

THE STANDARD BEARER

February 1, 2003

A REFORMED SEMI-MONTHLY MAGAZINE

In This Issue:

MEDITATION

Rev. James D. Slopsema

The Consequences of Sin 194

EDITORIAL

Prof. David J. Engelsma

**The Unconditional Covenant in Contemporary Debate –
and the Protestant Reformed Seminary (3)** 196

LETTERS

198

MARKING THE BULWARKS OF ZION

Prof. Herman C. Hanko

Jerome Bolsec and Predestination (2) 199

ALL AROUND US

Rev. Gise VanBaren

200

TAKING HEED TO THE DOCTRINE

Rev. Steven R. Key

The Perfect Ground of our Imputed Righteousness 203

GO YE INTO ALL THE WORLD

Rev. Arie den Hartog

The Great Commission (1) 205

ALL THY WORKS SHALL PRAISE THEE

Mr. Joel Minderhoud

Many Members:

Chemical Messengers of the Nervous System 207

DAY OF SHADOWS

George M. Ophoff

The Types of Scripture (10) 210

BOOK REVIEWS

212

NEWS FROM OUR CHURCHES

Mr. Benjamin Wigger

214

The Consequences of Sin

Now therefore the sword shall never depart from thine house; because thou hast despised me, and hast taken the wife of Uriah the Hittite to be thy wife.

Thus saith the LORD, Behold, I will raise up evil against thee out of thine own house, and I will take thy wives before thine eyes, and give them unto thy neighbour, and he shall lie with thy wives in the sight of this sun.

For thou didst it secretly: but I will do this thing before all Israel, and before the sun.

And David said unto Nathan, I have sinned against the LORD. And Nathan said unto David, The LORD also hath put away thy sin; thou shalt not die.

Howbeit, because by this deed thou hast given great occasion to the enemies of the LORD to blaspheme, the child also that is born unto thee shall surely die.

II Samuel 12:10-14

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

The one black mark on what otherwise was the illustrious career of David was his sin with Bathsheba and the murder of her husband Uriah. We are all familiar with this account. David took Bathsheba in adultery while the armies of Israel were fighting the Ammonites. When Bathsheba conceived, David attempted to cover up his sin. First, he brought Bathsheba's husband, Uriah, home from battle so that the child would appear to be his. When that failed, David arranged to have Uriah killed in battle. Immediately after this, David took Bathsheba to wife, thinking he had effectively covered up his sin.

David lived in impenitence, until finally the prophet Nathan visited him. Nathan presented David with the sad tale of a poor man who lost his treasured lamb to his cruel, rich neighbor. David responded in righteous indignation, swearing an oath that this rich man should die for taking his neighbor's one, precious lamb to feed his guest. And Nathan replied, "Thou art the man."

Now we read of the judgment of God that would fall upon David

for his sin. Although God forgave David, there were still consequences that David had to live with for the rest of his life. It is well that we understand this, so that we take sin seriously.



According to the prophet Nathan there would be serious consequences to David's sin.

First, the sword would not depart from David's house (v. 10). This means that violence would fill the house of David, so that family members would die violent deaths. And this word of God was certainly fulfilled. Absalom murdered Amnon for the rape of his sister Tamar. Absalom attempted to take the throne from his father, David, and was killed by Joab in the ensuing battle. Solomon ordered the death of Adonijah, who persisted in his attempt to gain the throne after the reins of government were transferred from David to Solomon. What grief this brought to David and his house.

Secondly, God would raise up evil against David out of his own house and would take the wives of David and give them to his neigh-

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

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

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SUBSCRIPTION PRICE

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

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

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

bor, who would lie with them in the sight of the sun (vv. 11, 12). This was fulfilled when Absalom went in unto the ten concubines that David had left behind in the palace when he fled from Absalom. What humiliation this was for David.

Finally, the child of David and Bathsheba, conceived in adultery, would die. This word of God took place immediately.

These judgments of God for David's sin were strikingly appropriate. There is an unmistakable similarity between the sin of David and the judgment that befell him. David sinned by killing Uriah with the sword; the sword would never depart from David's house. David sinned by taking another man's wife in adultery; David's wives would be taken by his neighbor, and that openly. And the child of David's adultery would die.

What was true of David is always true.

Sin always has its consequences. Galatians 6:7 states the principle very clearly: "Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap." This passage sets forth a simple rule of agriculture. That which you sow, you will also reap. Sow corn and you will reap corn. This is true also spiritually. If you walk in obedience to God, you are sowing seed from which you will reap a harvest of many blessings. However, if you despise God's law and trample it underfoot, you will reap the bitter consequences of God's judgment. This is always the case. There are no exceptions. Sometimes it does not appear that way. There may be those around us who seem to sin with impunity. We ourselves may turn to a particular sin without coming to any discernible harm. This leads some to develop a casual attitude towards sin. Sin, they think, is really not so bad. Others are even emboldened to sin. Yet, if we could see things as God does, we would know differently. Every sin

has its judgment of God. Sin always has consequences.

And there is often a direct relationship between the sin committed and the judgment that God brings upon it, so that the one uniquely fits the other. The judgment of God upon the person who abuses his body through drunkenness or gluttony is to take away his health and bring him to an early grave. God judges the chronic liar by making sure no one believes him anymore. God's judgment on the adulterer is a ruined marriage. But perhaps the most devastating judgment of God upon sin is that God leads the children to follow in the sins of their parents, so that the sins of the parents come back to haunt them.

Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap.



God's people often view these judgments of God in their own lives as punishment. When tragedy of some sort befalls them, the question is frequently asked, "Why is God punishing me?" And when there is an obvious connection between some adversity and a sin or weakness in the life of the child of God, the statement often heard by pastors is, "God's punishing me, isn't He?"

Yet this was not true for David. Nathan assured David that the Lord had put away his sin, i.e., forgiven him.

There are two things noteworthy about this forgiveness. First, this forgiveness came only in the way of repentance and confession. For quite some time David lived impenitently, seeking to cover up his sin, even in his own conscience. Yet, as Psalm 51 indicates, he found no peace. His soul was deeply troubled. When finally Nathan confronted him with his sin, David repented and confessed. And immediately Nathan assured him of God's forgiveness. The second noteworthy thing about David's

forgiveness is that David escaped the punishment of God. God's punishment for adultery and murder was death. Yet God assured David through the prophet that he would not die. He would escape the punishment for this sin.

This is always the way it is for God's people. Make no mistake: God does punish sin. He punishes all sin, even the sin of His people. In fact, He does so to the extreme, with everlasting punishment of body and soul in hell. This is the stark reality of God's justice. But God in His great mercy has punished His Son, Jesus Christ, for the sin of His people. All the punishment for their sin was endured at the cross. There is none left. And so it is that when we confess our sin in true repentance and lay hold of the cross by faith, we may be assured that our sins also are forgiven and that there is no punishment for these sins.

What fell upon David and what comes to us, as consequences of our sins, is God's chastisement.

There is a great difference between punishment and chastisement. Punishment is the work of God's justice to destroy the sinner. This punishment falls on all those who are without Jesus Christ. Chastisement is the work of God's love and mercy to afflict this sinner in order to correct him and turn him from his sin. It is a work of salvation.

It was the chastisement of God that fell upon David.

Nathan pointed out two terrible things about David's sin.

First, David had despised the Lord in this sin. This is very striking in light of the fact that David is set forth in Scripture as a man after God's own heart. How was it, then, that David despised the Lord? This was due to his sinful nature, which he retained even as a great man of God. The born-again heart loves the Lord; the flesh despises Him. Through neglect of the Word and prayer, David's flesh gained control for a time, so that

he despised the Lord. This contempt focused especially on the commandments of God. David held the Lord's commandments in contempt, so that it became a small thing to trample them under his feet. This alone explains such horrible sins in the life of such a great man of God.

The second thing Nathan pointed out concerning David's sin was that David had given great occasion to the enemies of the Lord to blaspheme. This certainly is not difficult to see. Here the Lord's anointed, the one who represents the Lord Himself, stoops to commit such horrible things. The enemies of the Lord laughed and spoke evil of Him.

But this may not be. God will

not allow His people to despise Him. Neither will He allow His name to be blasphemed by His enemies on account of His people's behavior. So David must be corrected. The best way to correct such a foul attitude and direction of life is by affliction. In infinite love and perfect wisdom, God laid these afflictions on David so that he would not only come to repentance but would never continue in these sins again.

This is how God always deals with His beloved people. When they begin to despise Him, and show that by trampling underfoot His commandments, the Lord in His love corrects them. He rebukes them with His Word. But it is often necessary to correct them with the sad consequences of sin.

And it always is the work of His love and mercy to save His people from their foolish sins.

Let us then take sin seriously. Sin is nothing to take lightly. The child of God will not perish in his sin. The Lord will certainly keep His own. But He might accomplish that preservation of His own by chastising him with many stripes.

For those who are suffering the consequences of their sin (and who is not?), God has this to say: "My son, despise not the chastening of the LORD; neither be weary of his correction" (Prov. 3:11).

"Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time: Casting all your care upon him; for he careth for you" (1 Pet. 5:6, 7).



Editorial

The Unconditional Covenant in Contemporary Debate — and the Protestant Reformed Seminary* (3)

Prominent, influential ministers, professors of theology, and ruling elders in reputedly conservative Reformed and Presbyterian churches in North America are openly attacking the

cardinal truths of salvation by grace alone — *all* of the cardinal truths of salvation by grace alone — on the basis of the doctrine of a conditional covenant.

Central in the contemporary debate is biblical justification. This is as it should be. Justification, or the forgiveness of the guilty sinner, is the heart of the gospel of grace. It is to be expected that enemies of grace will assault the heart. The doctrine of justification by faith alone is, as Luther taught the churches of the Reformation, the article of a standing or falling

church. It follows that the churches of the Reformation that now fall do so by denying the very article in which once in the mercy of Christ they stood.

Justification by the Works of Faith

The distinct, powerful movement now deeply troubling the true churches of Christ and the saints of God in North America teaches that justification is by faith *and by the good works faith performs*. It appeals to James 2:21 and James 2:25, which teach that Abraham and Rahab were justified by works and

* This is the text of the speech given at the convocation exercises of the Protestant Reformed Seminary on September 4, 2002. The first two installments appeared in the January 1 and 15, 2003 issues of the *Standard Bearer*.

not by faith only. The movement harmonizes these passages with Paul's denial in Romans 3 and 4 that we are justified by the deeds of the law by explaining that Paul and James have two different kinds of works in view. When Paul denies that we are righteous by good works, he refers exclusively to works done apart from faith and works intended to merit. James, on the other hand, affirming justification by good works, refers to the good works that flow from faith. The truth, therefore, according to this movement, is that we are in fact righteous before God partly on the basis of our own good works — our good works that are the fruits of faith.

