (John 4:24). Our worship must be from the heart. It is to be sincere. God does look at our outward conduct as we worship Him, but He is much more interested in what is in our hearts.

It is especially in this area that we fail miserably in worship. It is so easy for us simply to go through the outward motions of worship, but not to be sincere. Such worship is not acceptable in God's sight.

God is displeased when in


To worship God properly, we must have a proper awareness of whose presence we are in, namely, the presence of the great and the only God.

prayer we speak words that sound godly, but our hearts are not in it. He is displeased when we sit in church watching the clock to see if the minister is going "overtime." He is displeased when our eyes wander to watch others, or our minds are occupied with other thoughts. He is displeased when, as we sing, we are more interested in what others think of our voices than in the meaning of the words we are singing. He is displeased when in worship we act piously and godly, but harbor in our hearts

hatred toward a family member or fellow saint. In summary, He is displeased when our worship is done for men, and not for Him.

Our worship should be spiritual and sincere. That means we should mean what we say. We should mean the words we sing. We should mean it when we confess our faith in the words of the Apostles' Creed. We should mean it when we pray, having a true desire for the things we seek, and being sincerely thankful for what God


has given. There must not be an asking for grace to fight sin when our intention is to continue in that sin. There may not be thanks for all the things God gives or withholds while at the same time we question God's ways with us.

May we examine our hearts to see that our worship is sincere. May it be true of us that the words of our mouths have their source in the meditations of our hearts. And may God be pleased, by means of true worship, to comfort and feed our souls unto life eternal. 

Taking Heed to the Doctrine

Rev. James Laning

The Full Assurance of Faith Or Warning Against the Doubts of the Papist (2)

ur fathers at Dordt said that those who deny that the believer in this life normally comes to the complete assurance that he is a child of God are guilty of introducing into the churches "the doubts of the papist."¹ Over against the comfortless lies of Rome, the Reformed churches emphasized the comfort of the child of God. This comfort the child of God can and does experience only when he is assured that he has found grace in God's sight and that he will forever dwell in the house of his God.

Right at the beginning of the Heidelberg Catechism, we show that the Reformed believer con-

fesses that it is very common for the child of God to be completely assured that he will go to heaven, and that he often comes to this assurance at a very young age. We see this in the answer to the very first question of the Catechism, in which we teach our children to confess that they are assured that they belong to Christ. The following subtitle of the Catechism indicates what it was written to be:

Method of Instruction in the
Christian Religion

As the Same Is Taught in the
Reformed Churches and Schools
in Holland and in America

Also in the schools it was meant to be used. In these schools the children were to be taught to answer, not the question: "Do you have the only comfort in life and death?" but the question: "What is thy only comfort in life and death?"

This latter question was to be answered by faith, which means out of a true faith, a faith that is not only a certain knowledge, but also an assured confidence. Throughout the Catechism the child of Reformed believers is addressed as a true believer, and is taught to respond as a true believer. But how is it possible for him to give such an answer from the heart? It is possible because the child of God normally comes to experience the full assurance of faith in this life, and does so, at least often, very early in his life.

The last article on the full assurance of faith had as its purpose to show from Scripture and the Reformed confessions that the child of God can and normally does obtain the full assurance of faith in this life. This article will deal with how he comes to this assurance. A

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following article, Lord willing, will set forth the good fruit that arises out of this assurance.

The Rejection of Ungodly Mysticism

There are many who say they are Reformed believers who maintain that for someone to be fully assured that he is a child of God, and thus to be able to come to the table of the Lord, God must first give him some kind of mystical experience that assures him that he does belong to the body of Christ. Although different people may speak of different kinds of mystical experiences, such a mystical experience would really amount to a special revelation from God. God would be revealing something to the person – He would be revealing to him that he is a child of God.

This teaching is not Reformed. It is explicitly condemned in our Reformed creeds. We reject the errors of those who teach:

That without a special revelation we can have no certainty of future perseverance in this life. For by this doctrine the sure comfort of all believers is taken away in this life, and the doubts of the papist are again introduced into the church, while the Holy Scriptures constantly deduce this assurance, not from a special and extraordinary revelation, but from the marks proper to the children of God and from the constant promises of God. So especially the apostle Paul: "No creature shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Rom. 8:39). And John declares: "And he that keepeth his commandments abideth in him, and he in him. And hereby we know that He abideth in us, by the Spirit which he gave us" (I John 3:24). (Canons V, Rejection of Errors, Paragraph 5)

This same truth is confessed in Article 10 of the first section of this same Head of Doctrine:

This assurance, however, is not produced by any peculiar revela-

tion contrary to, or independent of the Word of God, but springs from faith in God's promises, which He has most abundantly revealed in His Word for our comfort; from the testimony of the Holy Spirit, witnessing with our spirit, that we are children and heirs of God (Rom. 8:16); and lastly, from a serious and holy desire to preserve a good conscience and to perform good works. And if the elect of God were deprived of this solid comfort, that they shall finally obtain the victory, and of this infallible pledge or earnest of eternal glory, they would be of all men the most miserable.

