

THE *March 1, 2003* STANDARD BEARER

A REFORMED SEMI-MONTHLY MAGAZINE

In This Issue:

MEDITATION

Rev. Ronald VanOverloop

Prayer for Christ to Dwell in You 242

EDITORIAL

Prof. David J. Engelsma

***The Unconditional Covenant in Contemporary Debate —
and the Protestant Reformed Seminary (5)*** 244

LETTERS

247

ALL AROUND US

Rev. Kenneth Koole

248

FEATURE ARTICLE

Rev. Angus Stewart

The Real Saint Patrick (1) 251

ALL THY WORKS SHALL PRAISE THEE

Mr. Joel Minderhoud

Autoimmune Disorders 253

TAKING HEED TO THE DOCTRINE

Rev. Steven R. Key

Justification by Faith Alone 255

IN HIS FEAR

Rev. Richard J. Smit

Both Coins (2) 258

GO YE INTO ALL THE WORLD

Rev. Jason L. Kortering

Mission Preaching in the Established Church (1) 260

NEWS FROM OUR CHURCHES

Mr. Benjamin Wigger

263

Prayer for Christ to Dwell in You

That he would grant you, according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man; that Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith.

Ephesians 3:16, 17a

Paul tells the saints at Ephesus that he prays on their behalf. What better thing can be done for you than that a fellow-saint pray for you! What a wonderful encouragement!

Paul does not just tell the Ephesian Christians that he is praying for them. He also tells them what he is praying for them. That is an even greater encouragement!

This is the second time Paul tells the Ephesians that he is praying for them. His first prayer is found in 1:15-23. The first time was on the occasion of hearing of their "faith in the Lord Jesus and their love unto all the saints." The second time, the occasion for his prayers for them was their concern about his imprisonment in Rome.

They were fearful that the removal of Paul would be harmful for the church, *their church*, and for the cause of the spread of the gospel among the Gentiles. So Paul tells them that he is praying for them.

The two prayers have one thing in common. Paul asks God to supply the Ephesian believers with what is needed for spiritual maturation. This is every pastor's prayer. It is the request that God will bless the sheep with increased spiritual growth unto spiritual maturity. In the first prayer, Paul asked that God give them spiritual growth in the way of increased knowledge. In the second, he asks two things that are characteristic of those who are spiritually mature, namely, an intimate relationship with Jesus Christ, and the ability to know the love of Christ which passes knowledge.



Paul's prayer is "that Christ dwell in your hearts by faith." This seems strange. Was not Christ already in the hearts of these Ephesians to whom he is writing? After all, he addresses them as saints and the faithful in Christ Jesus. He spoke of their having been predestinated and redeemed

(1:5, 7) and quickened (2:5). To be quickened is to be regenerated. Regeneration is the power of divine, irresistible grace working in the heart of the elect sinner, dethroning Satan and putting the life of Christ into the heart. Yes, Paul knew that Christ was already in them. He is not denying that.

Paul's prayer now is for something else: that Christ dwell in their hearts by faith. This is to be distinguished from regeneration. That Paul is thinking of something other than regeneration is obvious also from the fact that he adds the words, "by faith." Regeneration is a work of God that He does without the use of any means or instruments. Paul's prayer is for Christ to dwell in the Ephesians "by faith." So Paul is requesting that God do something of which faith is to be the means or instrument.

The key to understanding this petition of Paul is the meaning of the word "dwell." To "dwell" means to live in, as in a house, to settle down and to be at home. May Christ live in our hearts as in a house; may He be at home in our hearts.

What does it mean that Christ dwells in our hearts? Remember that this has to be more than be-

Rev. VanOverloop is pastor of Georgetown Protestant Reformed Church in Hudsonville, Michigan.

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

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

REPRINT POLICY

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

EDITORIAL POLICY

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

EDITORIAL OFFICE

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

BUSINESS OFFICE

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

CHURCH NEWS EDITOR

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

NEW ZEALAND OFFICE

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

UNITED KINGDOM OFFICE

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

SUBSCRIPTION PRICE

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

ADVERTISING POLICY

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

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

Website for RFP: www.rfpa.org
Website for PRC: www.prca.org

lieving in Him, for the Ephesians were already doing that. First, it means having Jesus Christ so revealed to us that His presence is in us and with us. And, second, it means that there is a pervasive sense of His presence in us — He dwells in us in the sense of being settled and at home in us. Third, it is a joyous fellowship with Him.

It is sad but true that one can be a Christian without having much conscious fellowship with Jesus, without being aware that He is near to us. When Christ dwells in our hearts, He is doing more than exerting a vague, infrequent influence on us. He is so at home in us that we are at home with Him, consciously aware of and enjoying His presence.

It is one thing to know what Christ has done for us. But it is another thing to know that He who has done so much for us is *in* us and *with* us. When we are young in our faith, our focus is on knowing what Jesus did for us. This is as it ought to be, for at this stage of our spiritual development we must know these beautiful truths of His perfect work. However, as one matures, the knowledge of these objective truths more and more includes the experiential awareness of their wonderful, amazing, humbling, and refreshing implications. When Christ dwells in our hearts by faith, then we will experience the on-going miracle that “whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be *in him* a well of water springing up to everlasting life” (John 4:14). Jesus said that “he that eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood, *dwelleth in me*, and *I in him*” (John 6:56).

The believer in whose heart Christ dwells knows that he lives spiritually. This is the experience of living a life in the flesh by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me, so “not I, but Christ *liveth in me*” (Gal. 2:20). It is possible, from our hu-

man perspective, to have a relationship with Christ, but not to have Him as the constant center of our lives. Paul prays that the Ephesian believers will have a greater intimacy with Christ, their Sovereign Friend, which is likened to the friendship and fellowship that Jesus has in His Father. When He promised the Comforter, Jesus said, “At that day ye shall know that I am in my Father, and ye in me, and *I in you*” (John 14:20). Later Jesus said, “If a man love me, he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our *abode* with him” (John 14:23).

When Christ is *in* us, then He is the controlling factor in the whole of our life. The relationship with Him is not a vague influence, but a real fellowship when His will and pleasure controls and directs our life. It is possible to know Christ, but not be controlled by Him so that He rules over our thoughts, words, and actions. When Christ dwells in us by faith, then He is Lord of our life in a real, practical sense. Then we want to keep growing in our love for Him who loved us so much. Then we want to trust Him more and more. Then we believe that He is able to make everything in our life work out for our spiritual and eternal profit, no matter how impossible that may seem to our flesh. Then even His rod and His staff comfort us. Just so He is with us and having His abode in us.



How does this become a reality for us?

First, this becomes a reality “by faith.” This does not come about in a special, mystical way. This is not for some special, extra-blessed Christians. Rather, Christ dwells in our hearts “by faith.” Not only is faith the bond which unites *every* believer to Christ, but it also reveals Him to every believer. “Faith is an instrument that keeps us in communion with Him in all

His benefits” (Belgic Confession, Article 22). Without faith we can read over these great words and not understand their meaning. Faith enables the believer to know the truth about Jesus, not in a superficial way, but so that the believer is “persuaded of” these truths (Heb. 11:13).

As our faith is lived embracing Christ, we experience the wonder that Christ makes His abode in us. Faith enables every Christian to desire and to seek this reality. Do we often neglect to exercise our faith in the day-to-day things of life, in our conversations, in our thinking and planning? Do we live our life in the flesh as an end in itself, or do we seek to live in the flesh as having Christ living in us. Do we use the things of this earth as ends in themselves, or do we use them as part of our Christian life on the path to the life to come? Are we growing in the awareness of how much we sin and therefore how much we need Christ? Living by faith we experience the wonder of having Christ Himself in us, so we increasingly enjoy His presence.

Second, we attain this level of spiritual maturity only by being “strengthened with might by His Spirit in the inner man.” A spiritual baby is weak and needs to be strengthened. We need to be strengthened against the devil and his host (cf. 6:11, 12). The evil one often attacks our inner man. In order to put on the whole armor of God against the devil, we must be strengthened. “Be strong in the Lord and in the power of his might” (Eph. 6:10). We need to be strengthened in our inner man to be able to deal experientially with the wonderful truth that Christ dwells in our hearts.

We need to be strengthened because of the greatness of the truth. Strong meat is for those who are strong and mature. Milk is for those who are babes. There is a time for milk. And there should be a time for strong meat. But to

be strong enough to eat the strong meat we need to be strengthened. To receive, appreciate, and enjoy truths so strong, we need to be strengthened.

It is our "inner man" which needs to be strengthened. This inner man includes our minds. Our minds are earthly. Our minds can wander, or be dull and slow to understand, for all kinds of reasons. And the truths presented to this earthly mind are deep, spiritual truths. While the truth of what Christ did and does are gloriously simple, they are also tremendously profound. Our minds need more and more to expand to take in the truths of Scripture and their implications. To know the depths of the implications of God's truth, we need our mind strengthened.

And we need to be strengthened in our wills. Sometimes we don't want to put forth the effort to learn God's truth. I have heard Christians say that they are not readers, not realizing that they are then hiding these truths in the ground, like the servant with one talent. We must realize that this prayer of Paul is for all Christians, the "ordinary" ones too. We can easily be intellectually lazy, saying

that we don't want to climb down into the depths or up into the mountains of God's truth. In order to appreciate the blessed truth that Christ dwells in our hearts, we must have our wills strengthened.