The righteousness of the guilty sinner, the righteousness of his justification, the righteousness of his standing before God in judgment, is, and must be, in part, his own good works!

Insofar as the movement still practices caution in its teaching of justification by faith and works (and it behooves a movement that intends to deny justification by faith alone in churches holding Lord's Days 23 and 24 of the Heidelberg Catechism and Articles 21-24 of the Belgic Confession to be as vague, ambiguous, and slippery, that is, deceptive, as possible, even in our doctrinally ignorant and apathetic time), the movement is exposed, unmistakably, by its harmonizing of Paul and James. The movement immediately raises suspicion by its quick and emphatic appeal to James in the matter of justification. Every teenage catechumen in a Reformed church that teaches its youth the essentials of Reformed doctrine knows that in the great controversy of the Reformation over justification Rome sat in James 2. But James 2 is inspired Scripture, not apocrypha, nor a "right strawy epistle." Appeal to James 2, therefore, does not in itself expose a teacher, or a movement, as heretical.

Harmonizing Paul and James

What exposes the movement under discussion as heretical in the article of justification is its harmonizing of James and Paul *by affirming two kinds of works*. The orthodox harmonizing of Romans 3:28 and James 2:20-26 affirms *two kinds of justification*. As is evident in the Romans passage itself, justification in Paul is God's (legal) reckoning of the obedience of Jesus Christ to the account of the guilty sinner, the man or woman who in this judgment appears only as one who is ungodly. Justification in Romans is the forgiveness of sins. This justification is by means of (not: because of, or on the basis of!) faith only. The sinner's own works, whether works before salvation or after salvation, whether works apart from faith or works produced by faith, whether works done to merit or works done out of thankfulness, have nothing whatever to do with his justification, except that all of them need to be forgiven.

Justification in James 2, by contrast, is the justified sinner's exhibition of the truth of his faith and of the reality of his justification by this true faith alone, both to himself and to others, by the good works that true faith always performs in obedience to the command of God. The James passage itself makes plain that it is speaking of justification in a quite different sense from that which justification has in Romans. The passage in James begins this way: "Yea, a man may say, Thou hast faith, and I have works: *shew me thy faith without thy works, and I will shew thee my faith by my works*" (v. 18).

By insisting that Romans and James both speak of justification in the same sense, but that they have different kinds of works in view, the advocates of the movement now disturbing the Reformed churches "let the cat out of the bag." For them, justification—justification in the sense of one's becoming righteous before God, justification in the sense of the forgiveness of sins—is

partly by and because of the good works of the sinner himself. The sinner's righteousness with God is in part his own good works. The stipulation is that these good works be those that proceed from faith, not those done apart from faith and in order to merit.

Writing in the Spring 2002 issue of *Reformation & Revival Journal*, Norman Shepherd, a leading proponent of the movement in conservative Reformed and Presbyterian churches that overthrows the system of salvation by grace alone contained in the "Three Forms of Unity" and in the Westminster Standards, says this about justification in Romans and James:

As evangelicals we often try to dodge this attack [of Rome against the Reformation's confession of justification by faith alone] by saying that these verses [in James 2] are not talking about justification by faith in the forensic, soteric sense that Paul talks about it in Romans and Galatians. The Westminster Confession, however, does not use this dodge. Instead, the Confession acknowledges that *James is talking about faith and justification in the same sense that Paul uses these terms when he denies that justification is by works* (p. 80, emphasis added).

This harmonizing of Romans and James commits Shepherd and his disciples to the doctrine of justification by faith and works. Shepherd expresses this doctrine as his own in his recent book, *The Call of Grace: How the Covenant Illuminates Salvation and Evangelism* (P&R 2000). With reference to the obedience that God required of Israel in the Mosaic covenant, obedience consisting of doing God's commandments, obedience that Shepherd describes as Israel's "obligation," Shepherd writes: "Obedience is simply faithfulness to the Lord; *it is the righteousness of faith* (compare Rom. 9:32)" (p. 39, emphasis added). Later, Shepherd repeats this gross false doctrine: "The righteousness

of faith is the obedience of faith (Rom. 1:5; 16:26), and is therefore simultaneously covenant privilege and responsibility" (p. 76).

The Obedience of Christ Alone

The truth about the righteousness of faith is that it is the obedience of Jesus Christ in our stead and on our behalf, and the obedience of Jesus Christ alone. The truth about the righteousness of faith is that it is this obedience of Christ imputed to the account of the guilty sinner through faith alone. The truth about the righteousness of faith is that it does not consist of any work of the sinner himself, not his works apart from faith, not his works of faith, and not his faith itself as a work. The truth about the righteousness of faith is that as soon as one work of the sinner himself is added to it, be that work never so small and insignificant, even a weak sigh of sorrow over sin, the righteousness is no longer the righteousness of faith, but the sinner's own righteousness. And both it and he are damned.

"We Heartily Believe ... [the] Doctrine ... in the ... Catechism"

There is no excuse for Shepherd. He is a Reformed minister, bound by Lord's Days 23 and 24 of the Heidelberg Catechism.

There is no excuse for Reformed people deceived by Shepherd and his allies. They know, or ought to know, Lord's Days 23 and 24 of the Heidelberg Catechism.

Q. 59. But what doth it profit thee now that thou believest all this?

A. That I am righteous in Christ, before God, and an heir of eternal life.

Q. 60. How art thou righteous before God?

A. Only by a true faith in Jesus Christ; so that, though my conscience accuse me that I have grossly transgressed all the commandments of God, and kept none of them, and am still inclined to all evil; notwithstanding, God, without any merit of mine, but only of mere grace, grants and imputes to me the perfect satisfaction, righteousness, and holiness of Christ; even so, as if I never had had nor committed any sin: yea, as if I had fully accomplished all that obedience which Christ has accomplished for me; inasmuch as I embrace such benefit with a believing heart.

Q. 61. Why sayest thou that thou art righteous by faith only?

A. Not that I am acceptable to God on account of the worthiness of my faith, but because only the satisfaction, righteousness, and holiness of Christ, is my righteousness

before God; and that I cannot receive and apply the same to myself any other way than by faith only.

Q. 62. But why cannot our good works be the whole or part of our righteousness before God?


A. Because that the righteousness which can be approved of before the tribunal of God must be absolutely perfect, and in all respects conformable to the divine law; and also, that our best works in this life are all imperfect and defiled with sin.

Justification by faith alone — heart of the gospel, article of the standing or falling church, precious comfort of poor sinners in the daily judgment of this life and regarding the final judgment to come, grand testimony to the worth of the life and death of the Savior, doctrine that glorifies the triune God, who worked out His own righteousness in the obedience of Jesus Christ and who magnifies His marvelous mercy in imputing this righteousness to His own for Christ's sake!

Attacked and denied today in Reformed and Presbyterian churches!

On the basis of a conditional covenant!

— DJE

... to be continued. 

Letters


Avoiding Extremes

Having read the editorial, "He Shines in All That's Fair" (*Standard Bearer*, Dec. 1, '02), I was disappointed to read about the lesbian group being allowed to sing at Calvin College. It is hard to imagine the rapid influence of the gay agenda in our society and even within our Christian community. I don't entirely agree with you though in blaming all of this on common grace. Naturally, holding to the common grace doctrine gives these wolves in sheep's clothing a loophole to leverage in their evil

ideology. But Calvin College had the right and duty to call a spade a spade regardless of their view of common grace. What God forbids, we forbid.

Extremes can be taken on both sides of this issue. On the one extreme side, one could become a hermit and avoid all contact with the world, or one could associate only with Christians and read or watch only Christian material, news, or programs. On the other extreme side of the issue, one could wallow in all the vomit of our sick society to glean the whole beans.

Thankfully, for Christians who struggle with this issue of common grace, no matter which side we are on, most of us find ourselves avoiding the extremes, being faithful to our Lord, albeit, not perfectly, and finding the Lord still using us as His witnesses. Let us pray for each other that the Lord may protect us from these evil extremes, and that He may continue to use us as His witnesses and in the building up of His kingdom until He returns.

Carl R. Smits
Lansing, IL 

Jerome Bolsec and Predestination (2)

Jerome Bolsec, as we saw last time, was an enemy of the truth of sovereign predestination. When he went so far as to interrupt a worship service in Geneva in order to oppose the preaching of that truth, he was arrested by the civil authorities for disturbing the peace. The Venerable Company of Pastors in Geneva urged the city Council to examine Bolsec's doctrinal positions, and to seek the advice of other cantons in Switzerland to arrive at the truth of the matter. As it turned out, however, the other Swiss churches were a disappointment. They agreed with the ministers in Geneva on the doctrine of unconditional election, but were of a mind to advise toleration of those who opposed the "perplexing doctrine" of reprobation.

The End of the Matter

Two events ended the matter. The Council refused to accept the advice of the churches from the neighboring cantons, and instead condemned the views of Bolsec. Nevertheless, the sentence passed upon Bolsec was almost certainly less severe than it could have been: Bolsec was banished from Geneva, under pain of being whipped if he returned.

The second consequence of the poor advice of the Swiss cantons was the preparation of a tract by Calvin entitled *On the Eternal Predestination of God*, in which Calvin

set forth his mature and fully developed views on sovereign, eternal, and double predestination. It, along with another tract on the doctrine of providence, has been published under the title *Calvin's Calvinism*.^{*} This tract is sometimes called the *Consensus Genevensis* or *Genevan Agreement*. It was given this name because it expressed the position of the Genevan churches.

Jerome Bolsec was banished from Geneva on December 23, 1555. He never returned to the city, but he did return to the Roman Catholic Church, where he rightly belonged; for his doctrine was that of Rome, not of the Reformation, and his views were Semi-Pelagian and not Calvinistic. Before he died, he wrote a biography of Calvin that was full of slander, evil stories, and terrible accusations. The biography would have died at birth, I am sure, if it had not been for the fact that the Romish Church took hold of it and promoted it as a genuine story of the life of Calvin and the kind of man he was. But at last, even Roman Catholic scholarship, bound by scholarly integrity if not love for Calvin, killed it.

Conclusion

It is difficult to imagine, but it is, in fact, true, that there are men within the Reformed churches who come to Bolsec's defense and criticize Calvin for the Bolsec affair. Calvin is, e.g., charged with a hatred for Bolsec, not out of disagreement with Bolsec's theological position, but out of a determination to defend his own position as dictator of Geneva. Calvin is charged with seeing in Bolsec a threat to

his domination in the city and church, and with using his power and influence to rid the city of someone whom he considered a challenger to his absolute sway within the canton.