True assurance does not arrive out of a peculiar, special revelation that comes outside of the Word of God.² If one teaches that it does, then he is guilty of introducing the doubts of the papist into the church. Anyone who tries to convince himself that he has received a special revelation is self-deceived and is falling into ungodly mysticism.

There are no further revelations, now that the Scriptures have been completed. And the revelations that were received during the period in which the Scriptures were being written were not revelations that had as their sole purpose to assure a person that he was a child of God, but revelations that were given for the benefit of the church of Christ as a whole.

How One Does Obtain This Assurance

Rather, this assurance is said to spring forth from the following: 1) faith in God's promises; 2) the testimony of the Holy Spirit; 3) an earnest and holy exercise of a good conscience and of good works.³

The assurance we speak of is the assurance of faith, and faith is worked in our hearts centrally by means of the preaching of the gospel. By that preaching, Christ speaks the Word of promise to His chosen people, and the Spirit of Christ applies that Word to our hearts. When we hear the promises proclaimed in the preaching,

the Spirit assures us, His elect people, that that promise is not only to others, but also to us.

The preaching is the chief key of the kingdom. Through that preaching, the Spirit causes those walking in unbelief to know that He is shutting the door of the kingdom against them. But through this same preaching the Spirit causes those walking by faith to know and to be assured that the door of the kingdom is being opened to them. This preaching, this key of the kingdom, is the means by which the child of God comes to be assured that the door of the kingdom is opened, not only to others, but also to him.

We consciously hear this testimony of the Holy Spirit only when we are walking by faith, exercising a good conscience, and performing good works. If we, for a time, walk in any sin, the Spirit of God, who is the *Holy Spirit*, withdraws from us,⁴ so that we do not hear this tes-

1. A papist is one who adheres to the Roman Catholic Church and the authority of the pope.

2. The phrase "contrary to, or independent of the Word of God," could be more literally translated from the Dutch as "beside or outside of the Word of God." The latter statement is a bit clearer, making known that what is being rejected here is a special revelation that is outside of the revelation that God has given to us in Scripture, the revelation that the Spirit applies to our heart through the proclamation of those Scriptures.


3. This is a more literal translation of the phrase translated in our Canons as "a serious and holy desire to preserve a good conscience and to perform good works." The more literal translation brings out the idea that our fathers were speaking not merely of a desire, but the activity of exercising our good conscience and performing good works.

4. Although God never completely withdraws His Spirit from a child of God, He does very really discipline His children by withdrawing His Spirit from them when they walk in sin (Canons V, 6).

timony that we are a child of God. Then when we come to sit under the preaching of God's Word, we experience that Word to be a Word with no comfort for us. We do not experience the kingdom being opened to us. But in the way of our turning from that sin, crying out to God for forgiveness, and seeking the grace to be delivered from that sin, God restores unto us again the comfortable sense of His favor.

This is what we and our fathers confess when we say that the assurance of faith arises out of faith and obedience. It is said to arise out of "faith in God's promises" and "an earnest and holy exercise of a good conscience and of good works." Out of faith arises greater faith. When we repent and believe God's Word, when we exercise our faith and have a good conscience, we grow stronger in faith. It is only in this way that we continue to experience the full assurance

that we are children of God.

This faith, out of which a greater faith arises, is solely the work of God. It is a gift given only to God's chosen people, a gift that was earned for them by Christ's suffering and death on the cross. Knowing this, and believing this, we humbly cling to God's promises out of thankfulness, and are assured that we shall forever dwell with Him who is both our God and our Father. 

Things Which Must Shortly Come to Pass

Prof. David Engelsma

Chapter One The End of All Things

(continued)

It is necessary, therefore, that the church and the believer know what the end is. We can and do know what the end, or goal, of God with all things is, because God has made known to us in the gospel this "mystery of his will" (Eph. 1:9). There is one end, or goal, of all things. In this one goal, God accomplishes a number of related purposes, including the judgment of the ungodly world, the salvation of the godly, and the vindication of Himself, but the end is one. As God is one and as His plan for all things is one, so is the end of all things one. God is not of two minds with creation and history. He does not have two different purposes with His world.

In Ephesians 1:9, 10, the apostle

reminds the church of *the* mystery of the will of God, which is this one purpose of God: "that in the dispensation of the fullness of times he might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth; even in him."

The End Is Jesus Christ

The end of all things is Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ is the goal of all things. Eschatology is Christology. Jesus Christ is God's "Omega," "end" (Greek: *telos*), and "last one" (Greek: *eschatos*) (Rev. 22:13). He is the one purpose of God from eternity.

For by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him: And he is before all things, and by him all things consist. And he is the head

of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he might have the preeminence. For it pleased the Father that in him should all fullness dwell; And, having made peace through the blood of his cross, by him to reconcile all things unto himself; by him, I say, whether they be things in earth, or things in heaven (Col. 1:16-20).

According to this passage, the end of all things is God's "dear Son," not as the eternal Son in the triune being of God, but as incarnate in Jesus Christ, for He is the "firstborn of every creature," "in whom we have redemption through his blood" (Col. 1:14, 15). He is the firstborn of every creature, not historically, but inasmuch as He, Jesus, is first in the counsel of God. He opens the womb of the counsel to all other creatures. For Him, as their purpose and goal, were all things created. God did

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not create all things for Adam. God did not create all things with the purpose that they might glorify God as an unfallen world. God created all things for Jesus Christ, who is first in the divine counsel. All things were created, and are now preserved and governed by providence, so that Jesus Christ may have the preeminence among them.