May Christ dwell in your hearts. The possibility of this happening to us is the grace of God. "The Father of our Lord Jesus Christ" is the One before whom the apostle bows his knees (14). He is the One who must "grant" this reality to us. When He grants it, then it is free. We do not have to buy it or earn it. Therefore the weakest Christian may pray that God mercifully grant him to be strengthened in the inner man so that Christ may dwell in his heart by faith.

When God grants, He does so out of "the riches of His glory." Is there any end to His glory? Of course not! His glory is the beauty of His infinite perfections shining forth from Him. So great is God and so infinite are His perfections that His glory is a treasury which fills this whole universe and beyond. With the riches of God's glory being the source, the bless-

ings He gives and the strength He imparts are great indeed!

God grants this blessing to us "by His Spirit." The Spirit of Christ works in us initial regeneration and salvation. And He is the One who continues the work in order to strengthen us. The Spirit of Christ is the power that strengthens us so that we can hold Christ in our hearts. Christ Himself dwells in the human heart. The Spirit makes this possible. Let us pray with Paul that God may grant, according to His riches, that we be strengthened, so that we do not stagger when confronted by truths so wonderful and amazing.

When we by His grace rid ourselves of that which is incompatible with Him, Christ is at home in us and we are at home with Him. We must rid ourselves of love of the world and of self. We must increasingly see His love for us, so we love Him. "He that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him" (John 14:21).

Let us rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory that Christ dwells in us. May we more and more know the wonder that He is at home in us and we in Him. 

Editorial

The Unconditional Covenant in Contemporary Debate—and the Protestant Reformed Seminary* (5)

* This is the text of the speech given at the convocation exercises of the Protestant Reformed Seminary on September 4, 2002. The first four installments appeared in the January 1, January 15, February 1, and February 15, 2003 issues of the *Standard Bearer*. The speech has been revised and expanded for publication by naming theologians, books, and articles and by giving full citations.

244/*Standard Bearer*/March 1, 2003

The movement in conservative Reformed and Presbyterian churches that teaches justification by faith and faith's works leads back to the Roman Catholic Church. The gospel-truth of justification by faith alone as the core of the body of doctrines that teach salvation by the grace of

God alone is the fundamental difference between the true church of Christ and the Roman Catholic Church. For Protestant theologians and churches to give up justification by faith alone is to make the eventual return to Rome a certainty, indeed, a necessity.

Wright and Rome

Already at this early stage of the development of the movement, there are clear signals that the end of the movement is Roman Catholicism. N. T. Wright, whose influence on the movement in conservative Reformed churches should not be underestimated, makes no secret of it, that the main implication of the new understanding of justification is ecumenicity and that this ecumenicity embraces Rome.

Paul's doctrine of justification by faith impels the churches, in their current fragmented state, into the ecumenical task. It cannot be right that the very doctrine which declares that all who believe in Jesus belong at the same table (Galatians 2) should be used as a way of saying that some, who define the doctrine of justification differently, belong at a different table. The doctrine of justification, in other words, is not merely a doctrine which Catholic and Protestant might just be able to agree on, as a result of hard ecumenical endeavour. It is itself the ecumenical doctrine, the doctrine that rebukes all our petty and often culture-bound church groupings, and which declares that all who believe in Jesus belong together in the one family.... The doctrine of justification is in fact the great *ecumenical* doctrine (*What Saint Paul Really Said: Was Paul of Tarsus the Real Founder of Christianity?* Eerdmans, 1997, p. 158).

The doctrine of justification that Wright has in mind, however, is not the teaching of the imputation of Christ's righteousness to the guilty sinner by means of faith alone, as confessed by the churches of the Reformation in their creeds.

Shepherd and Rome

The same distinct leaning towards Rome appears in the defenders of the doctrine of justification by faith and the works of faith in conservative Reformed circles. Norman Shepherd laments that there are "unresolved questions"

remaining "that are really the legacy of the Protestant Reformation" (*The Call of Grace: How the Covenant Illuminates Salvation and Evangelism*, P&R, 2000, p. 4). These unresolved questions have to do with the doctrine of justification and include Reformed weaknesses regarding man's responsibility and the importance of works.

Ominously, Shepherd states that his doctrine of a conditional covenant, with its essential element of justification by faith and faith's works, offers "hope for a common understanding between Roman Catholicism and evangelical Protestantism regarding the way of salvation" (*Call of Grace*, p. 59). Although Rome is called to give up its notion of merit, that false church is not required to repent of its doctrine of justification by faith and works as denial of the gospel of grace. Nor is she rebuked for her heretical explanation of Romans 3, 4 and James 2.

Rome in Their Heart

Even though these defenders of justification by faith and faith's works are still in Reformed churches, Rome is in their heart. Shepherd takes Rome's side against Luther's translation of Romans 3:28 by means of the word "alone":

Luther inserted the word "alone" into his translation of Romans 3:28 to make it read "For we hold that one is justified by faith *alone* apart from works of the law." This is the origin of the dogmatic formula, justification by faith alone. However, his insertion actually distorts Paul's meaning ("Justification by Faith Alone," in *Reformation & Revival Journal*, 11, no. 2 [Spring 2002]: 87).

The clear and necessary implication of Shepherd's rejection of Luther's "only," of course, is that one is *not* justified by faith alone. Rather, as Rome has always taught, one is justified by faith *and by works of some sort*, though not "works of the law."

Shepherd fears, no doubt sincerely, that the Reformation's proclamation of justification by faith alone, without any reference to any works of the justified sinner, risks, if it does not imply, antinomism (*Call of Grace*, pp. 6-9, 61, 62). The gospel of salvation by grace alone makes men careless and profane! The way to guard against this antinomian carelessness of life, according to Shepherd, is by teaching that justification also depends upon the sinner's own works, by bringing the sinner's own obedience to the law into the doctrine of justification, and by stressing that the covenant is indeed conditional, depending upon the sinner's own faith, works of faith, and perseverance in faith and its works. That is, the way to promote a holy life is by compromising the gospel of grace.

Do these men not remember that the charge of carelessness and profanity of life, that is, antinomism, was always Rome's slander against the Reformation gospel of grace? Rome raised the slander especially against the doctrine of justification by faith alone. (In light of Rome's foul life, clergy and people, then and today, the slander is as ludicrous as it is wicked, but this was Rome's charge, nevertheless.) Having confessed justification by faith alone (accepting and confirming Luther's "alone" in Romans 3:28!) in Questions and Answers 59-63, the Heidelberg Catechism confronts Rome's slander—and Norman Shepherd's fear—head-on in Question and Answer 64: "But doth not this doctrine make men careless and profane? By no means; for it is impossible that those who are implanted into Christ by a true faith should not bring forth fruits of thankfulness."

The Catechism does not respond to the charge—and fear—of antinomism by qualifying, hedging on, pulling back from, or weakening in any way, that is, denying, the truth of justification by faith alone. In view of the charge—and

real danger—of antinomism, the Catechism does not speak of “unresolved questions” concerning justification and good works that are “the legacy of the Protestant Reformation.” The Catechism does not safeguard good works by making them partly the basis of God’s act of justifying and partly the righteousness of the justified sinner.

The Catechism’s response to the charge of antinomism is radically different from that of Norman Shepherd and his fellow critics of justification by faith alone in conservative Reformed churches today. The Catechism flatly denies the charge and dismisses the fear. “By no means!” The doctrine of justification by faith alone does not make men careless and profane. It has never made one human being careless and profane. It never will. Careless and profane men have abused the doctrine to serve their licentious lives. But the doctrine is blameless.

The truth of justification by faith alone *cannot* make anyone careless and profane. “*It is impossible*” that it should do so. Reformed men and women, who do not have Rome’s theology in their hearts, have this robust confidence concerning the doctrine of justification by faith alone. Justification by faith alone cannot produce antinomism because the true faith that alone justifies, as sole instrument of receiving the imputed righteousness of Christ, is union with Christ. Union with Christ *must* produce a holy life of good works in every one who is united with Christ, as a branch of a living tree must bring forth fruit.

These good works are “fruits of thankfulness.” In light of the charge by the foes of justification by faith alone that the doctrine makes men careless and profane, the Catechism’s description of the good works of the believer is extraordinarily significant. The charge, of course, is intended to force the Reformed churches to make good works the basis, in part,

of justification, and part of a sinner’s righteousness with God.

The Catechism will have nothing of this, antinomism or no antinomism. The good works of the believer are not *conditions required for justification*. They are “fruits” produced by and following justification. The good works of the believer are not the basis of justification, nor are they the believer’s righteousness with God. They are expressions of “thankfulness” for the gift of justification. The sole basis of justification is Christ’s obedience in His life and death. The only obedience to the law that constitutes the righteousness of the elect, believing sinner is the obedience of Christ in his stead.

The charge against the doctrine of justification by faith alone that it is antinomian exposes those making the charge as enemies of the gospel of grace. Always the confession of salvation by grace alone is met with the charge that this doctrine denies man’s responsibility and leads to carelessness of life.

Having taught that our unrighteousness commends the righteousness of God, the apostle takes note of the slanderous charge against him that he taught “Let us do evil, that good may come” (Rom. 3:5, 8).