One cannot take such a stand without calling into question Calvin's theology. And so, this also is done. Calvin is charged with gross error in his position on predestination, and Bolsec's position is honored and set forth as the truth of Scripture. The enemies of sovereign predestination are legion.

But, more seriously, Reformed and Presbyterian writers would prefer that the entire episode of Calvin's dealings with Bolsec remain unknown. These, and there are many, claim that a position similar to that of Bolsec was really Calvin's position; that Calvin never really taught what is said to be Calvin's theology; and that later theologians (among whom are mentioned Theodore Beza, the fathers at Dordt, the Westminster divines, Turretin, Kuyper, Hoeksema – to name but a few) have rashly and wrongly twisted Calvin's theology into something Calvin never taught or intended. These books (and there are many) do not want to talk about the Bolsec controversy, for they are unable to explain Calvin's condemnation of Bolsec when, according to them, Calvin held views almost identical to Bolsec.

And, as if that bit of historical legerdemain were not sufficient, even the theologians present at the

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^{*} It is available from the Reformed Free Publishing Association.

Synod of the Christian Reformed Church in 1924 sought support for the well-meant gospel offer by claiming that it was taught by Reformed writers in "the most flourishing period of Reformed theology" — when, in fact, it is the very doctrine that was part and parcel of Bolsec's views so strongly condemned by Calvin.

If anyone disputes this analysis of the situation, he need only read Calvin's *Treatise On the Eternal Predestination of God*. It is all there. While Bolsec's name is not mentioned, and while another enemy of sovereign predestination, Pighius by name, is mentioned in that treatise, the fact remains that the treatise was occasioned by the heresy of Bolsec and the sympathetic treatment of Bolsec by the other Swiss theologians.

Every genuinely orthodox theologian from Calvin to today has agreed that Calvin's teachings on election and reprobation are the teachings of the Word of God. All who have even a superficial understanding of the great church father Augustine also agree that Calvin did not bring into theology an innovation, a new doctrine, something invented by him, but that he taught nothing more than Augustine himself had taught and insisted was crucial to the truth of the sov-


ereignty of God in His work of grace in salvation. The great Synod of Dordt and the Westminster Assembly, both representing the best theologians that the age knew and, perhaps, that the world has ever seen assembled within a few years of each other, put its stamp on Calvin's teaching as being in all parts biblical.

Why do men refuse to accept what is so obviously the case, namely that election and reprobation are biblical, confessional, and the teachings of the Reformers? The answer can only be that man wants no part of the absolute sovereignty of God. He prefers to salvage some remnants of his tattered pride and place some responsibility for his salvation in his own hands. He refuses to admit that God is sovereign also in the damnation of the wicked. He refuses to acknowledge that God does all His good pleasure and reveals in all the works of His hands that He alone is God.

The church has never claimed that this is an easy doctrine. It is not easy to understand; it is not easy to preach; it is not easy to hold and confess. It crushes all human pride. It leaves man nothing and God everything. It insists that not man rules, not even in his own af-

fairs, but that God, the Creator, the Sustainer of all, is also the Potter, who is sovereign over the clay to make vessels of honor and dishonor as it pleases Him. God wills the salvation of the elect in Jesus Christ, and that decree of election is the "fountain and cause" of faith, of all good works, and of the fullness of salvation in Christ. But God also wills the damnation of the reprobate to everlasting hell in the way of their sin as manifestation of His supreme justice and infinite holiness.

It is, in the final analysis, impossible that one maintain the sovereignty of God in election (as many try to do) and deny the sovereignty of God in reprobation. To deny the latter will result in a denial of the former. Calvin understood that. Dordt understood that. Dordt insisted that election and reprobation were *one decree*, though with two sides: "That some receive the gift of faith from God and others do not receive it proceeds from God's eternal decree..." (Canons I, 6).

Let those churches and ministers who preach the whole counsel of God and claim to be Calvinists preach also the doctrine of eternal, unchangeable, and sovereign reprobation and maintain it against all opposition. 

All Around Us

Rev. Gise VanBaren

■ Sunday Labor – and the Fourth Commandment

The *Grand Rapids Press*, December 9, 2002, reports on an instance where an individual, refusing to work on Sunday, was fired from her job. The government filed a lawsuit against the employer, claiming this person's civil rights were violated.

The federal government is accusing Meijer Inc. of violating the civil rights of a cake decorator who was fired after refusing to work on a Sunday.

The Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, or EEOC, has filed a lawsuit on behalf of Debra Kerkstra of Allegan, who is a member of the Christian Reformed Church.

Meijer "failed to provide a reasonable accommodation to the known religious practices of Ms. Kerkstra," the EEOC said on a document filed recently in U.S.

District Court.

In response, the giant retailer said a day off for Kerkstra would have caused "an undue hardship" for the company on "one of the busiest days of the week."

Kerkstra, 37, was fired in May 2001 after a year at the Plainwell store in Allegan County.

While not speaking specifically about the case, Meijer spokesman Brian Breslin said workers covered by the union contract can be required to work any day.

"A person decides whether they want to accept the terms of em-

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

ployment. If they do, they're accountable to keep their part of the bargain," Breslin said. "I'm not aware of any exceptions.

"We can't do for one what we can't do for all," he said. "You have to have consistent work rules. That's why you have a labor contract."

The government, however, contends Meijer's Plainwell store was comfortable knowing Kerkstra didn't want to work Sundays when she was hired in April 2000. Then a year later, a new boss gave her a Sunday shift.

Kerkstra found another employee who was willing to decorate cakes that day, but the store director refused to allow the switch, the EEOC said. She didn't report to work as scheduled, was suspended for three days and eventually fired.

It is of interest that the Civil Rights Act of 1964, Title VII, as interpreted by the Supreme Court in 1977, requires companies to try to accommodate religious practices of workers. On that basis, it appears, Meijer might be held in violation of Ms. Kerkstra's "civil rights."

The case (and the Civil Rights Act) is of interest to Protestant Reformed workers especially — since it will not allow forced union membership or Sunday labor when such is refused on the basis of one's religion.

In the case of Ms. Kerkstra, there appears to be several reasons why her case is not as strong as it might be.

First, she evidently became a member of the union in order to work at Meijer. Meijer points out that the union member is bound by the rules of that union — which required the member to work on any day when Meijer demanded this.

Secondly, she worked one Sunday — at the grand opening of the store. Meijer argues that Ms. Kerkstra is inconsistent now when she refuses to work on any more Sundays. The *Press* reports, "Kerkstra is 'ashamed and embar-

assed' and regrets that decision, the EEOC said."

Thirdly, Ms. Kerkstra is a member of the Christian Reformed denomination, which now permits work on Sunday (as well as union membership).

Companies which intend to demand Sunday work are clever. In the case of Ms. Kerkstra, she was asked to work just the Sunday of the grand opening. These same companies soon go a step further: work just one Sunday a month — there are still 3 or 4 other Sundays for worship in church. But it is obvious: one who works just one Sunday, or one Sunday a month, has lost all moral right to refuse additional Sunday labor for conscience's sake.

Nor, one would think, would the comments of Henry DeMoor, Calvin Theological Seminary professor, be of assistance. He sets forth a view that is surely contrary to that which had earlier and emphatically been taught in his denomination. The *Press* reported:

...Henry DeMoor said the church has long recognized Sunday as a day of worship free from "servile works" except those involving charity and necessity.

"There would be considerable sympathy for her among a number of Christian Reformed people," said DeMoor, an expert in church policy.

"But in view of current society, it's hard for me to embrace that principle," he said. "If every Christian insisted we're not going to work on Sunday, I suspect there wouldn't be enough people to do the work.

"Ethically, a better position might be to tell church elders they work one Sunday a month. If they say they are conscious of the Fourth Commandment and honor it as much as they can, I'm sure elders would be satisfied," DeMoor said.

That is a striking morality presented. One simply must tell the elders, "We'll honor the command-

ment as much as we can." And to condone Sabbath work because otherwise there would not be enough workers!! If there were not enough workers, the stores might have to remain closed on Sunday.

And, to follow through on the morality DeMoor proposes, one who takes God's name in vain rather frequently can assure the elders that he is conscious of the Third Commandment and will honor it as much as he can. Then elders should be satisfied. And one who commits adultery can assure the elders that he is conscious of the requirement of the Seventh Commandment and will honor it as much as he can! The elders should be satisfied (and maybe God would be too?).

Is this, too, what is being taught at the Seminary to those who must go forth as ministers of the gospel?

One can be thankful that there is yet "considerable sympathy for her (Kerkstra) among a number of Christian Reformed people." That Ms. Kerkstra has maintained her convictions, though not consistent in the application of those convictions, is reason for commendation — she did this though it cost her her job. One can be thankful as well that the Civil Rights Act of 1964 protects the Christian who insists on walking according to his religious convictions.

At the same time, we must be aware that those who promote Sunday labor do so carefully, little by little, until they have won over the opposition — or compelled it to submit.

A number of years ago (1989) I wrote to D & W Food Centers (a Grand Rapids-based grocery chain) about their intent to open their stores on Sunday. A nice letter was written in answer explaining why they regarded this a necessity. They pointed out:

We plan to phase in the Sunday openings over roughly a two-month period, beginning in April.

In all, 11 stores around Grand Rapids and in Grand Haven will begin seven-day operations during that time frame. However, the stores located in Jenison, Grandville, and Fremont will not be opened on Sunday. We feel that at present D & W can best serve those communities by continuing our six-day operation. As do most prudent people, we follow the maxim that teaches, "never say never", but we can say that we have no plans to open those three stores in any time in the foreseeable future.

In making the decision to open more of our stores on Sunday, the needs and feelings of our 2,300 associates were uppermost in our thoughts. They make a commitment to our organization and our customers every day, and have the right to expect the same in return. At D & W we have that commitment, which includes a strong respect for religious beliefs. Because of this, we will not require any of our associates to work on Sunday if doing so would violate their religious principles. There will be no test involved, no need to prove religious convictions. We trust their integrity. Those who choose not to work on Sunday because of their religious beliefs will not be penalized for making that decision or compromise their opportunities to advance with D & W.

But obviously it did not work out that way. One who will not work on Sunday probably would not be hired. If one works in such stores, there is little or no possibility for advancement. The law of the land which does not allow for this religious discrimination is ignored.