Jesus Christ is the goal, not only of redemption and the church, but also of creation and world history. This is the biblical "philosophy of history." Whatever exists and all that happens in history are for the sake of Jesus Christ.

Jesus Christ is the beginning, the center, and the end of all God's works and ways. He is the "beginning" of Genesis 1:1 (John 1:1; Rev. 1:11). His coming into the world is the "fulness" of the world's time (Gal. 4:4). And He is the world's end, because He is God's end with the world.

The End Is Christ at His Coming

The end of all things is Jesus Christ at His second coming. *Parousia*, the Greek word in the New Testament for the (second) coming of Christ, literally means 'presence.' The end of all things is the presence, the arrival, of Jesus to His beleaguered church and His groaning creation, that is, Jesus Himself in His bodily presence as the resurrection and the life, as the judge, and as the renewer and reconciler of all things.

One who knows, and conforms his will to, God's goal with all things will live in the hope of the coming of Christ, will pray night and day, "Come, Lord Jesus" (Rev. 22:20).

Covenant, Kingdom, and Church

Because Christ comes, not simply as the eternal Son of God, but as the head of the covenant of grace, the king of the kingdom of

God, and the savior of the church, the end of all things is the consummation of the covenant, the perfection of the kingdom, and the salvation and glory of the church. The presence of Jesus Christ is the fellowship of God with men, the reign of God in His world, and the bliss of the saints. Eschatology is anthropology, soteriology, and ecclesiology.

This is why the truth of the last things does not, and must not, inspire dread and terror in those who are Christ's covenant friends, citizens of His kingdom, and members of His church. As He Himself said in His great eschatological discourse in Luke 21, concerning all the happenings leading up to His coming that cause men's hearts to fail for fear, "look up, and lift up your heads; for your redemption draweth nigh" (v. 28).

The Glory of God

In His bodily coming as the consummation of the covenant, the perfection of the kingdom, and the savior of the church, Jesus will be present on behalf of the triune God. Ultimately, the end of all things is the glory of God. God's goal is His own glory in Jesus Christ by the consummation of the covenant, the perfection of the kingdom, and the glorification of the church. This is clearly expressed in I Corinthians 15:23-28. The subject is the resurrection of our bodies at Christ's "coming" (v. 23). Christ's coming is, and brings about, "the end" (v. 24). And then the Son will subject Himself to the triune God "that God may be all in all" (v. 28). This was prophesied by Isaiah: "The earth shall be full of the knowledge of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea" (Is. 11:9). Thus, eschatology is theology.

If we forget that the end of all things is the glory of God, we will go wrong in our doctrine of the last things. For example, as regards the

last judgment, we will deny that the elect must appear in the judgment, to be judged according to their works. The judgment of the elect may seem to endanger the comfort of the elect and even to conflict with the gospel of their salvation by grace alone. But when we remember that the purpose of the final judgment, as of the last things generally, is the glory of God, we will assent to the judgment of the elect, so that their judgment may contribute to the vindication of God before the world.

The same is true regarding the end, or purpose, of our own life in the world personally. If we suppose that the purpose of our life is our own happiness, we must soon come to doubt God's eschatological leading of our life, on account of the trials, burdens, disappointments, and sorrows. The spiritual man encourages himself in this, that God's purpose with his life is the glory of the God whom he confesses. Then, like Job, in deepest distress shattering all "happiness," he confesses, "The LORD gave, and the LORD hath taken away; blessed be the name of the LORD" (Job 1:22).

Erroneous Views of the End: Evolution

The truth that the one end of all things is Jesus Christ exposes several popular eschatological views as erroneous. First, there is the theory of evolution, which is as much about ends as it is about beginnings. Evolution denies any end or goal of all things. Because evolution denies the beginning of all things in God's work of creation according to His eternal counsel, evolution's world and history are aimless. Not only is this theory miserable, since it plunges all who believe it into hopelessness, but it is also wicked, since it repudiates Jesus Christ as the goal of all things.

Premillennialism

Second, there is the notion of premillennial dispensationalism

*Jesus Christ
is the beginning,
the center,
and the end
of all God's works
and ways.*

that God had to postpone His main purpose in history, namely, the establishment of the Jews as His earthly kingdom, because of their rejection of Jesus as the Messiah. In the interim between the Jewish rejection of Christ and a future conversion of the Jews, God concocts and realizes a secondary purpose, namely, the salvation of a church. The present age of the salvation of the church as the body of Jesus Christ is a mere "parenthesis" breaking up, and perhaps adding a little something to, God's program for national Israel.

Dispensationalist John F. Walvoord has written:

The present age [of the gathering of the church by the blood and Spirit of Jesus Christ] is a parenthesis or a time period not predicted by the Old Testament and therefore not fulfilling or advancing the program of events revealed in the Old Testament foreview (John F. Walvoord, *The Millennial Kingdom*, Grand Rapids, Zondervan, 1975, p. 231).