Having taught righteousness by faith alone, apart from works of obedience to the law, Paul asks, “Do we then make void the law through faith?” evidently referring to the charge against his doctrine (Rom. 3:31).

At the end of the great section in Romans in which he has taught justification by faith alone and its basis in the obedience of Christ, the apostle confronts the common objection to his teaching of grace: “What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound?” (Rom. 6:1)

It is an unmistakable mark of the true gospel of grace that it draws the charge of antinomism. The charge itself assures the church that she is preaching the gospel of

grace. If the charge of antinomism is not leveled against a church’s teaching, the reason is that the church is not preaching grace.

How many churches today, Reformed in name and formal confession, are ever charged with doctrinal antinomism?

Who would ever think of charging the justification-doctrine of Norman Shepherd and his allies with antinomism? So full is their doctrine of conditions, law, and human works that it is simply inconceivable that anyone would ever think of saying, “You make void the law through faith! It is the implication of your doctrine that justified sinners continue in sin that grace may abound!”

A Hindrance to Evangelistic Preaching

Just as the proponents of justification by faith and faith’s works in conservative Reformed circles today share Rome’s antipathy to justification by faith alone as a licentious doctrine, so do they also agree with Rome and Arminianism that the “five points of Calvinism” make evangelistic preaching impossible. The theology of the Canons of Dordt is a hindrance, not only to evangelism and missions, but also to assuring members of the congregation of their salvation.

Election stands in the way of bringing the good news to all and sundry. “Because the Calvinist has an accomplished redemption that is particular in scope though always effective for the elect, he cannot apply it to particular persons.” Believing limited atonement, the Calvinistic pastor is not even able to “cultivate a hearty assurance in this or that believer, because he does not know for certain whether that person is one of the elect.”

The result of the theology of Dordt is the horrendous evil that “Calvinists tend to be more successful at preaching sin, condemnation, and death than at preaching the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ” (*Call of Grace*, pp. 79-82).

Why these men remain in Reformed and Presbyterian churches, which have this theology as their official, confessional understanding of the gospel in the Canons of Dordt and the Westminster Confession, is a mystery. For my part, the day I was convinced that the doctrines of grace in the Canons of Dordt cannot be preached, restrict me to preaching "sin, condemnation, and death" rather than "the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ," and make it impossible for me to apply the gospel personally to everyone whom I address, on that day I would renounce the Reformed faith and take my leave of the Reformed churches. With trumpets blaring, to warn all that the Reformed faith is a false gospel!

Shepherd's solution to the problem of the woeful insufficiency of the "five points of Calvinism" for evangelism and personal application of the gospel is universal, conditional election; universal, conditional atonement; and universal, conditional regeneration. All in the name of a conditional covenant! (*Call of Grace*, pp. 79-105). Never mind that the Canons expressly reject all of these teachings as grievous false doctrine! The doctrine of a conditional covenant trumps the Canons of Dordt.

Back into Bondage

The teaching of justification by faith and faith's works by these prominent, influential Reformed and Presbyterian professors and ministers has practical consequences. It leads impressionable Presbyterian and Reformed souls back to the bondage of the Roman Catholic Church. That this is no idle fear, but grim reality, has been testified by one such impressionable former Presbyterian, Scott Hahn.

Hahn fell away to the Roman Catholic Church, for which he is now an apologist to other Presbyterians. In his and his wife's book recounting their apostasy, Hahn tells the world how Norman Shepherd encouraged him in his conversion to Rome. By his own studies, Hahn discovered that the Protestant and Presbyterian doctrine of justification by faith alone was wrong. "*Sola fide* [by faith alone—DJE] was unscriptural!" Hahn continues:


I was so excited about this discovery. I shared it with some friends, who were amazed at how much sense it [Hahn's belief of justification by faith and works—DJE] made. Then one friend stopped me and asked if I knew who else was teaching this way

on justification. When I responded that I didn't, he told me that Dr. Norman Shepherd, a professor at Westminster Theological Seminary ... was about to undergo a heresy trial for teaching the same view of justification that I was expounding. So I called Professor Shepherd and talked with him. He said he was accused of teaching something contrary to the teachings of Scripture, Luther and Calvin. As I heard him describe what he was teaching, I thought, Hey, that is what I'm saying. Now this might not seem like much of a crisis to many, but for somebody steeped in Protestantism and convinced that Christianity turned on the hinge of *sola fide*, it meant the world (Scott and Kimberly Hahn, *Rome Sweet Home: Our Journey to Catholicism*, Ignatius, 1993, p. 31).

Yes, and it meant the souls of Scott and Kimberly Hahn.

Rejection of justification by faith alone, criticism of all the doctrines of grace, and a turning toward the Roman Catholic Church — this is the movement now firmly embedded, and spreading, in many of the conservative Reformed and Presbyterian churches in North America.

Its basis is the doctrine of a conditional covenant.

— DJE
(to be concluded) 

Letters

■ Positive Explanation

Rev. VanderWal is especially to be commended for his fine exposition of Matthew 5:43-48, in the November 1, 2002 issue of the *Standard Bearer*.

The history of the Protestant Reformed Churches has necessitated a refutation of the teaching of common grace. God be thanked for that refutation so faithfully maintained all these years!

Nevertheless, because of the necessity to refute common grace, I believe that discussion among Prot-

estant Reformed people about this passage has almost always been limited to what the Scripture here does *not* teach, namely, common grace. Hence, it has seemed to me for a long time that positive exegesis of these verses was overdue.

It was refreshing and edifying to read an article that clearly teaches what the Lord requires of us in this passage of His infallible Word. May we have grace to believe it and obey it!

John Hilton
Waterville, ME

■ Dress at Church

It is disappointing that Rev. Kleyn would weaken his description of Reformed worship by imposing his personal convictions concerning proper church attire. ("Worship Acceptable in God's Sight," *Standard Bearer*, January 15, 2003.) By insinuating that women and girls who wear something other than dresses to church do not have an acceptable attitude of worship, Rev. Kleyn condemns the common practice of vast numbers of humble, godly daughters of

Zion, including many in my own congregation. This kind of broad-brush accusation about a debatable matter can be hurtful and breed dissension in the body of Christ.

Surely, Paul's instruction in Romans 14 applies here. If in a local congregation, the brothers and sisters are strong, and so the women may exercise their freedom to forego dresses for other items of clothing, they do this unto the Lord. If in another congregation the brother and sisters do not have this strength, and so the women wear only dresses, they also do this unto the Lord. Neither the strong nor the weak believers should condemn the others for their practice. But more importantly, we should all echo Paul and say that the kingdom of God (and the acceptable worship of God) is not a matter of dresses or slacks, but of righteous-

ness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit.

Stephen VanderWoude
Crown Point, IN


Response:

In worship, as was stated in the article to which the above letter refers, we consciously enter the presence of our holy God. This requires proper attitudes of heart, such as godly fear, reverence, humility, etc. Our attitude of heart is certainly the most important thing when we worship God.

But one's attitude is reflected in his or her appearance. A casual appearance indicates a casual attitude. When one does not wear his or her "Sunday best" to church (please note that the mention of dresses in the article was just one example of "Sunday best" among various others), it appears that he or she does not have a true under-

standing of the majesty and glory of God. It is true that that is not necessarily the case. We cannot see and judge another's heart. But the proper attitude of heart ought to be reflected in our appearance.

I disagree with the idea that a congregation is "stronger" if women in it forego dresses, and that another congregation is "weaker" if the women in it wear only dresses. In this connection, I would ask the following (directing these questions both to men and women): Why do we desire to wear more casual clothing? Is it because we are mostly interested in being comfortable, fashionable, or progressive? Or is it because we think such clothing is the most appropriate to wear when we enter the presence of our great and holy God, before whom even the angels hide their faces (Isaiah 6)?

— (Rev.) Daniel Kleyn 

All Around Us

Rev. Ken Koole

■ Preparing the Groundwork for the Next Deadly Evil Or — Should Down-Syndrome Children Have the Right to Exist?

The slippery slope. We have all heard of it. Remove the legal restraint on something forbidden, and be prepared to be troubled by greater evils down the road. We have seen it happen time and again. In ecclesiastical affairs for instance. "Just women deacons. That is all we are seeking to justify on scriptural grounds. Not elders and ministers. Your fear is completely groundless and misplaced."

But once granted.... You know the rest. In a couple of years' time these same men were saying, "But simple logic and consistency demand that all the offices be opened to women. Any dummy should be able to see that! How simple you 'conservatives' are." The Devil is content to plot his strategy square by square, piece by piece, and to use smooth-sounding men (whose 'reassuring words' can be no more trusted than the father of the lie himself) to accomplish his ends, gaining one concession at a time until he dominates the board. And once his pieces are in place, expect no quarter. He intends to take his diabolical gains to their logical ends. So in the abortion issue.