■ Civil Rights and Union Membership

World magazine, a Christian weekly news magazine, has a cover story in its Nov. 30, 2002 issue titled: "Look (Out) For the Union Label." The article gives instances of people who refused to pay union dues or to join the union at all. This was done with the claim that they could not conscien-

tiously join or pay union dues on religious grounds. One instance:

Kathleen Klamut doesn't want her money used to keep abortionists in business. A psychologist with the Ravenna City School District in Ohio, she has fought state and local teachers unions in a dispute over dues deducted from her paycheck that go to elect pro-abortion candidates. But when she requested to have all of her dues diverted to charity, as is her right under law, the union said no—even though Mrs. Klamut had won a similar, two-year battle in the Louisville, Ohio, district in 1999. In March 2002, Mrs. Klamut filed a complaint with the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC).

The article gives several other examples of individuals who also objected to membership dues used to fund liberal causes — especially abortion, homosexuality, restrictions on parental choices in education, etc. Then it points out:

As unions have made good on their initial objectives — shorter work days, safe working conditions, and so on — many have moved on to funding liberal causes such as abortion-on-demand and school-based sexual-health clinics, opposing conservative causes such as school choice and welfare reform, and strongly supporting liberal candidates. Federal Election Commission records show that union political action committees over the past decade gave more than \$362 million to Democrats and only \$25 million to Republicans. Union leaders say they're representing their members, but about one-third of union members voted Republican in this month's elections.

Now, here's the perspective of Dennis Robey, who works in an "agency shop" state. In his 25th year as an industrial arts teacher in the Huber Heights City School District near Dayton, Ohio, Mr. Robey was an active member of Huber Heights Education Association, the Ohio Education Association, and the NEA until 1995. But

that was the year he found in his school mailbox an NEA publication called *Deceptions by the Radical Right Against the National Education Association*.

"As I read the publication, I decided that I needed to look further into what the union stood for," Mr. Robey told the U.S. House Committee on Education and Workforce Subcommittee in June 2002. He did look into it — and found himself in direct religious opposition to official NEA resolutions on "reproductive freedom," confidential school-based family planning, and restrictions on parental choices in education. Mr. Robey, a Church of God member in Springfield, Ohio, learned from the Focus on the Family magazine *Teachers in Focus* that he could request from the union a "religious accommodation" — which can include an exemption from union membership, and from paying to the union some or all required fees.

Workers are entitled to such accommodations under Title VII of the 1964 Civil Rights Act. The act prohibits employers and labor unions from discriminating against workers or adversely affecting their employment based on religion. Following passage of the act, the EEOC ruled that companies and unions must make "reasonable" religious accommodations that do not result in "undue hardship" on the business. Failure to do so is religious discrimination. Congress put an even finer point on the matter with the 1972 Equal Employment Opportunity Act. That law defines "religion" as including "all aspects of religious observance and practice, as well as belief"....

...as Mr. Robey found out, such rights do not prevent unions from denying religious accommodation requests, challenging workers' religious beliefs in court, or, at minimum, dragging their feet for years. From 1995 through 2000, he requested each January that his agency fees be diverted to charity. (Workers may also request nonmonetary accommodations such as time off for Sabbath or other religious observances.)

Mr. Robey was harassed with paper work in which he had to prove his claims; his dues were withheld and placed in escrow, and when finally paid, it was without interest for the period the money was withheld. So it went — until recently when there was an EEOC-brokered conciliation agreement in which the NEA and its Ohio affiliates agreed to cease paper-grilling of religious objectors.

The article points out:

Supreme Court case law holds that unions must provide to their members a detailed accounting of how dues are spent. But Robert Hunter has reviewed about 200 accounting reports from the Michigan Education Association, the United Auto Workers, the Association of State, Federal, City and Municipal Employees, and other unions. He said most were vague at best and, sometimes, untruth-

ful about the percentage of dues unions spend on political activities. The U.S. Supreme Court found in one case that 78 percent of dues were not necessary for the union to complete its collective bargaining activities; in another case the figure was 90 percent.


Mr. Hunter believes unions deliberately withhold from workers information on their objector rights to protect their political cash flow.

The article concludes with reports on two of the cases:

Meanwhile, Florida electrical technician Robert Beers is still fighting the machinists' union. But school psychologist Kathleen Klamut on Nov. 19 received a letter from the Ohio Education Association. The letter granted her religious accommodation request, but added, "We are not acknowledging the sincerity of your professed beliefs, nor are we acknowl-

edging that the law requires us to grant this accommodation."

NRTW director of legal information Dan Cronin said the letter showed that "even when the law is put right in the unions' face in black and white, they will still deny it. It's obvious that as long as they hold these kinds of attitudes, unions will continue to discriminate against people of faith. It shows why we have to keep fighting."

Children of God who have problems with employers or unions about Sunday work or who have problems with union membership itself ought to remember that the law of the land is still on their side — protecting them against this religious discrimination. One should not hesitate to seek the protection of the government when employers insist on this religious discrimination. 

Taking Heed to the Doctrine

Rev. Steven Key

The Perfect Ground of our Imputed Righteousness

We have seen that justification is the act of God's grace by which He imputes righteousness to the sinner. God justifies the ungodly!

We are immediately faced with the question: How is this possible? We recognize that there must be a ground for that divine verdict that has proclaimed our righteousness. What is that ground? What is the basis for God's declaring us righteous?

That is an important question. The answer to that question will

reflect upon the very being of God.

The ground of our justification is nothing less than the perfect righteousness of Jesus Christ and His perfect satisfaction on the cross.

Not in Us

This righteousness is not something imputed to us because of what we have done.

If you look at Philippians 3:9, you will note the contrast between "the righteousness which is of God" and what Paul, upon reflection in his own life, saw as "mine own righteousness, which is of the law." The contrast is important. As Paul came by grace to see, it is a contrast as sharp as that between

light and darkness, the truth and the lie, heaven and hell. It is a contrast, however, that many seem unable to grasp.

The greater part of the church world today — whether we speak of Roman Catholicism or Protestantism — wants to say that righteousness is by faith *and* works.

When we insist that God justifies the ungodly through faith alone and that our works play no part in our justification, the Roman Catholic Church pronounces us "anathema." This doctrine, after all, was the fundamental issue at the time of the Reformation.

The Council of Trent was Rome's formal response to the bib-

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lical teachings of Luther and the Reformers. Over against the Reformation teaching of justification by faith *alone* for the imputed righteousness of Jesus Christ, Rome responded with a position that made works an essential part of justification.

According to the “infallible” decrees of Trent, justification is a process whereby the sinner is actually *made* righteous. Justification is “not remission of sins merely, but also the sanctification and renewal of the inward man, through the voluntary reception of the grace and gifts by which an unrighteous man becomes righteous” (Canons and Decrees of the Council of Trent, sess. 6, chap. 6).

Rome speaks therefore of an *infused* righteousness by grace, which enables a person to do good works. These works then are the basis for the *declaration* of righteousness by God, and are necessary to obtain as well as to preserve justification. And because the sinner’s good works are themselves insufficient to obtain perfect righteousness, purgatory is necessary.

If anyone says that the guilt is remitted to every penitent sinner after the grace of justification has been received, and that the debt of eternal punishment is so blotted out that there remains no debt of temporal punishment to be discharged either in this world or in the next in Purgatory, before the entrance to the kingdom of heaven can be opened — let him be anathema. (*Ibid.*, sess. 6, canon 30)

While teaching that God justifies sinners by His grace, and even maintaining that such justification comes through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, Rome’s position stands at sharp odds with the Reformers’ doctrine.

If anyone says that men are justified either by the imputation of the righteousness of Christ alone, or by the remission of sins alone, to the exclusion of the grace and love that is poured forth in their hearts by

the Holy Spirit and is inherent in them; or even that the grace by which we are justified is only the favor of God — let him be anathema. (*Ibid.*, sess. 6, canon 11)

The contrast, therefore, between the teaching of the Roman Catholic Church and that of the Protestant Reformers is very sharp. Each side accused the other of preaching “another gospel.” So it is. We can appreciate the forthrightness of Rome for boldly expressing it in those terms. We do not hesitate to say the same — the Roman Catholic Church has another gospel than that which we preach.

For that very reason it is astounding that Protestantism and modern evangelicalism have made a steady march back to Rome.

Part of this is a desire in evangelical circles to seek a certain church unity regardless of the cost. Rome’s position concerning justification has not changed. But there are evangelicals who desire a certain measure of unity with Rome, and who have shown themselves willing to sacrifice even the truth of justification to obtain that unity. This has come to expression in recent years especially in the ecumenical documents *Evangelicals and Catholics Together: The Christian Mission in the Third Millennium*, and *The Gift of Salvation*.^{*} In these documents, the signatories showed a willingness to concede the truth of justification by faith *alone* as a non-essential doctrine, not central to the gospel.

Besides these noted concessions to the Roman Catholic error, there is also prevalent in evangelical churches a teaching of works-righteousness. This is just as prevalent today as it was in Jesus’ day and in the years prior to the great Reformation, and is in fact probably the most direct danger to us. Please note that we have yet to treat the relationship between justification and good works, and the importance of good works in the life of the Christian. But repeat-

edly the idea is expressed that what really matters before God is not what we believe, but how we serve Him and our fellow human beings. It is, after all, living the golden rule that counts in our standing before God.

The reason for this way of thinking is easily explained. By nature we love and are most eager to secure our own righteousness and take credit for our own status of being right before God. Although we may not publicly boast of our goodness, there is this thought that we are pretty good when we are faithful in our church attendance, loyal to church and Christian education, liberal in our contributions, and so on. We love to regard ourselves as a step ahead of the sinners around us, and as standing before God with some merit in how we have lived.

This natural and very wicked attitude is exposed by the apostle Paul with a personal example in Philippians 3.

The Testimony of Philippians 3:9

From the beginning Paul had recognized his responsibility to God. He believed that the God of the Old Testament Scriptures was his King and Judge, to whom he owed implicit obedience and to whom he would have to answer for the way he lived. The Scriptures had taught him this, and his own conscience echoed the demand.

But Paul also had a very mistaken perception of his ability and a faulty concept of sin and depravity.

Having received the law of the Old Testament, Paul believed from his early youth that he could keep and in fact did keep that law perfectly. In his heart he repeated the prayers of the Pharisees whom he followed and who were his teach-

^{*} The document *Evangelicals and Catholics Together: The Christian Mission in the Third Millennium* was given extensive review by David J. Engelsma in the *Standard Bearer* in vol. 75, beginning January 15, 1999.

ers: "God, I thank thee that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers. I fast twice in the week; I give tithes of all that I possess." In his spiritual blindness he thought that God should be pretty proud of him.