So unrelated is the saving of the church to God's work of making the Jews His earthly kingdom in dispensational thinking that dispensationalist theologian Lewis Sperry Chafer objects to calling the age of the saving of the church a "parenthesis." A parenthesis, after all, stands in some relation to the main sentence in which it is a helpful, though essentially unnecessary, insertion.

In fact, the new, hitherto unrevealed purpose of God in the outcalling of a heavenly people from Jews and Gentiles is so divergent with respect to the divine purpose toward Israel, which purpose preceded it and will yet follow it, that the term *parenthetical*, commonly employed to describe the new age-purpose, is inaccurate. A parenthetical portion sustains some direct or indirect relation to that which goes before or that which follows; but the present age-purpose is not thus related

and therefore is more properly termed an *intercalation*. The appropriateness of this word will be seen in the fact that, as an interpolation is formed by inserting a word or phrase into a context, so an intercalation is formed by introducing a day or a period of time into the calendar. The present age of the Church is an intercalation into the revealed calendar or program of God as that program was foreseen by the prophets of old. Such, indeed, is the precise character of the present age (Lewis Sperry Chafer, *Systematic Theology*, vol. 4, Dallas: Dallas Seminary Press, 1948, p. 41).

According to dispensationalism, God's great purpose of establishing national Israel as His earthly kingdom had to be "postponed" because of the Jews' rejection of Jesus as their Messiah. At that time, God began realizing, if He did not then hit upon, a secondary purpose in history, namely, the gathering of a church as the body of Christ. But He maintains His original purpose with the Jews. He will carry out this purpose in the coming millennium when the church age is over.


For dispensationalism, God has two, independent purposes in history.

The dispensationalist believes that throughout the ages God is pursuing two distinct purposes; one related to the earth with earthly people and earthly objectives involved, which is Judaism; while the other is related to heaven with heavenly people and heavenly objectives involved, which is Christianity (Lewis Sperry Chafer, cited in Charles C. Ryrie, *Dispensationalism Today*, Chicago, Moody Press, 1965, p. 146. Ryrie's attempt to soften this statement by a founding father of dispensationalism is significant. Ryrie does not object to Chafer's assertion of "two distinct purposes" of God in history, but to the crass insistence on the purely earthly nature of the Jewish kingdom. The notion of two different pur-

poses of God with all things is inherent in dispensationalism).

Of the two purposes, or goals, of God with history, the main one is that the physical Jews become finally His earthly, millennial kingdom. The saving of the church is a mere parenthesis, or "intercalation."

We will examine the bizarre teaching of premillennial dispensationalism in detail later, when we consider the millennium, but here we may point out that it sins against the Bible's doctrine of the end. The end of all things is the one, future, bodily coming of Jesus Christ. Jesus is the end as the savior of the church, which is Christ's spiritual kingdom composed of believing Jews and Gentiles (Col. 1:13). God does not have two purposes with history, a primary purpose consisting of the establishing of the Jews as His kingdom and a secondary purpose consisting of the salvation of elect Gentiles. God has one purpose, which is *the* mystery of His will, and this purpose is the gathering together in one all things in Christ, particularly, the gathering of elect Jews and elect Gentiles in one body and household (Eph. 1:9, 10; 2:11-3:12).

The teaching that God had some intention to establish an earthly kingdom of Jews at the first coming of Christ, but that He had to postpone this purpose, because the Jews rejected their Messiah, and thus God's well-meant offer of the earthly kingdom, is a denial of the sovereignty of God. In Romans 11, the apostle teaches that God decreed and governed the partial blinding of Israel in order that the fullness of the Gentiles might come in. In this way ("so," v. 26), God realizes His purpose of saving all Israel, which salvation is not an earthly kingdom apart from the church, but the forgiveness of sins in the one covenant of God with elect Jews and elect Gentiles (vv. 26, 27). 

The Election and Installation of Deacons (4)

The Nominee's Calling

So you have received a letter from your council, informing you that they have nominated you to the office of deacon or elder. Perhaps the news came somewhat as a surprise, and you first had to get over the shock. Perhaps not. Either way, you must now face the question: should I accept the nomination, or not?

Having already explained the roles both of congregation and of council in the election process, we now treat the calling of the man nominated for office. That is, we will do two things: explain what responsibility falls upon him as he considers whether to accept or decline this nomination, and explain of what the true call to office consists.



We consider a topic that is very important, but about which, nevertheless, little has been written.

The Church Order says nothing about the responsibility of the nominee. Article 22 speaks only of the role of the congregation and council in the election process. One gets the impression that the nominee really has no say in the matter.

Because the Church Order does not treat the subject, it is not surprising that VanDellen and Monsma do not treat it in their

Church Order Commentary. Neither does P. Y. DeJong in his book *The Ministry of Mercy for Today*.