The opponents of abortion have always pointed out that public policy that legalizes the murder of the unborn can only arise out of a debased evaluation of human life

and must inevitably lead to a greater devaluing of human life until not one person whose contribution to 'civilized society' is questionable is safe from being "terminated." The advocates of abortion have always said "Nonsense. You see boogey-men where none exist." Well, guess what. The "pessimists" were right again, as pointed out in an article in the December 5, 2002 issue of *Boundless*, entitled "Targeting the Disabled," by Roberto Rivera y Carlo. Writes y Carlo:

...The devaluing of human life continues unimpeded, as attendees at a recent conference at the University of Rhode Island learned. At the 10th "Genetic Technology & Public Policy in the New Millennium" symposium, Daniel W. Brock, a bioethicist at the National Institutes of Health, gave a presentation entitled "Genetic testing and selection: A Response to the Disability Movement's Critique."

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

In his presentation, Brock argued that prenatal testing to prevent the birth of severely disabled children, such as the blind or those with "severe mental retardation," was in the public interest. Caring for people with these sorts of disabilities consumes precious and often limited resources: money, time, and emotional energy. Brock told his audience that "it's a mistake to think that the social and economic costs are not a legitimate concern in this context."

What is more, he said, these expenditures do not necessarily translate into a meaningful improvement in the quality of life of the severely disabled. Even with what Brock calls "environmental" changes, such as handicapped access to buildings and learning new skills, such as American Sign Language or Braille, the disabled live with "real disadvantages."

It doesn't matter that the disabled don't seem to mind. "Our notion of how good a person's life is [isn't] fully determined by their own subjective self-assessment," Brock told his audience. Besides, "preventing a severe disability is not for the sake of the child who will have it. Rather, it is for the sake of less suffering and loss of opportunity in the world."

Did you catch those last couple of sentences, and for whose sake, according to Brock, preventing severe disability *is not*? Not the disabled. Mention is made of "less suffering and loss of opportunity in the world." Whose suffering? Whose loss of opportunity? Why, you simpleton, ours! We, the healthy ones, should be spared the 'suffering' and loss of opportunity that diseased and disabled persons bring upon us by their intrusion into the opportunities and resources available to us! Unbelievable. The sheer unadulterated selfishness of it all. In Brock's 'brave new-world' the well-fed and well-bred are what life is to be all about.

Do you know what this man (who was listened to with honor!) has just implied? This! The great

and decisive consideration of the medical profession ultimately is not the happiness and well-being of the patient (your crippled child for instance), but the "right to happiness" (fullness of "opportunity") of society at large. Will society benefit (financially, emotionally) from the continued presence of this or that disabled person? If society (read — the bureaucrats appointed to make such judgments) thinks not, then the family of said-individual owes it to society to make sure such a child never sees the light of day. This is the inalienable right of the well-fed and the well-bred!

y Carlo points out that this perspective has a long pedigree in American life. He writes:

Compare Brock's appeal to the prospect of 'less suffering and loss of opportunity' to the following [quote]:

"It would be strange if [the public welfare] could not call upon those who already sap the strength of the State for these lesser sacrifices ... in order to prevent our being swamped with incompetence. It is better for all the world, if instead of waiting to execute degenerate offspring for crime, or to let them starve for their imbecility, society can prevent those who are manifestly unfit from continuing their kind.... Three generations of imbecilities is enough."

You're probably thinking that I'm quoting some Nazi-era document but I'm not. It's from Supreme Court Justice Oliver Wendell Holmes majority decision in *Buck v. Bell* (1927), which upheld a Virginia law that mandated sterilization of what then were called the "feebleminded."

For the better part of a century, a segment of American elite opinion has practiced and advocated various forms of what is euphemistically called "birth control" to promote its vision of a better society.... Like Holmes, they made lofty-sounding appeals to the 'public welfare' and inveighed against the costs associated with

allowing certain births to take place. (One Michigan legislator went so far as to introduce a bill calling for the electrocution of severely retarded infants, claiming that electrocution was a humane way of putting these children out of their suffering.)...

As a result [of consistent Supreme Court decisions over the past 30 years to legalize abortion procedures of every stripe and hew], the campaign to minimize suffering and maximize opportunity is free to proceed in an unfettered manner. And proceed it has, long before Brock gave his controversial remarks in Cranston. You see, the dirty little not-so-secret is that Americans are already practicing what Brock preaches. They are working to eliminate an entire class of disabled people: those with Down Syndrome.

These have been, as Tucker Carlson put it in the *Weekly Standard*, "targeted for elimination." According to several studies, 90 percent of the women who learned, through amniocenteses and chromosome analysis, that they were carrying a child with Down Syndrome subsequently had an abortion. Combine this with the way that doctors, for insurance, regulatory and legal reasons, strongly encourage their patients to undergo testing, and a pattern emerges: an unofficial, but nonetheless effective, effort to reduce the number of people with Down Syndrome.

Why? For many of the same reasons Brock cites: raising a child with Down Syndrome is expensive and, as Nachum Sicherman of Columbia University put it, most of the cost is "not going to be paid by parents." And, of course, there are the non-monetary costs, such as "the number of women who would have to quit their careers to care for these babies," mentioned by an embryologist in a *New York Times* article.

As y Carlo concludes, what just a few years ago was considered to be unthinkable, society now embraces, or at least is willing to overlook. The direction in which our "Christian, civilized society" is

heading is truly frightening. Life means next to nothing at all, especially that life which intrudes into society's own comfort and ease. The "undesirables" must go. How long will it be before Christians, that is, those who prick self-centered, greedy, murderous society's conscience in matters like these, and who will not terminate their children's lives on the altar of "society's benefit," are also labeled as "undesirable"? One can almost feel the breath of the Dragon on one's neck.

■ An Amazing Turnabout (Confessions of One of the 'Pro-abortion' Co-founders)

Whistleblower Magazine, in its January 2003 issue, marking the thirtieth anniversary of the infamous "Roe v. Wade" decision, carries an astonishing article in which it interviews one of the co-founders of the pro-abortion movement, Dr. Bernard Nathanson. Nathanson was one of the principal architects and strategists of the abortion movement in the United States in the late '60s and early '70s. After years of personal involvement as both advocate and an abortionist, Nathanson has had, if not a change of heart, at least a change of conscience, finding it difficult to live with himself after all these years. He lays bare the sheer deceit that has permeated the pro-abortion movement from its very inception. He tells an astonishing, shocking story (part of which follows).

"In 1968 I met Lawrence Lader," says Nathanson. "Lader had just finished a book called 'Abortion,' and in it had made the audacious demand that abortion should be legalized through-out the country. I had just finished a residency in obstetrics and gynecology and was impressed with the number of women who were coming into our clinics, wards and hospitals suffering from illegal, and infected, botched abortions.

"Lader and I were perfect for

each other. We sat down and plotted out the organization now known as NARAL (National Abortion and Reproductive Rights Action League — KK). With Betty Friedan, we set up this organization and began working on the strategy.

"We persuaded the media that the cause of permissive abortion was a liberal, enlightened, sophisticated one," recalls the movement's co-founder. "Knowing that if a true poll were taken, we would be soundly defeated, we simply fabricated the results of fictional polls. We announced to the media that we had taken polls and that 60 percent of Americans were in favor of permissive abortion. This is the tactic of the self-fulfilling lie. Few people care to be in the minority. We aroused enough sympathy to sell our program of permissive abortion by fabricating the number of illegal abortions done annually in the U.S. The actual figure was approaching 100,000, but the figure we gave to the media repeatedly was 1,000,000.

"Repeating the big lie often enough convinces the public (sic! — KK). The number of women dying from illegal abortions was around 200-250 annually. The figure we constantly fed to the media was 10,000. These false figures took root in the consciousness of America, convincing many that we needed to crack the abortion law.

"Another myth we fed the public through the media was that legalizing abortion would only mean that the abortions taking place illegally would then be done legally. In fact, of course, abortion is now being used as a primary method of birth control in the U.S. and the annual number of abortions has increased by 1,500 percent since legalization."

What was the result of NARAL's brilliant deceitful marketing campaign, bolstered by thoroughly fraudulent research?

In New York, the law outlawing abortion had been on the books for 140 years. "In two years of work, we at NARAL struck that law down," says Nathanson.

New York immediately became

the abortion capital for the eastern half of the United States.

"We were inundated with applicants for abortion," says Nathanson. "To that end, I set up a clinic, the Center for Reproductive and Sexual Health (CRASH), which operated in the east side of Manhattan. It had 10 operating rooms, 35 doctors, 85 nurses. It operated seven days a week, from 8 AM to midnight. We did 120 abortions every day in that clinic. At the end of the two years that I was the director, we had done 60,000 abortions. I myself, with my own hands, have done 5,000 abortions. I have supervised another 10,000 that residents have done under my direction. So I [am responsible for] 75,000 abortions in my life. Those are pretty good credentials to speak on the subject of abortions."

But something happened to Nathanson — something profound. Just as it happened to countless other abortionists, abortion-clinic owners and staffers. Just as it happened to Norma McCorvey — the real name for "Jane Roe," the plaintiff in the Supreme Court's 1973 Roe v. Wade abortion decision.

These pioneers of the abortion-rights movement have all arrived at the same conclusion — that abortion is the unjust killing of a human baby — and have come over to the other side of the raging abortion war.