But when the Spirit began to work in him on that road to Damascus and in the days following, it became clear to Paul that God's commandment is exceeding broad, reaching vastly farther and searching infinitely deeper than he had conceived. This very religious man had taken into consideration only his outward life, and even there only the letter of the law. When he saw the absence of outward, positive transgression, he thought all was well. But upon conversion he saw that God desires truth in the inward parts. God demands perfect purity and consecration of the heart, out of which come all the issues of life (Prov. 4:23).

How shocking it was to Paul that when God made inquisition concerning spiritual obedience, this religious man had nothing with which he could plead righteousness. He was condemned! In his own conscience he was condemned! He had nothing but his own righteousness, which was of the law. And that law condemned him!

The law can never justify us. By the works of the law we can never be righteous. It condemns

us all the time. The supposed righteousness of his own, which Paul thought he had derived from keeping the law, was a delusion! "Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight: for by the law is the knowledge of sin" (Rom. 3:20).

God brought Paul to the knowledge of that one only salvation, salvation which shows in one view God's abhorrence of sin and determination to sustain His own perfect holiness, and at the same time the infinite richness of His love and grace. God gave him to see that righteousness "which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith" (Phil. 3:9).


Justification is the righteousness which is ours in Christ Jesus: "Even the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe" (Rom. 3:22).

The eternal Son of God as the representative Head of His people worked and accomplished for us a perfect righteousness which is imputed to us for His sake. God counts the righteousness of Christ as the personal righteousness of all those who are in Christ by faith.

That perfect and eternally sufficient righteousness is enjoyed by all who believe in Him. Or, as the apostle puts it in Philippians 3:9, we no longer walk around with the supposed and utterly insufficient

righteousness that is of the law. But to us who are in Christ belongs the righteousness that is of God, conceived and proclaimed and given by Him through faith. Though personally unworthy, we are justified in Christ, vitally united to Him by faith.

"Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law" (Rom. 3:28). Our righteousness is entirely the righteousness of someone else. Christ Himself is our righteousness.

When you have the righteousness that is of God, therefore, you have a righteousness that is firmly grounded. He conceived of it from eternity, and willed it in His unchangeable counsel from before the foundation of the world. Eternally He conceived of the relationship between Himself in Christ and the people He would take to Himself. And He realized it in His Son. In Immanuel, God with us, God united Himself with our flesh and blood in the person of the Son. In an act of love inconceivable to us in all its ramifications, the Son of God assumed our relation to the demands of the law, took upon Himself our sins, assumed our guilt and shame, was nailed to our cross, descended into our death, and bore the wrath of God unto everlasting hell. There is the perfect satisfaction, righteousness, and holiness of Christ for His people. Do you see it as your own? 

Go Ye Into All the World

Rev. Arie denHartog

The Great Commission (1)

Recently I had the privilege of teaching a course on missions in the Bible School of the Evangelical Reformed Churches in Singapore called the Asian Reformed Theological School (ARTS). I had to prepare a series

of eighteen lectures for this course. I plan to revise a few of these lectures for use as *Standard Bearer* articles, in the hope that they might be beneficial to others. In doing this I have no desire to put myself forth as an authority on the subject

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February 1, 2003/Standard Bearer/205

of missions. I have been given the opportunity and great privilege to serve on the mission field for a number of years. I am thankful to the Lord for the things we have by His grace learned. We also find that we are always learning more, always again searching the Scriptures, and testing the principles according to which we do our work as we face its difficulties and complexities. In our ARTS course on missions we tried to address some of the most important issues commonly faced by the church as she seeks to carry out her missionary calling.

The best place to begin a course on missions is the so-called great commission given by our Lord. "Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen" (Matt. 28:19, 20).

From this passage we are reminded forcefully that the mandate to preach the gospel and carry out the work of missions is given to the church by direct commandment from the Lord Himself. It is clear from this commandment, especially from its attached promise, that the church must be faithful to continue the great commission even to the end of the world. The work of missions is the work of the Lord Jesus Christ Himself. He has redeemed His elect church by His great sacrifice on the cross. It is His purpose that His church be gathered from the nations of the world. He Himself, by the almighty, sovereign power of His grace and Holy Spirit, saves His people through the means of the preaching of the gospel and gathers them into the unity of faith by the same power as His beloved church. The Lord Jesus Himself also equips and empowers the church to accomplish this mighty and wonderful work which is of such great significance for the

history of the world. Only because this is true is this work always victorious. Knowing this truth is the great encouragement and incentive to the church to be faithful to her Lord.

We do well to begin by considering the occasion on which Christ gave this great commission. He did so after the victory of His cross and resurrection. Through His cross Christ made the great sacrifice and atonement for the sins of His people, even all those whom God the Father had given to Him. He fulfilled all righteousness on their behalf. On the cross Christ fully accomplished the great work of reconciliation. By His cross Christ also destroyed principalities and powers, putting them to open shame. He laid the foundation of righteousness and peace with God for His glorious kingdom. After His cross Jesus arose, triumphing over death and hell. Jesus was proven to be the eternal Son of God and the mighty Lord of salvation.

Jesus gave the great commission just before His ascension into heaven. Before Him at the time of the giving of the great commission were His disciples, the representatives of His church whom He called to be His apostles. Some are of the opinion that this was the occasion of Jesus' appearing to the five hundred at once. As the Lord had prayed in His High Priestly prayer recorded in John 17, these would be left in the world. They would not be taken out of the world. They would be left in the world to testify of His glorious name and of the wonderful work of His salvation through the preaching of the gospel.

Jesus was looking forward to His exaltation to the highest heaven above principalities and powers in heaven and earth. In heaven Jesus is now crowned with glory and honor and power. He has been made the Lord of lords and the King of kings, the ruler of all the nations of the earth. All power and authority in heaven and earth have

been given to Him. It is from the perspective of the anticipation of this exaltation that Jesus could and did give the great commission to His disciples, commanding them to go throughout all the world to preach the gospel. As the exalted Lord Jesus, He also assures His church of the certain prospect of the final and glorious triumph of His kingdom. He will come again at the end of the ages as the glorious exalted Lord, the great God and Savior of His people. He will come to raise up the dead, and to bring His beloved church to be with Him in glory and cause her members to be citizens of His everlasting kingdom of glory in the new heavens and earth. Such is the great significance of the occasion of the giving of the great commission.

Before His ascension into heaven, Christ promised to give the Holy Spirit to His church. This was implied already by the Lord in the promise joined to the great commission: "Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world." This promise was given by the Lord again immediately before His ascension into heaven. "But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth" (Acts 1:8). At the time of His exaltation the Spirit of God was given to the Lord. It is only by the sovereign and almighty power of the Spirit of the exalted Lord Jesus Christ that the church will be able to fulfill the great commission. It is only by the power of this same Spirit that all those who are ordained by the Father unto eternal life will believe unto salvation. All of these truths are really wonderful and tremendously significant for the work of missions.

The great commission was given to the disciples of the Lord, and through them to the church of all the ages of the New Testament

era. This is significant because on this basis we know and maintain that the work of missions is specifically and emphatically the work of the church. The disciples, at the time of the giving of the great commission, represented this church. The work of missions is not the work of a self-appointed man or some society or parachurch group organized by no higher authority than its own. The church alone has the Lord's authority to do the work of missions. The gospel of salvation was given to her, for her to preach. She is not to bring the word of a mere man but she is to preach faithfully the Lord's own Word.

Furthermore, the work of missions has as its purpose the gathering of the church of Christ. It is not merely the purpose of missions to gather thousands and millions of unrelated Christians all over the world. The Lord says, "I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against her." It is the purpose of Christ that those who believe the gospel be gathered and formed as His church. That church was chosen in Christ before the foundations of the world. Her members were redeemed through

His cross. These must be gathered together for the worship of the name of the Lord and the showing forth of His glorious praises in the earth. Through the preaching of the gospel the saints of God must be called out from the world and brought to conversion and faith in Jesus Christ. These must be nurtured in the truth of the Word of the Lord, growing up together in Him as one man unto the full measure of the stature of the body of Christ.

Before they were given the great commission, the disciples had been called and prepared by the Lord Himself. None were ever called and trained and prepared like these disciples of the Lord. They would become the apostles of the Lord, sent out directly by Him into the world. They would be instrumental in laying the foundation of the whole New Testament church. They had seen the Lord Jesus Christ and beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten Son of God full of grace and truth. They were with Him personally during most of His earthly ministry. They heard His wonderful words and saw the amazing dem-

onstrations of His almighty power and authority in the miracles He performed before their eyes. They were on earth at the time when Jesus made His great sacrifice on the cross, though at the time they did not understand what it all meant. When the Spirit was poured out they would understand, and they would be commissioned to preach the gospel of the cross of Jesus Christ. They saw Him as the glorious resurrected Lord who appeared several times to them. Some of them were even eyewitnesses of the glory that the Lord would possess in His kingdom after His exaltation. They saw the foreshadowing of this glory on the Mount of Transfiguration.

Through the apostles of the Lord, by the authority given to them, and according to the word of the Lord, others would later also be ordained to the work of the preaching of the gospel. This is significant for the understanding of the great commission. The great commission is to be carried out through the ministers of Christ called by Him, ordained by Him, filled with His Spirit, and taught by His Word.

... to be continued. 

All Thy Works Shall Praise Thee

Mr. Joel Minderhoud

Many Members: Chemical Messengers of the Nervous System

Mr. Minderhoud is a teacher in Covenant Christian High School and a member of Hope Protestant Reformed Church, Walker, Michigan.

And if they were all one member, where were the body? But now are they many members, yet but one body.

I Corinthians 12:19-20

In a previous article we examined a nerve cell and considered two basic parts of it – the dendrites and the axon. We recall that the dendrites are the long tentacle-like branches at the

beginning of the nerve cell, whose function it is to receive stimuli from various sources. The axon is the insulated "wire" that transmits electrical signals from their point of origin (the dendrites) to the end of the nerve cell, where they will be sent on to the next cell. In those two parts we saw the handiwork of God. We saw how God made our bodies in a most intricate way and that He continues to guide and direct all the minutest parts of our body that they work together in harmony.

In this article we again consider the nerve cells, but this time we consider the third basic part – the synaptic knobs and the chemical messengers they contain. Here again we see God's power and wisdom as He governs these chemical messengers and as He weaves the body together with an amazing unity – a picture of the unity within the Body of Christ.

The Synaptic Knobs

The end of an axon branches into many thin extensions. At the end of these extensions there are tiny knobs filled with chemicals. These knobs, called the synaptic knobs, are the third major part of the neuron. They are particularly interesting because they are necessary for the transmission of the electrical impulse to the next cell, whether that cell be another nerve cell or a cell from a muscle or gland.