Yet the subject is important. Surely the nominee who takes his nomination seriously considers it important — he must accept the nomination, and be ready to serve God's people in Christ's behalf if elected, or he must decline, and then only with good reasons. Should he accept the nomination and be elected, he must be able to say "Yes" with conviction, when asked at the time of installation: "... whether you do not feel in your hearts that ye are lawfully called of God's church, and consequently of God Himself, to these your respective holy offices" (Form of Ordination of Elders and Deacons). Also our Belgic Confession, Article 31, stresses the importance of knowing one is called: "Therefore every one must take heed not to intrude himself by indecent means, but is bound to wait till it shall please God to call him, that he may have testimony of his calling and be certain and assured that it is of the Lord."

Because of the importance of the subject, we do not want to overlook it in connection with our explanation of the process of electing and installing deacons.



The nominee must bear in mind that a call to office is an objective call by Christ through the church.

Throughout history, God did not always use the church to call men to office. In the Old Testament, God made known whom He would appoint to office by telling a prophet to anoint that man (I Sam. 9:15ff.; 16:1-13); or by designating which house would serve in which office (the house of Aaron in the office of priest, and the house of David in the office of king). Israel had no choice in who would be their prophet, priest, or king; God revealed His will concerning this matter by His Word.

However, in the new dispensation, God uses the church. This is clear from Acts 6:1ff., which speaks of the choosing of the first deacons in the New Testament church. We read in verse 3 that the apostles said to the people, "Wherefore, brethren, look ye out among you seven men ... whom we may appoint over this business." Through the church, elders and deacons are elected to office.

The objective call of the pastor, elder, and deacon takes place when the church elects a man to office. Obviously, one's nomination to office is not the call itself, for usually only half of those nominated are elected. Nevertheless, the nomination of that man who is later elected to office is the beginning of the process by which God through the church calls him to office. When the church both nominates and elects a man to office, that man can know that he is called of God. The question asked of el-

ders and deacons at their installation, already quoted above, indicates this. Notice: "whether you do not feel in your hearts that ye are lawfully called of God's church, and consequently of God Himself, to these your respective holy offices?"

Why must the nominee remember that the call to office is an objective call of God through the church by election? On the one hand, to prevent any rash presumption on the part of the nominee; and on the other, to give the nominee who is elected confidence as he begins his work.

Not until a man is elected by the church may he consider himself to have been called by God to the office. To think otherwise is rash presumption. Perhaps this is not a danger for many nominees, but it can become one when, for example, a man has long desired the office. He may then come to believe that God has already called him to the office, when he has not yet been elected to it. Moses is an example of such rashness. He desired that Israel be delivered from Egypt's oppression, and he knew that God would deliver Israel through him (Acts 7:25). So he forsook Pharaoh's house, and went out to deliver them (Ex. 2:11ff.). But he was acting rashly. God had not yet called him to office. Therefore, God would not, and did not, bless his efforts; his plan to deliver Israel was not realized at that time. Only when God later called him to the work of delivering Israel was Moses given authority to do the work.

But it might be that the nominee is filled with questions when he receives his nomination letter. Why me? Can I do the work well? Am I really the right man for the office? Is my situation such, or are my weaknesses such, that I should decline the nomination? One who has such questions should not be in a hurry to decline nomination; rather, he should understand that if he is elected, God has called him

to office. By calling him, God has judged him to be the right man for the office, and promises to give him the ability to do the work well.

Knowing that God calls a man to office through the church by election, we can understand better why so little is written about the role of the nominee regarding his nomination. His role is either to provide the council with weighty reasons why he should be removed from nomination, or to wait on God to make known His will through the election. The nominee must believe that if he is elected, God has called him to the work.



What reasons would be considered weighty enough to cause a council to remove a man from nomination?

Notice how this question was phrased — the *council* must remove a man from nomination. The nominee does not remove himself; his desire to be removed does not in itself remove him. He might tell the council that he does not wish to be on nomination, but if the council does not remove his name he is nominated anyway. K. Sietsma, in his book *The Idea of Office*, writes: "Occasionally it occurs that a brother declines the office, but, not having been granted release, persists in his unwillingness to accept because he feels himself unqualified. We would judge that in general this is not permissible. It is not for the brother to judge his own gifts. He must believe that the Lord, who has called him, will use for blessing the gifts that he owns, modest though they be."* By "declines the office," Sietsma does not mean that the brother simply refuses to serve, but that the brother gives the council reasons why it should release him from nomination to office.

On what basis, then, might one request to be released from the nomination?

The first instance Sietsma gives is that "he can prove that his elec-

tion is in conflict with Scriptural principles" (p. 66). It is possible, of course, for a council to err in the matter of nominating men to office. The burden of proof is on the nominee who wishes to be removed from nomination to show that the council has done this. Assuming our councils take seriously their work of nominating men to office, the nominee will most likely have to present information about himself of which the council was not aware.

A second weighty reason for asking the council to remove one from nomination, would be that the nominee is unable to serve because he is in the process of moving away from the local congregation (p. 67).

A third reason would be that one is "already deeply committed to another place" (p. 68). Sietsma allows for the possibility that this "other place" is one's earthly labor. While it is true that in some instances one's work might be compromised by serving in an office, we ought be very careful not to place commitment to one's earthly work above kingdom work. Justifiably to use this as a reason, one would have to convince the council that his particular circumstances are such that he would truly be unable to fulfill his calling to work were he to be elected to office.