The outrageous deceitfulness behind the whole abortion movement is self-evident, of course. Lies from beginning to end, especially the end, namely, the participants assuring themselves that this is not a human being, this is not murder. The real scandal is that, despite all this evidence, nothing will change. When it comes to justifying evil, man is given to staggering self-deception, as the Master of the Lie well knows. The 'harvest of shame' will continue unabated in this country. Our society's conscience has become all but dead. ☛

The Real Saint Patrick (1) Patrick: the Myth

In connection with Saint Patrick's Day, March 17, we thought that it would be worthwhile to contribute to the *Standard Bearer* several articles on the patron saint of Ireland. Patrick is undoubtedly the world's most famous patron saint. Few know the patron saint of Spain or Poland outside of those nations, but Patrick has attained international fame. Patrick is also the patron saint of fishermen—and almost every other occupation—along the River Loire in France. There are churches named after Patrick all over the world, including in Rome itself.

The popular conception of Patrick is of the mitred bishop who illustrated the Trinity using a shamrock, drove the snakes of Ireland into the sea, and victoriously confronted Loeghaire (pronounced Leary), the High-King of Ireland, and the druids at Tara. He is seen as typically Irish and was dearly loved by the Irish populace of his day.

Saint Patrick's Day is celebrated by many the world over, and not just by the Irish and those in the Irish diaspora. The parade in New York — the largest demonstration of its kind in the world — sees over 100,000 march up Fifth Avenue. Green beer; shamrocks; green, white, and orange flags; and

public speeches are the order of the day. The world turns green, and everybody discovers that he has at least some Irish connections.

Patrick, apparently, was a colorful character, a fun-loving guy. One author lends some support to this conclusion. Thomas Cahill puts it this way: Patrick "didn't take himself too seriously."¹

Many aspects of the "popular Patrick" are promoted not only by the Irish diaspora and the Irish tourist board and the Irish government, but also by the Roman Church. According to Romish reckoning, Patrick was sent to Ireland by the pope. Clerical vestments are his garb and he carries a pastoral staff. He is accompanied by a guardian angel and works miracles. He is, in short, a "holy man." Thus when Pope John Paul II was in Ireland, he was allegedly walking "in the footsteps of Saint Patrick." It is strange that Patrick has not been canonized by the Roman Church.

On the last Sunday of July, Roman Catholics are still to be seen climbing Croagh Patrick in County Mayo, some with bare feet. Allegedly, Patrick once spent the forty days of Lent on that mount, and the Roman Church promises the faithful access to his merits. The island on Lough Derg in County Donegal, on which Patrick allegedly had visions of purgatory, is another holy place that is frequented by pilgrims. In reality, however, the legend of Saint



Patrick's purgatory began with the pilgrimage to Lough Derg by a soldier known as the Knight Owen, in the middle of the twelfth century.

Not content with all this, the papal church even declares Patrick's daily ritual. The *Roman Breviary* for March 17 tells us:

Every day he worshipped God three hundred times with genuflections and during each canonical hour he made the sign of the cross one hundred times. He divided the night into three periods, devoting the first into the recitation of one hundred psalms, accompanied by two hundred genuflections; the second to the recitation of the last fifty psalms, but immersed in cold water, holding the heart, the eyes and the hands towards Heaven; the third he devoted to a short rest, lying on the bare stone.

But is this a faithful presentation of the Patrick who labored in Ireland in the fifth century? Is this

1. Thomas Cahill, *How the Irish Saved Civilization: The Untold Story of Ireland's Heroic Role from the Fall of Rome to the Rise of Medieval Europe* (USA: Anchor Books, Doubleday, 1995), p. 147.

Rev. Stewart is a Protestant Reformed minister, presently working in Northern Ireland.

really the man who evangelized the Emerald Isle? And if it is, do we really want to know such a man, never mind make him the object of a special study? Ironically, the presentation of Patrick that embellishes his life with "pious legend" and papal fictions to make him appealing and interesting rather than making us admire him makes any real appreciation of this remarkable man impossible. Thankfully, as John T. McNeill points out, "The popular image of Patrick partakes largely of the legend and bears little relation to the historical person."²

Thankfully, we possess two writings of Patrick which, incidentally, constitute the oldest existing Irish literature. First, in his *Letter to Coroticus* Patrick rebukes Coroticus and his soldiers for attacking some of his Christian converts. Some were slaughtered, but others were kidnapped to be sold into slavery. Second, Patrick wrote his *Confession* near the end of his life as a defense of his mission work in Ireland. Patrick's two writings have been translated into English several times and exist in many editions. They are well worth obtaining and they make rewarding reading, taking us back to the work and world of a Christian missionary in fifth century Ireland.³

Papal writers sometimes betray a certain amount of disappointment with Patrick's *Confession* and his *Letter to Coroticus*. They appear to be dissatisfied with the simple account of his gratitude to God and labors on behalf of the gospel of Christ. "Where are his miraculous works?" they seem to be thinking. "Where does he speak of the practices of the Roman Church?" Something more is expected of a saint, and so the myths and exaggerations of the centuries succeeding Patrick are latched upon and promoted.

Admittedly, there are several historical difficulties. Patrick's writings are brief, and they were not intended to provide later readers with his "Life and Times." They are occasionally ambiguous and can sometimes be interpreted in different senses. Our knowledge of the times during which he lived is still somewhat sketchy, and this provides further opportunity for an honest difference of opinion.

Patrick's first two biographers, Tirechan (pronounced Teera-hawn) and Muirchu (pronounced Murrahoo), both wrote in the second half of the seventh century, at least two hundred years after his death. Later works betray an even greater desire to heighten Patrick's repute. It was one of these, the *Tripartite Life*, probably compiled near the end of the ninth century, which (sadly) became the most popular account of Patrick in Ireland until the twentieth century.

At the outset, we need to debunk some of the myths. First, Patrick was not Irish. He was born in Britain. Second, the tradition of Patrick's driving the snakes out of

Ireland is palpably false. Third, the shamrock story was first mentioned about one thousand years after Patrick. Fourth, the confrontation at Tara, though taken for truth by many, is mythical. R. P. C. Hanson states, "There was no High-King of Ireland in his day," and "miters were

not invented for at least 500 years after Patrick."⁴ Fifth, the green beer is not of an old vintage.


Sixth, the claim of Patrick's papal connections is denied even by some Roman Catholic scholars. Aidan Nichols, in a recent Vatican publication, states,

Patrick's own writings ... make no such pretension to papal support. It seems that the conversion of those Celtic areas that lay outside

the civil zone of Roman Britain was initiated by British Christians themselves.⁵

It is highly significant that when Patrick was challenged as to his credentials for working in Ireland, he does not appeal to Rome (*Conf* 23ff.). Had Patrick been a papal missionary, such an omission would be unthinkable.

If this helps us in understanding what Patrick was not, we are still some way in understanding what he was really like. According to one scholar, Patrick "is one of the few personalities of fifth-century Europe who has revealed himself with living warmth, in terms that men of any age who care for their fellows can understand." This quotation may serve to encourage us in our quest for the real Saint Patrick, the man behind the myth.

The Patrick portrayed in public celebrations and by the Roman Catholic Church is mythical and useless. In Patrick's *Confession* and *Letter to Coroticus* we meet a godly Christian missionary who both commands our admiration and deserves greater attention. Thus we shall consider his life, his message, and his missionary labors, before concluding with an analysis of his significance. This we shall begin, God willing, next time. 

The Patrick portrayed in public celebrations and by the Roman Catholic Church is mythical....

2. John T. McNeill, *The Celtic Churches: A History A.D. 200 to 1200* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1974), p. 55; italics mine.

3. Patrick's *Confession* and his *Letter to Coroticus* hereafter will be abbreviated *Conf* and *Letter*, respectively. The translation from the original Latin which is used in this article is that of R. P. C. Hanson (*The Life and Writings of the Historical Saint Patrick* [New York: The Seabury Press, 1983]).

4. Hanson, *Op. cit.*, p. 1.

5. Aidan Nichols, "The Roman Primacy in the Ancient Irish and Anglo-Celtic Church," in Michele Maccarrone (ed.), *Il Primato del vescovo di Roma nel primo millennio* (Vatican: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1997), p. 475.

Autoimmune Disorders –

The Importance of All the Body's Members

Nay much more those members of the body, which seem to be more feeble, are necessary.

I Corinthians 12:22

Scripture, on more than one occasion, uses the human body to illustrate characteristics of the Body of Christ. "If the whole body were an eye, where were the hearing? If the whole body were hearing, where were the smelling? But now hath God set the members every one of them in the body as it hath pleased him" (I Cor. 12:17-18). "Nay much more those members of the body, which seem to be more feeble, are necessary" (I Cor. 12:22). Scripture teaches that the Body of Christ is made up of many members and that all the members play a vital and significant role in that Body.

In previous articles on the nervous system (see *SB*, January 1, February 1, 2003) we marveled at our sovereign God, who created and controls the complex unity that is found within the human body. We have seen the specific God-given tasks given to the many individual members within the nervous system – members that we perhaps did not even know existed, and that we certainly ignore in our day-to-day activities. Only when we recognize how vital all the members are in the body will we begin to understand how the proper activity of each of

these vital members brings unity to the body. Likewise, when these members do not, or cannot, function as they should, the unity within the body is disrupted and the whole body suffers.