Within our bodies a series of nerve cells are used to connect the brain to the other cells in the body. There is incredible wisdom in such a design. Each neuron's dendrites spread and branch to a thousand or more cells waiting for an electrical message from them. Once a message has been received, it is passed along the neuron to the synaptic knobs. Each neuron can terminate with a thousand or more synaptic knobs, and the impulse can be sent to thousands of other cells. In this manner, a single electrical impulse can communicate messages to other members of the

body rapidly and efficiently – a marvelous means used to unite a body made up of multitudes of other members.

An amazing aspect of this whole process is that the synaptic knobs transmit the electrical signal to neighboring dendrites or other cells without actually touching them. In fact, there is always a gap between synaptic knobs and other cells. God created this gap, called the synapse, between each nerve cell and every other cell, and ordained certain chemicals to bridge that gap and communicate the electrical signal to the other cells. The synapse is about one millionth of an inch wide – a relatively great distance when considering the minute size of nerve cells. When an electrical impulse comes to the end of the axon, it reaches the synaptic knobs and causes them to "burst" and to release the chemicals within them. These chemical molecules are called neurotransmitters. Because none of these chemicals are found on the surface of the next cell, the neurotransmitters are drawn to it. This process is called diffusion. Molecules are always in motion and tend to bump into each other and spread away from each other from areas of high concentration to areas of low concentration. This explains why, for example, if a bottle of perfume would break in a room, in short order the entire room would smell of perfume. The molecules of perfume will diffuse through the air in a room from areas of high perfume molecule concentration to areas of low perfume concentration. This also explains why the sodium ions we discussed in the last article rushed through the open gates in the walls of the axon. The sodium ions diffused from the areas of high sodium ion concentration to the areas of low sodium ion concentration.

We marvel to see the wondrous, orderly ways in which God works. God speaks and the molecules always move in the same or-

derly way – a way which we call diffusion.

These chemicals, the neurotransmitters, diffuse across the synapse and are received by special molecules, called receptors, on the surface of the dendrites of the next nerve cell, or other neighboring cells. Once the neurotransmitter is received by the chemical receptor, the next cell is stimulated to transmit the electrical impulse. Thus, the electrical impulse has been transmitted successfully and continues on its journey.

How does a neighboring cell "receive" these neurotransmitters? Consider an analogy of a toy that a young child plays with, in which the child must place objects of particular shapes into spaces that correspond with those shapes. The "receptor" molecules on the surface of the neighboring cells are "circular" or "square" holders that will receive only particularly shaped molecules. Certain neurotransmitters can bond only with certain receptors. The neurotransmitters are sent from the synaptic knobs, diffuse towards the neighboring cell, and are received by these specifically designed molecules that have the correct shape to bond to the neurotransmitters. In God's wisdom and sovereign design, the neurotransmitters have a particular shape, ensuring that the correct message is passed along.

Once the electrical message has been passed on, the cell no longer has need of the neurotransmitter and it must be removed from the cell's receptors so that the message will not be sent over and over again, continually. God ordained enzymes to be present in the fluid of the synaptic gap that detach the neurotransmitter from the receptor molecule. Once removed, the neurotransmitter is either returned to the synaptic knobs where it can be used again, or it is broken down into smaller parts and used elsewhere in the body. By this means the cell is prevented from receiving perpetual stimulation.

Types of Neurotransmitters and Their Antagonists

There are many types of neurotransmitters in the body. Many stimulate the next cell in the body to continue an electrical impulse. Probably the most common neurotransmitter is acetylcholine (as-e-til-KO-len), which communicates to the muscle cells that they are to contract. For example, when one puts his hand on a hot pan, a message eventually arrives at the muscles of the arm commanding them to contract so that the arm moves. Acetylcholine is the neurotransmitter that bridges the gap and delivers the message from the neuron to the muscle cells. There are other neurotransmitters whose job it is to tell the next cell to do nothing or to stop doing something. These are inhibitory neurotransmitters. Sometimes they tell a muscle cell *not* to contract, or they tell a gland *not* to secrete a hormone. This too shows the handiwork of God to fashion molecules in such an intricate way that the cells of the body will do one thing when in contact with one neurotransmitter but will do the very opposite thing when in contact with a differently shaped neurotransmitter. We see many different members with different purposes – a picture of the Body of Christ that is composed of many members with differing functions and roles in that Body.

Finally, we must see the effect that poisons and other chemicals have on this communication process within the nervous system. Some neurotransmitters are blocked by various chemicals that enter our bodies. For example, a botulin toxin (bacterial poison) affects the neurotransmitter that communicates between the nerve cells and muscle cells. This chemical makes it difficult for the neurotransmitter to communicate to the muscle cells, and therefore the muscle cells do not contract as they should. Paralysis can result. Another bacterium, known as the tetanus

toxin, can affect the neurotransmitters in the synaptic gap:

Many of the body's muscles occur as paired sets.... When one set contracts, an opposing set is stretched. Bend your arm at the elbow and you can feel two such sets (biceps and triceps) in your upper arm. When the biceps contracts, inhibitory signals (inhibitory neurotransmitters) are sent to the triceps and it relaxes. The tetanus toxin blocks the release of inhibitory signals – so *both* sets of muscles contract! Within four to ten days, paired muscles attempt to work in opposition to each other. This is the start of spastic paralysis – the muscles simply cannot be released from contraction. The increase in muscle tension (spasms) can be violent enough to break bones in the body. Fists and jaws may undergo prolonged clenching (hence the name lockjaw, which is sometimes used for the disorder). The back may become paralyzed in a permanent arch. Muscles of the respiratory system and heart also may undergo spastic paralysis, in which case the affected individual nearly always dies.¹

Some neurotransmitters are sent out at faster rates by chemicals we consume. One such example is caffeine. It causes neurotransmitters to be sent to the next cell at a faster rate than the nerve cell normally sends them. Therefore, the adjacent nerve cells are stimulated at faster speeds. This has the end result of an overly active and responsive person, who at night may be so stimulated that he or she is unable to relax and fall asleep.

Some chemicals that enter the body mimic the neurotransmitters, so that our bodies respond to these chemicals and stimulate actions our brain never initiated. Nicotine is one such chemical. It is a chemical that mimics or acts like acetylcholine. It takes over, creating responses apart from the natural workings of the body.

All Thy Works Shall Praise Thee

The entire nervous system is marvelous. The multitudes of connections and chemical communications that occur each second in the nervous system in order to regulate and control day-to-day activities is mind-boggling. Consider the following quote from Dr. Brand and Philip Yancey in their book, *In His Image*, as they speak about the complexity of the brain itself:

(All) visual images, all sounds, all touch and pain sensations, all smells, the monitors of blood pressure and chemical changes, the sensations of hunger ... all the "noise" from the entire body – occupy only one-tenth of one percent of the brain's cells. Each second those fibers (bringing messages from the rest of the body — jm) bombard the brain with a hundred million messages.... Another two-tenths of one percent of cells control all motor activities: the motions involved in playing a piano concerto, speaking a language, dancing a ballet, typing a letter, or operating a video game.... Physiologically, the whole mental process comes down to these ten billion cells spitting irritating chemicals at each other across the synapses or gaps. The web of nerve cells defies description or depiction. One cubic millimeter, the size of a pinpoint, contains one billion connections among cells; a mere gram of brain tissue may contain as many as four hundred billion synaptic junctions. As a result, each cell can communicate with every other cell at lightning speed.... Even in sleep the nerve cell community never stops chattering.²

What do we make of all this? Such

1. Starr, Cecie and Ralph Taggart. *Animal Structure and Function*. Wadsworth Publishing Company, Inc., Belmont California, 1992. (pp. 557-558).

2. Brand, Dr. Paul and Phillip Yancey. *In His Image*. Zondervan Publishing House, Grand Rapids, 1984. (pp. 127-128).


intricacy and complexity woven together within our bodies does not exist on its own accord. The evolutionist would remove God as the creator of these members. The deist would remove God from the day-to-day upholding and governing of these tiny members of the body. By the grace of God, we see such folly. We know from the testimony of Scripture that God speaks and these creatures too have their being. God speaks and they move. What a powerful God is our God, who can create such an amazing creature and continue to govern every aspect of it! To God be all glory and honor!

It is well worth our time to see the wondrous works of God in the human nervous system in order to

show the beauty and unity within our bodies. We have seen dendrites, axons, sodium pumps, and neurotransmitters working harmoniously together in millions of nerve cells in the body. Many members, all placed in their particular places by God, serving their distinct God-ordained functions, work together and unite a body that otherwise would be a collection of individual and disjointed parts that would accomplish nothing. Our physical bodies vividly demonstrate unity. God uses the human body and its many members as an appropriate picture of the Body of Christ and the unity that exists, howbeit imperfectly in this life, within that Body.

Amidst all this order and unity

we see the ravages of sin. Poisons disrupt the chemical messengers of the nervous system. This disruption, in turn, affects the other bodily systems so that the body does not properly accomplish its tasks. We see the effects of sin in the Body of Christ, too. Sin is also found in the church, causing dissension and disruptions within and among congregations and denominations.

We have begun to see in a small way how the human body demonstrates unity and how sin brings disharmony, but much more could be said. We hope, the Lord willing, to discuss this more in the next article as we further contrast the unity in the body with the disharmony brought by sin. 

The Types of Scripture (10)

We ended our previous article by demonstrating that the shadows of the old dispensation were vehicles of much valuable instruction to the believers of the new dispensation. It is plain that, to the inspired writers of the New Testament church, the symbols were images of truths brought into full view with the coming of Christ. Their writings bring to light that they were inclined to set forth the truth in language which reflected the shadows of the old covenant. The types and symbols, the mean-

ing of which had been veiled in the day of shadows, served the inspired writers of the new dispensation as so many molds into which the truth was cast and presented in concrete form. This goes to show that the method of training adopted by God has produced the results contemplated by Jehovah.

Unfolding of the truth

Let us say a word at this juncture about God's method of instruction. It is a method of gradual unfolding of the truth. Not until the fullness of time were the realities of the gospel brought into full view. The truth possessed by the church in its infancy was but a bud. In this bud, however, were hidden the various elements constituting the counsel of redemption, viz., 1) God; 2) the man with Jehovah, or

the seed; and 3) the blood. In subsequent ages, that bud of truth was gradually made to unfold. It is the prerogative of the church of the new dispensation to behold the truth in full bloom.