But this "other place" could also refer to other kingdom work. For example, if one can demonstrate that the circumstance in his family is such that he would truly be jeopardizing his ability to be a husband or father, he could ask to be removed on this ground. Again, it must be understood that every officebearer who has a family will have to work harder to be a good husband and father because his church work keeps him busier; and one must be willing to do this. But in a case of extreme hardship, a man might request on the basis of this ground to be released. The same could be true of our teachers, to use another example. I have nothing against teachers serving in

office in the church; many have served very well. But teaching the covenant children of the church is a demanding work in itself. If one thinks that his work, and the church's children, would truly suffer if he were elected to office, he would have a weighty reason for requesting to be removed from nomination.

Before using any of these reasons, however, the nominee should carefully search his soul to be sure that he would truly be seeking the glory of God by seeking to be removed from nomination. He must understand that, by nominating him to office, the church has already judged him fit to serve, and expressed her desire that he serve.



What is the nominee's responsibility, if he has no intention of asking to be removed from nomination?

First, it is to believe that he is by God's grace qualified for the office, and to pray that God give him grace to cause him to continue to be the kind of man God requires him to be.

One who believes that he is qualified for office has examined


himself — a task that must be done carefully. A proud man will conclude that he is qualified in his own strength — thereby showing that he is not really qualified. False humility might cause a man, knowing his sins and weaknesses, to conclude that he is unfit for office. Moses was an example of this. He tried to avoid God's call by saying, "I am slow of speech, and of a slow tongue" (Ex. 4:10). In contrast to this, the prospective officebearer must know that, by God's grace alone, he does have the spiritual and natural gifts necessary for the work. Being convinced of this, he will begin his work with the proper boldness and conviction which God requires of him.

Secondly, he should ask himself whether he is committed to serving faithfully if he should be elected. If he lacks this commitment, he should not seek to be removed from nomination, but should rather pray that God give it to him, and examine whether his heart is right before God in this respect. When, by God's grace, one finds in himself this willingness to be faithful, he can be assured that God will bless him in his work.

Thirdly, the prospective nominee must ask himself whether he

loves the church of Jesus Christ — not just the church universal, but the church as manifest in the congregation of which he is a member. It is a congregation made up of saints who are still sinners; in it are people who are not always easy to work with or visit; and in it are some whom he might not so quickly consider friends, even if they are brothers in Christ. Does he love this church? Does he seek her salvation in Christ? Does he desire that she, as the body of Christ, grow in grace and knowledge and all virtue? And would he be willing, as an officebearer in that church, to give of himself, as one appointed by Christ and in Christ's service, to this end?

Finally, the nominee must pray that God will work through the upcoming election to do what pleases Him, and he must pray for grace to be subject to God's will.

In these ways, he shows that he takes his nomination seriously, and is ready to serve God his Savior, and Christ his Lord, if chosen to office. 

* K. Sietsma, *The Idea of Office*, (Jordan Station, ON: Paideia Press, 1985), page 66.

When Thou Sittest in Thine House

Abraham Kuyper

The Night Also Is Thine

The night

As in reading a book you skip a part that does not interest you, so there are those who between the days of their life simply skip the nights.

So a day does not have twenty-four, but sixteen or seventeen hours. They keep count of time

from their rising in the morning until they pillow their head by night; but the night that lies in between does not count. This is especially so with persons in good health, who sleep at once when they touch the pillow, and, though they may have dreamed, know nothing of it. To such as they the night is simply a something that

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goes out of their life. When they go to sleep they are lost in unconsciousness, and when the sun is above the horizon again, they raise their head above the waters of self-forgetfulness. This is yet more strongly the case with little children who as roses have slept all night long, and at awakening have no faint perception of the length or duration of the time that they slept.

The sick, *they* know about it. And no less they of weary head, people whose nerves are overstrung, or whose head is crowded with carping cares. When one struggles to get to sleep, and cannot succeed, or if lost for a moment in unconsciousness at once wakes up again with anxious fear. Then, especially, a long winter's night seems almost endless, and the first ray of light that enters in by the window brings a feeling of deliverance. For those, too, who watch with the sick, such a night can creep along with oppressive slowness. But by far the most people, especially they who labor with their hands, know nothing of this. In the evening they are tired. They long with their garment to drop the cares of life from their shoulders. And though they live through the night, into what the night is they do not enter. But with men of deep spirituality, like a David and Asaph, it is altogether different.

The night, too, is a subject of deep thought. Of the night, count is kept, and the honor of the night is brought to our faithful God and Father.

"I laid me down and slept, and rose again: for the Lord sustained me" (Ps. 3:5).

As Asaph exclaimed: "The day is thine, the night also is thine, O my God" (Ps. 74:16).



Do you not perceive the higher seriousness of life in this?

The night of sleep is usually a *third part* of your life's day. With retiring and rising again, each day

eight of the twenty-four hours. He who may reach the age of seventy-five years, loses by sleep twenty-five full years, counting day and night together.

And would you be unmindful of that third part of your life, take no heed of it, have no eye for it, and act as though you had no knowledge of it?

"Teach us to number *our days*," prays the psalmist, "that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom" (90), and the "Teach us also to number our nights" is included in it.