Let us consider the value and importance of these little members as seen against the backdrop of the disruption that occurs when there is disharmony in the body and certain parts are damaged or destroyed. It is our hope that, by means of this contrast, we may better appreciate the unity that should be characteristic of the body. And may this study, by God's grace, help us to see how all the members in the greater Body are important and necessary, and how the Body of Christ lives as one, suffering and rejoicing together, united in Christ for the purpose of glorifying God's most holy name.

Significant Members of the Body

As seen in a previous article, we experience movement – hands grip a hammer, legs carry and move us about, eyes blink, stomachs churn, and hearts beat – because of electrical signals that connect the brain to the other parts of the body. Tiny, seemingly insignificant, members of the nervous system transmit these electrical signals. What if those little members could not do their jobs? What effect would it have on our bodies? In some of our bodies those little members are destroyed by the immune system. Normally the immune system ignores the cells of the body and attacks only "foreign" organisms. However, under the

sovereign direction of God, the white blood cells of the immune system sometimes attack the cells of its own body. The complications and effects that result from this are called "autoimmune disorders." We will consider two such disorders that affect the nervous system and notice that when certain members of the body do not function as intended, disharmony exists in the body, disrupting the entire workings of the body as a whole.

The first autoimmune disorder we consider is multiple sclerosis. In the case of multiple sclerosis, the immune system attacks a portion of the nerve cell. As we saw in a previous article, nerve cells consist of three major parts – the dendrites, which look like long tree-branch-like extensions, whose role it is to receive stimuli from outside sources; the axon, which is a long "wire" covered in insulation, whose role it is to transmit the electrical signal; and the synaptic knobs, which are found at the axon terminal branches, whose job it is to send chemical messengers to the next nerve cell in order to relay the electrical signal. In the case of multiple sclerosis, a portion of the axon, called myelin, is attacked, destroyed, and removed by the white blood cells of the immune system.

Myelin is a fatty substance that coats the surface of the axon in intervals (giving it the appearance of a string of "frankfurters"). This myelin is important because it assists in properly transmitting the electrical message. Recall that the electrical impulse is transmitted down the surface of the axon by sodium ions

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

rushing through certain successive gates or doors in the walls of the axon. These gates are found at the joints between the myelin on the axon. Therefore, the greater the distance between myelin joints, the farther down the axon the nerve impulse will be continued. Thus, a large section of myelin results in electrical impulses being conducted longer distances, moving the impulse rapidly down the length of the nerve cell. Neurons with large sections of myelin can conduct an electrical impulse at speeds up to 100 meters per second, while neurons with little or no myelin move the electrical impulse at a speed of only 2 meters per second.

The result of the immune system's attack on the myelin is that the electrical impulse is passed on slowly, sporadically, or not at all, creating a loss of sensation and possibly movement. Large de-myelination usually results in great loss of motor control and even paralysis, while minimal de-myelination can mean loss of sensation. Thus, depending on the amount of myelin insulation destroyed, people who suffer from multiple sclerosis may experience a range of difficulties from numbness, uncontrolled movement, to paralysis. Here we see how a tiny body part such as myelin is vital for our bodies to function properly, and when one member suffers, the whole body is adversely affected.

Another example of an autoimmune disorder is myasthenia gravis. In this disorder the immune system attacks and destroys the receptors on the muscle cells. In order for us to move any part of our body, an electrical impulse must travel down the nerve cells and stimulate the synaptic knobs to release their chemical messengers, which are then received by receptors on the muscle cells that stimulate the muscles to contract. In the case of myasthenia gravis, the immune system destroys or damages these receptors, and the muscle is incapable of receiving the

electrical signal from the nerve cells. Without the stimulation from the chemical messengers, the muscle will not contract, and movement will not result. Even though every other part of the body may be functioning properly – the eyes see danger, the brain sends an electrical impulse to the leg to move, the nerves transmit the electrical signal to the leg muscles, the synaptic knobs release their chemical messengers, the chemical messengers are properly formed and travel to the muscles – yet, because the receptors have been destroyed by the immune system, the affected body parts will not move.

In some cases the immune system attacks many muscle-cell receptors and the effects are widespread. In other cases the immune system targets only some muscle-cell receptors. Thus, people who suffer from myasthenia gravis will experience difficulties ranging from a lack of muscle control and muscle tone to a lack of motor control or even paralysis of parts of the body. Here again we clearly see how so-called “feeble” and “insignificant” members of the body, such as muscle receptors, are vital for our bodies to experience movement.

The Wondrous Works of God

We ought to look more closely at our bodies and marvel at how they work and how so many different parts work together to accomplish the tasks of life. When one sees how just one tiny member, such as myelin or receptor molecules on the muscle cells, can disrupt the whole body when it is not functioning as it ought, we marvel at the greatness of our God, and our utter dependence on Him. How amazing it is that each day millions of “miniscule” tasks are accomplished by the parts of our body so that we can do even the

simplest of tasks. This all is under the sovereign direction of Almighty God. To Him be all praise and glory. Yea, truly we are fearfully and wonderfully made.

God made the human body as He did, at least in part, so that He could teach us significant truths about the Body of Christ. The autoimmune disorders highlight the truth that all the members of the body (Body), even the tiny, the so-called “unimportant” members, are vital to the existence and vibrancy of the body (Body). Consider again what I Corinthians 12:22 has to teach us. “Nay much more those members of the body, which seem to be more feeble, are necessary.” Is it not amazing how many “little” and “feeble” parts the body has?

And yet, all are vital. They are all necessary. We take them for granted. In many cases we have no idea that they even exist – until they don't. God shows us that all the parts of the body are necessary, so that the body can function and prosper, as it should.


There is good teaching here for the church. All the members of the Body of

Christ are necessary, and the Body is incomplete without them. Each member plays a vital role in the church, and we as God's people must learn to “esteem other better than (our) selves” (Phil. 2: 3). Our Father knows we have much to learn in this area. Scripture, therefore, is full of references to our calling to care for the “weak” and for our brothers and sisters in Christ. “And I will come near to you in judgment; against those that oppress the hireling in his wages, the widow, and the fatherless” (Mal. 3: 5). “Wherefore putting away lying, speak every man truth with his neighbour: for we are members one of another” (Eph. 4:25). We have seen the devastating effects

*All the members
of the body
(Body),
even the tiny,
the so-called
“unimportant”
members,
are vital
to the existence
and vibrancy
of the body
(Body).*

that occur when members of the body work against each other instead of for each other! Envy and hatred will not build up the brethren, will not strengthen the Body, but will only harm its goal of being united in Christ to bring glory and honor to God. May God bless His church, the Body and Bride of Christ, keeping her from sins that can only disrupt and destroy the unity we have in Christ Jesus.

May we learn from Scripture's lesson – the human body, in all of its diversity, complexity, and intricacy, teaches us something vital about the glorious Body of Christ. God has an individual purpose for all of us in His Body, the working out of which is so complex and intricate that we can only begin to grasp it in this life by His revelation to us. But our sovereign Lord has united us all, with our own

unique talents and tasks, to fulfill His ultimate purpose of glorifying Himself in Christ. Each of us within that Body is vitally important, and our importance lies only in the fact that we are a part of that Body, organically united. So, though we be many members, we toil, suffer, and rejoice as one. May we then with one accord extol the praises of our glorious Head and sovereign Lord. 

Taking Heed to the Doctrine

Rev. Steven Key

Justification by Faith Alone

Having considered the amazing truth of justification as the divine wonder of grace in imputing the righteousness of Christ to our account (see *Standard Bearer*, February 1, 2003), we have yet to consider the manner in which we receive this astounding gift.

Our Reformed confessions expound the Word of God in telling us that we are righteous before God “only by a true faith in Jesus Christ” (Heidelberg Catechism, Q & A 60, 61, 65). The Belgic Confession explicitly and carefully spells out that truth when it says in Article 22:

Therefore we justly say with Paul, that we are justified by faith alone, or by faith without works. However, to speak more clearly, we do not mean that faith itself justifies us, for it is only an instrument with which we embrace Christ our righteousness. But Jesus Christ,

imputing to us all His merits and so many holy works which He has done for us and in our stead, is our righteousness. And faith is an instrument that keeps us in communion with Him in all His benefits, which, when they become ours, are more than sufficient to acquit us of our sins.

It is by faith, therefore, that the sinner is actually justified before God. When we speak of being justified by faith, we are speaking of the means by which God's sentence — “Innocent” — is applied to us sinners, so that we pass from that state of guilt to our new state of righteousness before God.

What Is This Faith?

What is this faith that justifies?

The Belgic Confession, in the Article just cited, refers to faith as “an instrument with which we embrace Christ,” or “an instrument that keeps us in communion with Him.” The reference to faith as “an instrument” speaks of the essence of faith.

Faith is not first of all the activity of man, the act of believing.

Faith must be understood as a *bond* or *living union* with Christ. Following the example Christ set

before us in John 15, we can describe faith as the living graft uniting the branch to the vine.

That living graft is established by the husbandman, who is God Himself. By grafting His elect branches into the Vine, who is Christ, God severs us from our natural and legal relation to the human race fallen in Adam and incorporates us into Christ. Faith “keeps us in communion with Christ in all His benefits.” So the righteousness of Christ is imputed to us!