Why must the church in the old dispensation be content with the bud? Because man is a finite creature. He has his limitations and infirmities. These were multiplied by sin. Add to this, that the church was in its infancy when it first came into the possession of the truth. Then, too, the things which God has prepared for those who love Him, eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have they entered into the heart of man (I Cor. 2:9). He who is suddenly transported from a quiet environment into a new, strange, and busy world will be greatly perplexed by

George Ophoff was Professor of Old Testament Studies in the Protestant Reformed Seminary in its early days. Reprinted here, in edited form, are articles which Ophoff wrote at that time for the Standard Bearer.

the things he hears and sees. If, on the other hand, one is gradually led into that world and given fair time to familiarize himself with the objects which present themselves to view, no distress will be experienced. So it is with the realities of the gospel. They would have dazzled and greatly perplexed the church had they suddenly been presented to it in all the fullness of their splendor, majesty, and power. Therefore the body was preceded by its shadow. With it the believers had to become familiar. In God's own good time the body came.

Further, let it be repeated, that the truths of the economy of redemption were presented to man in concrete form. The things which fill the world in which man lives and moves were made the images of the realities of heaven. These realities, therefore, were placed within man's reach. Truth, so presented, can easily be laid hold on by the mind.

The extent of the shadows of the old dispensation

We now enter upon a new phase of our subject, namely, the extent of the typical field of the old dispensation. Are the typical materials confined within the boundaries of the ceremonial law, or do they extend beyond these? In other words, do the terms *shadow* and *figure* apply only to institutions and prescriptions of the ceremonial law, or do these terms, according to Scripture, also signify events and personages? The Scriptures contain several indications that historical events of the old dispensation may foreshadow truths of a higher realm. In the First Epistle of Peter is found this passage:

By which also he (Christ) went and preached unto the spirits in prison; which sometimes were disobedient, when once the long suffering of God waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was a preparing, wherein few, that is, eight

souls were saved by water. The like figure whereunto even baptism doth also now save us (not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God,) by the resurrection of Jesus Christ (I Pet. 3:19-21).

The apostle informs us that the flood stood in typical relation to baptism. The waters of the flood purged the earth of a wicked generation and preserved Noah and his family, the holy seed, the nucleus of a new race. For this reason the deluge can serve as a figure of baptism, which signifies the washing away of the filth of the carnal nature by the blood of Christ, by which also the seed of new life is fostered.

According to the apostle Paul, Hagar and Sarah together with their offspring are figures, the former of the false, the latter of the true church. The passage reads as follows:

Tell me, ye that desire to be under the law, do ye not hear the law? For it is written, that Abraham had two sons, the one by a bondmaid, the other by a freewoman. But he who was of the bondwoman was born after the flesh; but he of the freewoman was by promise. Which things are an allegory: for these are the two covenants; the one from the mount Sinai, which gendereth to bondage, which is Agar. For this Agar is mount Sinai in Arabia, and answereth to Jerusalem which now is, and is in bondage with her children. But Jerusalem which is above is free, which is the mother of us all. For it is written, Rejoice, thou barren that bearest not; break forth and cry, thou that travailest not: for the desolate hath many more children than she which hath an husband. Now we, brethren, as Isaac was, are the children of promise. But as then he that was born after the flesh persecuted him that was born after the Spirit, even so it is now. Nevertheless what saith the scripture? Cast out the bondwoman and her son: for the son of the

bondwoman shall not be heir with the son of the freewoman. So then, brethren, we are not children of the bondwoman, but of the free (Gal. 4:21-31).

In the epistle to the Hebrews the carnal Israelites who fell in the wilderness are referred to as a type of the unbelievers of the new dispensation who do not attain to heaven.

But with whom was he grieved forty years? was it not with them that had sinned, whose carcasses fell in the wilderness? And to whom swore he that they should not enter into his rest, but to them that believed not? So we see that they could not enter in because of unbelief. Let us therefore fear, lest, a promise being left us of entering into his rest, any of you should seem to come short of it. For unto us was the gospel preached, as well as unto them: but the word preached did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in them that heard it. For we which have believed do enter into rest, as he said, As I have sworn in my wrath, if they shall enter into my rest: although the words were finished from the foundation of the world. For he spake in a certain place of the seventh day on this wise, And God did rest the seventh day from all his works. And in this place again, If they shall enter into my rest. Seeing therefore it remaineth that some must enter therein, and they to whom it was first preached entered not in because of unbelief: Again, he limiteth a certain day, saying in David, To-day, after so long a time; as it is said, To-day if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts. For if Jesus had given them rest, then would he not afterward have spoken of another day. There remaineth therefore a rest to the people of God. For he that is entered into his rest, he also hath ceased from his own works, as God did from his. Let us labour therefore to enter into that rest, lest any man fall after the same example of unbelief" (Heb. 3:17-4:11).

It will also be observed that in this Scripture the land of Canaan is a figure of heaven.

These Scriptures prove that one should look beyond the boundaries of the ceremonial law when searching for typical materials. That much of the historical material of the book of the old covenant has typical significance is also plain from the prophetic writings of the Old Testament. In depicting the better things to come, the prophets often availed themselves of the characters and events of history. "But it could do so on the twofold ground that it perceived in these essentially the same elements of truth and principles which were to appear in the future; and in that future anticipated a nobler exhibition of them than had been given in the past" (Fairbairn). So David connects the historical Melchizedek with Christ. The former is a type of the latter.

The Lord said unto my Lord, Sit thou at my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool. The Lord shall send the rod of thy strength out of Zion: rule thou in the midst of thine enemies. Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power, in the beauties of

holiness from the womb of the morning: thou hast the dew of thy youth. The Lord hath sworn and will not repent, Thou art a priest forever after the order of Melchizedek. The Lord through thy right hand shall strike through kings in the day of his wrath (Ps. 110:1-5).

Elijah is presented by the prophet Malachi as an image or type of Christ:


Remember ye the law of Moses my servant, which I commanded unto him in Horeb for all Israel, with the statutes and judgments. Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord: And he shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers, lest I come and smite the earth with a curse (Mal. 4:4-6).

The best proof is found in the prophetic writings of Isaiah.

For Zion's sake will I not hold my peace, and for Jerusalem's sake I will not rest, until the righteousness thereof go forth as brightness, and the salvation thereof as a lamp that burneth. And the Gentiles shall see thy righteousness, and all kings thy glory: and thou

shalt be called by a new name, which the mouth of the Lord shall name. Thou shalt also be a crown of glory in the hand of the Lord, and a royal diadem in the hand of thy God (Is. 62:1-3).

"In the latter portions of Isaiah's writings we find the prophet intermingling so closely together the past and the future, that it is often difficult to tell of which he actually speaks. He passes from Israel to the Messiah, and again from the Messiah to Israel, as if the one were but a new, higher, and nobler development of what belonged to the other. And the church of the future is constantly represented under the relations of the past, only freed from the imperfections of former times, and rendered in every respect more blessed and glorious" (Fairbairn).

The very fact that the book of Psalms continued to have value for the church of the new covenant is due only to the fact that both dispensations, the old and the new, are pervaded by the same truths and principles. In a sense it is true that the entire Old Testament dispensation stands in a typical relation to the new. 

Book Reviews



With Reverence and Awe: Returning to the Basics of Reformed Worship, by D. J. Hart and John R. Muether. Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R Publishers, 2002. 203 pp. \$12.99. (paper). [Reviewed by Prof. Robert D. Decker.]

The fact that a Protestant Reformed believer will not agree with every detail in this book does in no way detract from the book's valuable contribution to the whole subject of distinctively Reformed worship. This is a good book,

which ought to be read by every believer who wishes to engage in worship that is pleasing to God because it is worship that is in harmony with God's will as revealed in the inspired, infallible Scriptures.

Not only in the sphere of what may be called "broadly evangelical churches," but also among Presbyterian and Reformed denominations the contemporary church is plagued by "worship wars." We hear of contemporary worship, seeker-sensitive worship services. There is a wide variety of worship

styles among the churches. There's even blended worship, which is an attempt to combine the new worship styles with the old, traditional worship. How did we get to this point, the authors ask? We are where we are because of a couple of false assumptions. One is that traditional worship is too somber and sober, too unemotional. We need to experience the joy of salvation in our worship. Another false assumption is that we need to attract the unconverted. Our worship must not make them feel uncomfortable.

The authors contend we need to get back to the basics of Reformed worship. We must begin with theology, because good theology must produce good worship. Defective theology yields inferior and inappropriate forms of worship. This is why the Westminster divines began with a Directory of the Public Worship of God!

Good theology is biblical theology, and biblical theology begins, continues, and ends with the sovereignty of God. Our worship, if it be biblical, will of necessity be theocentric. Proper worship will be in harmony with the sound doctrines of God's Word, e.g., man's total depravity and God's sovereign and particular grace. Never will our worship be separated from the sound doctrine of God's Word. It's in this context that the authors make a point that ought to give the Reformed believer who leans in the direction of "seeker-sensitive worship" pause.

Ironically, however, there is a sense in which what we propose in this study is profoundly seeker-sensitive. We do not mean that we hope to please any browsers who might step into our sanctuaries on Sunday morning. Rather the seeker we intend to please is the one whom Scripture describes as the seeker of acceptable worship. In his conversation with the Samaritan woman, Jesus says that those who worship God in spirit and truth are the kind of worshiper "the Father seeks" (John 4:23). This is the seeker-sensitivity that the Bible requires and that Reformed worship has traditionally pursued (p. 21).

The authors correctly point out that the church is *ecclesia*, i.e., called out. The church, as church, is called out of the world, separated from the world by God. Also and especially in her worship the church is separate from the world and in the fellowship of God. The world out of which the church is called into God's fellowship is the

world of unbelief and sin. As called out, the church is to be holy and, therefore, the church is against the world, antithetical to the world!

This truth has three implications for the church's worship: 1) The wisdom and ways of the gospel will appear foolish to those who are enemies of God. 2) The contrast between the church and the world will be most obvious when the church is at worship. 3) True worship will be odd, and even weird, to the watching world (pp. 33, 34).

For this reason, the authors contend, the church must be unapologetic in her worship and must not cater to those bound to ridicule her ways as foolish (p. 34).

Christians cannot expect unbelievers to be comfortable in services of worship that are alien to the ways of the world. "User friendly" or "seeker-sensitive" worship is not an option for the people of God. In fact, worship that demonstrates the separateness of the church is what Machen called "merciful unkindness" because it testifies to the world of the hope that is within us. If the world mocks us, so be it. True worship is for the church, not for the world (p. 35).

The worship of the church is inseparably related to the purpose of the church. The purpose of the church is not:

1. to right the wrongs of society (nineteenth century liberalism's "social gospel").

2. the "Church Growth" movement, i.e., to grow in numbers by means of up-tempo music, choruses, dramatic skits, liturgical dance, etc.

3. merely to win converts.

The purpose of the church is to nurture disciples of Christ. Hence, worship involves preaching and sacraments. And the church must believe that God will indeed save "them that believe" by these means!