Also at night, when you lie down in unconsciousness, you are there, you exist after soul and body, and something takes place in you, and something with you. When you rise, you are not just as you were when you lay down, but altogether different, refreshed in thought and refreshed in strength.

The night is even of so much importance that it is none too strongly put when we say that by day you live on the capital which you lay up by night. In other words: *impoverished* as to strength you go to bed, and in the morning *rich* in power you go into life again.

Let there be a night when sleeplessness tormented you, or one which in your folly, as Job 17:12 has it, you had "changed into day," and in your inability to apply yourself to work and in the depressed condition of your nerves you realize what it is, for a single night, to have missed the supply of strength from the Fountain of Life.

And with this for the most part we think only of our physical strength. Of the healing of our tired muscles by rest. Of the healthy tension of our weakened nerves by that surcease for hours together of all excitement. Of the cooling of our blood. Of the relaxation of our whole body by lying down, the freedom from the weight of our garments, and the gentle equable warming of the skin and the opening of the pores.

But apart from that renewal of physical strength, there is still

something more in sleep. Sleep also affects your *spiritual existence*.

Even in every way.

Sleep affects your thought, and many a one experiences the truth of the French proverb: *La nuit porte conseil*, i.e., in the night we form our best plans. It is folly, of course, when a schoolboy puts his book under his pillow, but it is not folly that a lesson learned at night, and is only half committed, in the quietness of night sinks into us more deeply, and thereby is more firmly imprinted in the memory. And apart from this, as everyone knows, when in the evening the head refused to work, and was utterly disabled, and the spring of thought ceased to flow, in the morning that same fountain flows fresh and abundant again and makes thoughts stream toward us.

But even to this the inworking of sleep upon our spiritual existence does not limit itself.

"In the night seasons," the psalmist sings, "*my reins also instruct me*" (16:7). And from the remembrance of many a dream everyone knows how, at night, while we sleep and the body rests, great activities can be going on in our inward man.

Sometimes it seems as though, at midnight, someone enters into our soul, to put in order there again, what by day was spoiled, to refill the lamp with oil, and inwardly to prepare us for the life-task of the following day.



Truly this is no self-deception, it is reality.

Every evening when you go to sleep, you let yourself go, and there is some One else who takes you up in the arms of His compassion, and that some One else is the Lord your God.

It is He alone who at the entrance of night takes you from yourself, during the long hours of night, to protect and to refresh you, and in the morning renewed again to return you to yourself.

But in the night He has possession of you; it is He who carries and keeps you, who takes you in hand after body and after soul to mold you. And so all the night long your God is busy with you, while you are not in the least aware of it.

By day you are also in His hand, but by night in a different way and far more effectively, for in the night God takes you away from yourself, independently of yourself, to fashion and to purify you, to equip you with new capital of physical and spiritual strength, and after that to bring you back again to conscious life.

The world calls this Nature, and undergoes it without giving itself an account of it, as the bear ensconces himself in his winter-sleep.

But to him who honors and fears God, there opens in that life of night more and more a world of rich meaning. For him, that life by night obtains the significance of an extremely important chapter of history. And more yet than by day it is by night that God's child learns to observe the work which God works on his body and to his soul.

A third part of our life, i.e., every night, like the small boat from the water is pulled on land, so are we taken by God out of the stream of life. In the night He repairs the suffered injuries. And when in the morning the cock crows, that same God brings us without damage back again into the waterway of life.



Now you can say: "If that is so, it all goes on outside of myself and can imply no instruction for my soul." But this is not so.

All Scripture and experience of the saints teaches differently.

Not merely does the psalmist say that at night his reins instruct him, but time and again the Scripture brings you the active attestation of the man who meditates in the law of the Lord *day and*

night (Ps. 1:2), or the declaration: "The Lord will command his lovingkindness in the daytime, and in the *night His song shall be with me*" (Ps. 42:8).

For sleep is indeed sleep, and when one is once "gone" in sleep, one does no more conscious thinking; but it makes a difference how, and with what deliberations and thoughts, one goes to sleep, and what sensations rise in us at waking.

The more godly among the children of God have ever striven, before retiring at night, to loosen their thoughts from the world, by reading of the Word and by prayer to connect their thoughts to the things of the eternal kingdom, and in lying down, before they slept, to seek fellowship with the Eternal Being.

So going to sleep is even most rich and most blessed, and is as it were a sinking away into a night from which on this earth one might not awake. This imparts discipline to the soul. It prepares the soul. So that when at last death does come, he cannot so greatly surprise you.

In this way your going to sleep is no longer a surrender of yourself to your pillow, but a conscious surrender of yourself into the hand of your God, who for that whole night long takes you away from yourself, only at dawn of the new day to give you back to yourself again.



What is said in the Moravian evening hymn: "Let me sleeping wait on Thee. Then my sleep shall peaceful be. Holy thoughts inspire in me. Dreaming let my joy be Thee," is somewhat strained. Most rarely indeed have we fellowship with Jesus in our dream. For we

know Him no more after the flesh. In the dream everything is representation, outward appearance. But this aside, this prayer breathes piety and devotion. A deep appreciation of the fact that night also is a part of our life, that of the night honor must come to our Lord, and that night must not separate us from our God but must bring Him closer to us.