Faith is our righteousness, not because of its worthiness, or because it is a substitute for obedience to the law, but because it brings us into contact with Christ and His life. It unites us with Christ, so that His perfect righteousness becomes ours. The righteousness of *Christ*, therefore, becomes ours *through* faith.

You realize, however, that there is another aspect of faith that we have to consider. For faith is certainly also an activity. Besides being a *bond* or *living graft* with Christ, faith is the act of believing and laying hold of Christ and all His benefits. So it is spoken of in Romans 4:3-5, another passage im-

Rev. Key is pastor of the Protestant Reformed Church of Hull, Iowa.

portant to consider in this connection: "For what saith the scripture? Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness. Now to him that worketh is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt. But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness."¹

Concerning this verse, it is important to face the question: What is first — believing or justification? Verse 5 shows that He that justifies the ungodly is first. Your faith does not bring about that justification. God does not justify the believer. He justifies the ungodly! The act of believing, therefore, does not make you righteous.

Why then is faith — that act of believing — counted for righteousness? It is so as a matter of our own subjective experience. We speak about justification not merely as an abstraction, but as a benefit of salvation in Christ of which *we are partakers*. This is a personal matter to us, a matter of life-or-death significance!

When Christ died on the cross, He blotted out the sins of His people, justifying the ungodly. God Himself confirmed that blessed truth when He raised Jesus from the dead (Rom. 4:25). At the resurrection God testified that His Son had accomplished His perfect work in justifying the ungodly.

But those whom He has justified must become conscious partakers of that salvation. To that end the gospel is preached. It is preached as the power of God unto salvation, the irresistible operation of the Holy Spirit in the hearts of His own, calling them to faith in Christ Jesus. When Christ so speaks by His Spirit through the preaching, we believe. We believe in Him who justifies the ungodly!

We lay hold of Him whom God has set forth to be a propitiation through faith in His blood (Rom. 3:25). With a certain spiritual knowledge and assured confidence, we receive as applicable to *us* that

absolutely amazing proclamation of God, "You are righteous. I have justified the ungodly." God has given us His testimony that we are His righteous heirs — through Him that loved us even unto death. We lay hold of our righteousness, which is only in Christ.

God gives us that faith. He alone establishes that union with Christ whereby I am justified. And to bring that wonder of grace to my consciousness, He sends forth His gospel, revealing His own justice in declaring *us* sinners righteous for the propitiatory sacrifice² of His Son. By the power of His own Word He calls that faith to action, and we receive Christ and all His benefits, consciously entering into that blessed peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ (Rom. 5:1).

So God reckons faith for righteousness — not for anything in that faith, but because of what is in *Christ*, whose benefits we receive by faith. In this way we consciously partake of Christ and all His benefits, rejoicing in the God of our salvation who sovereignly and out of free grace justifies unworthy sinners.

By Faith Alone

The keynote of the Reformation was "justification by faith alone." It was not "justification by faith *and* works." It was not "justification by faith *as a work*." It was "justification by faith alone."

This was the insistence of the Reformers over against the error of Roman Catholic theology.

Rome insists that righteousness is merited only by Christ. Rome also insists that our justification comes from the grace of God. Notice, Rome uses the same terms that we use. Nonetheless, those terms are used to express a doctrine very different from that of the gospel.

Rome teaches that the instrumental cause of justification is baptism. By means of baptism, sancti-

fying grace is bestowed upon the individual, a spiritual quality infused by God into the soul.³

1265 Baptism not only purifies from all sins, but also makes the neophyte "a new creature," an adopted son of God, who has become a "partaker of the divine nature," member of Christ and co-heir with him, and a temple of the Holy Spirit.

1266 The Most Holy Trinity gives the baptized sanctifying grace, the grace of justification:

- enabling them to believe in God, to hope in him, and to love him through the theological virtues;
- giving them the power to live and act under the prompting of the Holy Spirit through the gifts of the Holy Spirit;
- allowing them to grow in goodness through the moral virtues.

Thus the whole organism of the Christian's supernatural life has its roots in Baptism.⁴

The effects of this sanctifying grace make that person holy and pleasing to God, and give him the right to heaven, so that he merits a heavenly reward for the good works that he performs.⁵ So Rome clings with an improper understanding to the order set forth in I Corinthians 6:11 — "but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified" — and makes justification dependent upon sanctification. Righteousness is *infused* into the Christian, and the subsequent good works merit his legal righteousness before God. Good works as the expression of the *infusion* of righteousness is the basis for God declaring a man justified.

Rome denies that Christ's righteousness is *imputed* to us, so as to become the immediate ground of our acceptance with God and the only reason on account of which He declares us "innocent." In fact, at the Council of Trent, where the Roman Catholic Church definitively set forth its doctrine over against the teaching of the Protestant Reformers, Rome boldly stated

that all who teach such are “anathema.”

It is in this context that the Reformers insisted that our works have nothing to do with meriting our justification, either in whole or in part. Justification is by faith alone.

Let us understand, then — this faith is not another work. The Reformers certainly were not so foolish as to deny justification by works, only to replace that Romish error with “justification by faith as man’s work.”

It is not so, that God, seeing we could not fulfill the requirements of His law, put another requirement before us that we must fulfill in order to be justified. It is not so, that God — setting aside the requirements of the law — now demands just one work of us, and that is faith.

If faith is a condition that we must fulfill in order to be justified, we have made faith another work!

Such a teaching is more gross an error than that conceived by Rome! To make faith a condition that we must fulfill in order to be justified is to make that one act of believing so meritorious that it entitles us to all Christ’s benefits and establishes us as heirs of God’s kingdom.

The error is only compounded today by those who would speak of justification by faith *and* works.

The Scottish theologian James Buchanan (1804-1870), in his classic work, *The Doctrine of Justification*, documented Rome’s attempts to seduce the church of the Reformation back to Rome’s doctrine of justification.⁶ Some 15 years after the initial break by Luther, some Romanist theologians held a conference with some of the Reformers, at which they presented a “new” interpretation of Rome’s doctrine of justification — an interpretation that ultimately was found unacceptable to both parties. They claimed that there was really no essential difference between the

two parties. They were even willing to speak of righteousness *imputed* to us through Jesus Christ and His merits. But one point was carefully preserved. The *faith* by which we are justified was defined as a faith that not only unites the sinner to Christ, but also *works* in and *sanctifies* the sinner. It is this *faith* that is acceptable to God unto justification.

If Rome were to formulate her doctrine in such a way today, evangelicals would be falling over themselves in the rush to return to Rome! The fact is, it is by such a definition of *faith* that some theologians today in evangelical and Reformed circles are attempting to redefine the doctrine of justification — often in connection with their teaching of a conditional covenant.

That faith produces good works is a sound and wholesome doctrine in its proper place. But as Buchanan points out, “it becomes unsound and dangerous, when it is mixed up with the truth which relates to the ground and reason of a sinner’s pardon and acceptance with God.”⁷


Those who don’t like the term *only*, as in justification by faith *only*, are simply rejecting the corresponding terms of the inspired apostle — *freely* and *without* works.

These issues are critically important! To quote the Genevan pastor, Francis Turretin, a successor of Calvin and Beza,

This appears more clearly when we come to the thing itself and the controversy is not carried on coldly and unfeelingly in scholastic cloud and dust (as if from a distance), but in wrestling and agony — when the conscience is placed before God and terrified by a sense of sin and of the divine justice, it seeks a way to stand in the judgment and to flee from the wrath to come. It is indeed easy in the shades of the schools to prattle much concerning the worth of an inherent righteousness and of works to the justification of men.... But when we rise to the

heavenly tribunal and place before our eyes that supreme Judge...who does not make the guilty innocent; whose vengeance when once kindled penetrates even to the lowest depths of hell, then in an instant the vain confidence of men perishes and falls and conscience is compelled (whatever it may have proudly boasted before men concerning its own righteousness) to deprecate the judgment to confess that it has nothing upon which it can rely before God.⁸

Let us glory in the cross, “Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus” (Rom. 3:24). “Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law” (Rom. 3:28).

This leaves us to consider the *fruits* of justification. For those fruits must surely follow. 

1. For a more complete exposition of this passage and many related concepts pertaining to this doctrine, the reader is encouraged to confer Herman Hoeksema’s *Righteous by Faith Alone: A Devotional Commentary on Romans*, Grandville, MI: Reformed Free Publishing Association, 2002.

2. A sacrifice that appeases and satisfies.

3. Confraternity of Christian Doctrine, *A Catechism of Christian Doctrine: Revised Edition of the Baltimore Catechism*, 1941 and 1949, pp. 80-87.

4. The Vatican, *Catechism of the Catholic Church*. Part Three, Life in Christ; Section One, Man’s Vocation Life in the Spirit; Chapter Three, God’s Salvation: Law and Grace; Article 2, Grace and Justification; I. Justification. On-line. Available at <http://www.vatican.va>

5. Confraternity of Christian Doctrine, *A Catechism...*, pp. 80-87.

6. James Buchanan, *The Doctrine of Justification*, Edinburgh: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1984, pp. 127ff.

7. *Ibid.*, p. 134.

8. Francis Turretin, *Institutes of Elenctic Theology*, Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R Publishing, 1994, v. 2, p. 639.

Both Coins (2)

We consider now the second principle we must remember about true giving.