Further, the church is saved in

order to worship God in the way of glorifying Him and enjoying Him. This is evident, the authors assert, from the marks of the church: pure preaching, proper observance of the sacraments, and exercise of discipline (Belgic Confession, Art. 29). These marks constitute proper worship. Also the third, inasmuch as preaching is the chief key of the kingdom of heaven (Heidelberg Catechism, Q. 84).

In the fourth chapter of the book the authors bemoan the fact that American Protestants no longer observe the Sabbath. This chapter is a must read. We, too, must "take heed lest we fall" regarding God's holy day. It is fulfilled in Christ. The Sabbath is the Lord's Day and is to be devoted to spiritual rest: the public worship of God, morning and evening!

In their defense of the "regulative principle," the authors affirm that this principle is taught in the Westminster Standards, in the Heidelberg Catechism, and in the Belgic Confession. Calvin, too, held this principle. Hence, the regulative principle is not a Puritan invention. The authors present a fine defense of the regulative principle against its critics (cf. pp. 81-84).

The book stresses that worship is for the praise of God by His people. This praise of God takes place by the means of grace: preaching, sacraments, and prayer. By these means God enables His people to worship Him and receive in their worship His blessings as they grow in sanctification. All of this takes place corporately, in the communion of the saints in the church, and never apart from the church (cf. pp. 131-144).

In the tenth chapter the authors make a distinction between the "elements, circumstances, and forms" of worship. The elements that are commanded by God, from which we may not subtract and to which we may not add, are: reading and preaching the Word, sacraments, prayer, song, and collection. How

often we sing is circumstance determined by the session/consistory. What we sing, psalms or hymns, is a form.

While in their discussion of "Song in Worship" (chapter 11) there is sharp, biblical criticism of "contemporary music," as well as a bemoaning of the loss of Psalm singing and an advocating of frequent Psalm singing, the authors come short of advocating exclusive psalmody and of prohibiting choirs and special music.

There is an error on page 110, where the reference "Ephesians 4:12" ought to be Ephesians 4:11-12. The authors, however, are to be commended for their careful working with Scripture and the Presbyterian and Reformed confessions. The book is well documented, and its value is enhanced by a general index, a scripture index, and an index of the confessions.

Again, this is a good book. This reviewer has added it to the Select Bibliography of his class in Homiletics/Liturgics, and it will be required reading for his students in that class. ■

The Shorter Catechism, With Scriptural Proofs and Notes, by Roderick Lawson. Christian Focus, 2002. Pp.

80, (paper). [Reviewed by Prof. Herman Hanko.]

Those of us who were born and raised in the tradition of Dutch Reformed theology know very little, as a general rule, of Presbyterian history, doctrine, and creedal development. We know very little of the work of the Westminster Assembly and of the three creeds they prepared. Especially in these days when our churches are having increased contact with Presbyterian churches, especially the Evangelical Presbyterian Church of Australia, it is well that we know something of this grand tradition of Calvinism as well as of our own.

Perhaps the best known and most loved creed prepared under the auspices of Westminster is the Shorter Catechism. Who can forget the memorable words with which this creed begins: "What is the chief end of man? Man's chief end is to glorify God and enjoy Him forever." The creed is memorized by thousands, enjoyed by tens of thousands, and serves as a handbook of Christian doctrine to saints in all parts of the world. It is the creed with which one ought to begin in a study of Presbyterianism.

This little book will be an excellent book with which to start. It

contains the entire Shorter Catechism, scriptural proofs for every question and answer (proof texts are quoted in full), and brief comments by the editor. Some of these comments are very much to the point. In question and answer 7, the decrees of God's counsel are defined. The editor comments: "The decrees of God are *his purposes, or what he has from eternity determined to do*. And this answer tells us that God has so appointed everything that comes to pass. Nothing happens by chance. Everything is arranged upon a plan, and that plan is the plan of God. He makes all things work together for good to them that love him, and for evil to them that hate him."

I do not have the price of this small book, but it can be purchased for a minimal amount, I am sure, and it is small enough to push in a pocket or purse to be read and pondered while one is in a doctor's waiting room or hoping his malfunctioning car will soon be fixed. It is simply written and can be used by young people as well as adults. Perhaps the book will whet one's appetite for other more meaty books on the Westminster Assembly, the Westminster Confession of Faith, and the Shorter Catechism.



News From Our Churches

Mr. Benjamin Wigger

School Activities

The student body of Covenant Christian High School in Grand Rapids, MI was encouraged by their Student Council to express the true meaning of Christmas by contributing to a collection of gift certificates from area stores for needy families in the area PR churches.

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

The Christmas program of South Holland Protestant Reformed School in South Holland, IL was presented December 19 in South Holland PRC. The students developed the theme "Very God and Very Man," based on I Timothy 3:16.

On December 19 the students of Faith Christian School in Randolph, WI presented their annual Christmas program under the theme "Jesus, Name Above All

Names." We can also mention here that the next morning, December 20, the students and teachers of Faith continued to develop that theme by caroling at various homes of shut-ins in the area of the school.

The students of Heritage Christian School in Hudsonville, MI took a collection this past Christmas season for Herrick Presbyterian Covenant School in Tasmania.

With thankfulness to our heavenly Father, our seminary reports

that there are six young men presently in college who have expressed interest in entering the ministry of the Word.

Denomination Activities

We are also happy to report that the Reformed Witness Hour, in response to their urgent request for operating funds, has received in the last month \$30,000 in gifts from its listeners and supporters, and that soon the program will be aired on short wave radio in Eastern Europe. Progress is also being made in beginning a broadcast in the Chicagoland area.

Mission Activities

In news from the Philippines, we find that Rev. A. Spriensma was busy leading a conference at the missionary house on the subject of Reformed Church Government on December 26-28. In all there were 23 men who attended. They were from the Daet/Labo area, from the island of Negros, and from Manila, and a new contact came through the Reformed Witness Hour broadcast. Rev. Spriensma presented eight lectures in two days. Much lively discussion and many questions followed each lecture. The Spriensma family housed most of these men at their home for the duration of the conference, and, with help from one of the ladies of the Berean Church of God Reformed, provided for their meals as well. The conference reportedly went well.

Congregation Activities

On January 1 the internships of Mr. Paul Goh and Mr. Bill Langerak officially came to an end. From announcements in the bulletins of Bethel PRC in Roselle, IL and Southeast PRC in Grand Rapids, MI, where these men served, we can safely conclude that these men will be missed. May the experiences gained over the past six months serve them well in the future as, the Lord willing, their graduation from our seminary is now only a few short months away.

On January 4 the men of Bethel PRC in Roselle, IL resumed their monthly discussions on book readings by discussing the book, "I Kissed Dating Good-Bye," by Josh Harris. A special invitation was extended to the young men of the congregation to attend.

Evidence continues to indicate that Trinity PRC in Hudsonville, MI is gaining in membership. For one thing, their council decided to add one elder and one deacon in the new year, so that they now have five elders and four deacons. For another, they now have enough post-high-school young adults to organize their own Bible Study.

The Choir of Georgetown PRC in Hudsonville, MI presented their Christmas program on Sunday, December 8.

Sunday evening, December 29, Rev. Dale Kuiper preached his farewell sermon at Southeast PRC in Grand Rapids, MI, and on January 1 became one of our denomination's emeriti ministers. Rev. Kuiper was ordained into the ministry in 1967 and served six of our congregations, besides serving as home missionary for two years. For his last sermon as Southeast's pastor, Rev. Kuiper preached from I Corinthians 2:1-5 under the theme, "A Minister Looks Back with the Flock to See." 1. What His Determination Was. 2. What His Method Was. 3. What His Purpose Was.

Evangelism Activities


The Evangelism Committee of Trinity PRC in Hudsonville, MI asked their congregation to help them put together a community-wide mailing. The mailing consisted of a flyer introducing Trinity to the neighborhood, and an insert inviting them to Trinity's services on December 22 and 25.

Minister Activities

Rev. and Mrs. Doug Kuiper, serving our church in Randolph, WI, were blessed with the birth of a baby boy, Jared William, on December 26.

On January 1, Rev. Dale Kuiper became emeritus, but will continue to serve Southeast PRC in Grand Rapids, MI on a "part-time" basis. Southeast's council and congregation approved a plan that will keep the Kuipers in their parsonage until about April 1. Rev. Kuiper will preach the evening services. He will also do some catechism teaching and leading of societies. Prof. R. Dykstra will be preaching the morning services. Of course, this could all change if Southeast receives a pastor before April 1.

Rev. M. DeVries declined the call to serve as our churches' second missionary to Ghana.

Rev. C. Haak declined the call to serve as pastor of Faith PRC in Jenison, MI. 

Announcements

RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The Senior Bible Fellowship of Faith PRC express their Christian sympathy to the Rick and Jill Elzinga family in the death of Jill's father,

JAKE JABAAY.

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

Pat Koole, Secretary

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.

RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The congregation and council of Grandville express their Christian sympathy to Mr. and Mrs. Charles Kregel in the death of Charles' brother,

MR. HAROLD KREGEL.

"Now our Lord Jesus Christ himself, and God, even our Father, which hath loved us, and hath given us everlasting consolation and good hope through grace, comfort your hearts, and stablish you in every good word and work" (II Thessalonians 2:16, 17).

Rev. K. Koole, Pres.
K. G. Vink, Asst. Clerk

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

RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The council and congregation of Southeast PRC extend their Christian sympathy to Joel and Ellen Bruinooge and family in the death of Joel's mother,

EUNICE BRUINOOGHE.

May they be comforted from the Scriptures: "Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also" (John 14:1-3).

Rev. Dale Kuiper, Pres.
Tim Pipe, Clerk

RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The Adult Bible Class of Faith PRC express their Christian sympathy to Jim VanOverloop in the death of his mother-in-law,

MRS. BETTY EKEMA.

May Jim and his family find comfort in Psalm 116:15, "Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints."

Fred Hanko, Vice President
Judy VanBaren, Sec/Treas.

RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The Men's Society of Hope PRC, Redlands expresses its Christian sympathy to Berend Meelker, Chad Meelker, and Alvern Miersma in the death of

MR. JAKE JABAAY.

"Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints" (Psalm 116:15).

Jonathan denHartog, Secretary

Reformed Witness Hour

Topics for February

| Date | Topic | Text |
|-------------|------------------------------------|------------------|
| February 2 | "Joyful Mothers" | Psalm 113:9 |
| February 9 | "Submissive Wives" | Colossians 3:18 |
| February 16 | "Our Prayer as Husbands and Wives" | Psalm 27:4 |
| February 23 | "Our Prayer for Our Children" | Psalm 114:11, 12 |