The day is Thine, the *night also is Thine*.

That in the end is the main thing that counts.


He who can go to sleep, and all night long let himself be healed and operated upon and refreshed by his faithful God, and can rise again in the morning without a thought of what during all those hours of night God has done in him and for him, is a Christian with a faded religion. If he does company with the Lord's people, his piety is offensively superficial.

He, on the other hand, who has an eye for this great work of God which goes on through all those hours of night and is affected will praise God and thank Him, O, most truly, for all help accorded him *by day*, but no less warmly and earnestly for the supply of strength and grace that was accorded him *by*

night, after soul and body, whereby alone success of life became possible on the new day.

More yet.

Night is the instrument in God's hand not only to strengthen our body and to pour fresh oil again into the stiffened joints of our spiritual existence, but night must also renew our *faith* and no less our *fellowship with our God*.

The sprinkling of the blood of the Lamb of God must every morning be upon you. 

He who can go to sleep, and all night long let himself be healed and operated upon and refreshed by his faithful God, and can rise again in the morning without a thought of what during all those hours of night God has done in him and for him, is a Christian with a faded religion.

YEARBOOK UPDATE

The new e-mail of the bulletin clerk for Randolph PRC:
edsarah@centurytel.net

WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

On February 1, 2003, our parents and grandparents,

NICK and INA KLEYN,
will celebrate 40 years of marriage.

We congratulate them, and rejoice with them on this happy occasion. We are thankful to them and to our covenant God for their faithful instruction of us and godly example to us. We pray that God may continue to guide them in their future years.

My mouth shall sing for aye
Thy tender mercies, Lord;
To every age will I
Thy faithfulness record.
(Psalm 89, Psalter 422)

- * Cornelis and Rebecca Kleyn
Rachel, Abigail, Kelsie, Justin
- * Rev. Daniel and Sharon Kleyn
- * Nicholas and Debra Kleyn
Lynette, Peter, Susan, Sharon, Brenda, Valerie
- * Arthur and Andrea Kleyn
Ruth, James, David
- * Peter Kleyn (dec. Aug. 7, 1973)
- * Rev. Rodney and Elizabeth Kleyn
Sarah, Alyssa, Matthew, Aaron
- * Steven and Sarah-Lynn Kleyn
- * Steve and Maria Lotterman
Davinia, Kristen, Marielle
- * Phillip and Kristen Kleyn
- * Wally and Nicola Kleyn
Jerry
- * Michael and Heidi Klaassens
Joseph Kleyn
- * Timothy Kleyn
- * Lydia Kleyn

Grand Rapids, Michigan

WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

With gratitude and praise to our covenant God, we join our parents and grandparents,

GERALD and BONNIE KUIPER,
in celebration of 40 years of marriage on January 24, 2003. We thank our heavenly Father for the years He has given them together. Their consistent, faithful instruction in God's Word and ways has been a blessing to us their children. Our humble prayer is that God will continue to keep them in His care and bless their marriage in the years to come.

"But the mercy of the LORD is from everlasting to everlasting upon them that fear him, and his righteousness unto children's children; to such as keep his covenant, and to those that remember his commandments to do them" (Psalm 103:17, 18).

- * Jerry and Beth Kuiper
Jordan, Travis, Kelsey, Levi
- * Doug and Pam Dykstra
Joshua, Justin
- * Jim and Karen Daling
Nathan, Brandon, Leanna, Jeremy
- * Matt and Tami Kuiper
Alyssa, Nicole
- * Tim Kuiper
- * Andy Kuiper
- * David Kuiper

Hudsonville, Michigan

NOTICE!

Classis West of the Protestant Reformed Churches will be hosted by Lynden PRC in Lynden, Washington on Wednesday, March 5, 2003 at 8:30 A.M., the Lord willing. All material for the agenda should be in the hands of the stated clerk by Monday, February 3, 2003. An officebearers' conference is being planned for Tuesday, March 4, on the subject, "The Canons of Dordt: Our Reformed Banner!" Delegates or visitors in need of lodging or of transportation should notify the clerk of Lynden, Mr. Rick Span, at ricknmarsha@hotmail.com

Rev. Daniel Kleyn
Stated Clerk of Classis West

NOTICE!!

All students enrolled in the Protestant Reformed Seminary who will be in need of financial assistance for the coming school year are asked to contact the Student Aid Committee secretary, Mr. Jeff Kalsbeek (Phone: 616 453-6455). This contact should be made before the next scheduled meeting, February 10, 2003, D.V.

Student Aid Committee
Jeff Kalsbeek, Secretary

LECTURE SERIES

The Evangelism Committee of First PRC of Holland will be sponsoring three lectures in February on the subjects of God's Will and Man's Will. All lectures will be at 7:30 P.M. in the church.

Lecture 1: February 13 "Predestination and Man's Will"

Prof. Herman Hanko

Lecture 2: February 20 "Grace and Man's Will"

Prof. Robert Decker

Lecture 3: February 27 "Law and Man's Will"

Rev. Carl Haak

Refreshments and fellowship will follow each lecture, D.V.