The second principle that we must remember is that the God who gives us all things in life, even our offerings for His treasury, is our God for Christ's sake alone. The earthly gifts that we have, God gives to us as a blessing in Jesus Christ. We deserve to have the Lord curse us through these earthly gifts because of our sin. In fact, with respect to our giving, we deserve to perish because of our sinful failures in giving properly to Him. If God were to reward us for what we give and how we give to the treasury of our Jehovah, He could justly destroy us in His wrath because of the gross ingratitude we show at the offering plate.

But the amazing truth is that our merciful and gracious Father forgives all our sin. We learn by His Spirit that despite our unworthiness, He blesses us constantly, even through the means of all these earthly possessions. That is true only because of the death of our Lord Jesus Christ and His atoning blood. Christ has covered all of our sin and removed the curse due to us for our sin. On that basis alone, the Father blesses us with all blessings, even blessing us through the means of many earthly possessions. All these things serve

our salvation and eternal profit. Growing in the understanding of that glorious truth of the gospel of Christ, the believer is profoundly thankful. Out of that thankfulness he rejoices in the privilege to give unto the Lord his God. Our desire is that the Spirit of Christ more and more work in us that spiritual gift of giving to His treasury in thanksgiving for our Father's unspeakable gift to us of the Savior, our Lord Jesus Christ.



By the example of the poor widow's giving, the Lord warns us from persistent problems that hinder our duty to give like the poor widow who gave both coins (Mark 12:41-44).

The first problem that is avoided by faithful and true giving is one that is often associated with the whole enterprise of fundraising for church and school causes. The many methods of extracting money from us for a seemingly growing number of causes may reveal a deeper, spiritual problem. The Rev. J. Heys wrote years ago, in the 1950s, about the common practice of fundraisers, and called them "bitter pills with a sugar coating upon them. Their bitterness we do not taste; and they achieve the desired end" (*SB*, vol. 33, p. 109).

He used that illustration to point out a root problem with most fundraising. We quote again what Rev. Heys had to say.

We have in mind this widespread and much-used method of getting — shall we say extracting?

— financial support for worthy causes in God's kingdom wherein man has to get something in return for his money.

It is a method whereby money is extracted from individuals, when actually it should have been given by these individuals and otherwise would not have been forthcoming.

There is so little giving left today because it is made so painful for us to part with our money for the kingdom causes.

The bitter part of parting with our money is sugar-coated by the thing that we get in return.

...So chicken dinners, soup suppers, baked goods sales, and a host of similar projects are initiated to make it less painful for us to part with that which is necessary for the support of worthy causes in God's kingdom. By these methods we have tasted only the sugar coating of the "pill" and we find out that it was not so bad after all (*SB*, vol. 33, p. 109).

In that same vein, we ought to examine our motives in giving. Do we give to a worthy kingdom cause because we are getting something tangible in return (soup, bread, auction item, etc.)? Do we give to get honor before men? Do we play with our money before God and pay a ridiculously high price for an item or service only to look good in the eyes of fellow men? Do we give to get a tax break?

How do we evaluate the manner in which we give in the light of these comments and implications of the principles of faithful giving?

We quote Rev. Heys' conclusion.

...Nor will we pass judgment on those societies as to their sincerity when they sponsor sales and meals with a view to using the proceeds for the support of some phase of God's kingdom here below. But we maintain that it is a sad commentary on our giving when we must resort to such methods. It shows that we have never learned to give, or else have to a great extent forgotten how.

The Word of God has this to say, "God loveth a cheerful giver," II Corinthians 9:7.

But let us read the whole verse. Let us read it together with the one that precedes it. "But this I say, He which soweth sparingly shall also reap sparingly; and he which soweth bountifully shall also reap bountifully. Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give; not grudgingly or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver" (SB, vol. 33, p. 109).

Indeed it is a sad commentary on our giving when we are forced to use the common fundraising methods to extract out of our tight-fisted hearts and hands both coins for the support our churches and schools and in true thanksgiving. When we resort to all these "sugar-coated bitter-pill methods," it shows that we have never fully learned how to give and have forgotten how to give as the poor widow.

In contrast to the giving associated with most fundraising today, we must heartily agree with Rev. Heys' desire for the ideal: "How wonderful it would be if all these means to raise money were not necessary, and simply on being told of the need for funds, men would cheerfully and readily contribute!" (SB, vol. 33, p. 109). How true! How wonderful it would be if

"both coins" would freely come from thankful hearts and hands to meet the needs of the churches or the schools by means of the offerings in church and by means of an announcement or two outlining the particular need.

Secondly, giving faithfully according to the principles illustrated by the poor widow, we also avoid the error of concerning ourselves with what the fellow saint is giving. This improper way of giving afflicts both the rich and the poor. The poorer are easily tempted to look at those who are more wealthy and expect them to carry more of the burden of the needs of God's kingdom in the earth. The widow may have been tempted to approach the treasury of God in the temple with the attitude that she was not required to give anything. She may have been tempted to conclude that since the rich had much more to give, she with her two little coins was not required to give anything or, at the most, only one coin. Do not we who are poorer face that very temptation? Are not we tempted to figure out how much

How wonderful it would be if "both coins" would freely come from thankful hearts and hands to meet the needs of the churches or the schools by means of the offerings in church and by means of an announcement or two outlining the particular need.

the rich should be giving and so decide what we should give? In our envy or covetousness, we will tell others how to give, but we will not let God tell us how to give, when He commands us to give *both* coins and to give them in thanksgiving, contentment, and humility before Him.

The rich, on the other hand, are faced with a temptation, too. Perhaps the rich are tempted to think that if they would give too much, then the poor might take advantage of their giving. The rich may be tempted to hold back in their giving in order to avoid losing their abundance

and the style of living that others enjoy.

Such was not at all the giving of the poor widow. She did not compare herself to others and, on that basis, determine what and how she would give to God. By faith, she looked at her God in the Messiah. On the basis of that covenant relationship with Jehovah in the Messiah, she gave before the Lord, unto the Lord, and for the Lord's sake. By faith, she gave both coins in true love and thanksgiving into His treasury.

Ought not we to do likewise? To us the Lord has given much. For the majority of us, we do not miss one meal a day. We enjoy warm houses, lots of clothes, and usually good health besides. Surely out of our abundance before the Lord and, if necessary, out of our necessity, we must give to the Lord both coins.


Finally, as we learn and embrace by faith the principles of true giving, we guard ourselves from the evil of robbing God and His treasury. The widow was prone to do that. She would give the first coin, but was prone to hold back the second. She would give the first coin to fulfill her duty, but would she give the second coin?

Would you have given the second?

We are willing to give the first coin of what we are supposed to do when the offering plate for the general fund or for benevolence passes us in the pew. But will we give the second? Will we give cheerfully, thankfully, liberally, generously, and copiously unto the Lord for the sake of His covenant? And will you give until it hurts so much that it means you will miss a meal or two?

Think about it.

Would *you* have given the second coin?

(...to be concluded next time) 

Mission Preaching in the Established Church (1)

The Biblical Perspective of the Local Congregation (intro.)

A number of years ago I had the privilege to serve as pastor of Covenant Evangelical Reformed Church in Singapore. Since they were without a pastor, it fell within my duties as minister-on-loan to help them in this way. These were formative years for me, as it was my first real exposure to serving in a local congregation with a mission setting. The members were first-generation Christians, their zeal for the Lord persisted; they carried a desire to bring non-Christian family members, colleagues, and schoolmates into the fellowship of the body of Christ. It was a special privilege to serve the Lord in such a congregation.

Prior to one of the morning services, one of the elders came excitedly into the room where we had gathered for prayer. One of the members of the congregation had taken his colleague to church with him and, though he was a professed Buddhist, he was showing some signs of being open to the gospel. The purpose of this adulation was to urge me to include in the morning's message a gospel emphasis, to set forth the need for Jesus and a call to repent and embrace Him. Much to my surprise, this was rather easy to do, and I gladly complied with the request. In fact, my preaching had a fresh

urgency, and I discovered that it was a not-to-be-taken-for-granted privilege to be a bearer of good news to the lost. I developed a sensitivity to be aware of those who might join the congregation for worship, and an appreciation for how God had given to me as a pastor the high calling to bring the gospel to all whom He brought into the worship service. The above scenario was replayed many times, over the years, and we thank God for the opportunities both to preach to such persons and to talk with them after the service and other follow-up.

In addition to such incidents, it was common practice to hold special gospel services with a view to bringing non-members, some from other churches and even others holding heathen religions, under the preaching of the gospel. Sometimes these services were included in the regular time of worship. At other times, special services were arranged for this purpose. The idea was to bring a more simplified message, so that non-Christians or ignorant ones could understand the gospel of the Reformed faith, and the emphasis was upon the call to salvation. God abundantly blessed these efforts over the years and used them mightily to gather His church through the preaching of the gospel.

Now that we have returned to the USA and have the privilege once again to worship in our beloved Protestant Reformed

Churches, the thought came to mind whether there is a difference between the established church in America and the established church in Singapore as far as preaching is concerned. True, there are differences in circumstances and society. The church in Singapore is in quite a different setting than the church in America, and this difference affects gospel preaching. This can be seen in the use of illustrations and applications that properly reflect these differences. It also affects the simplicity of the gospel preached, that is, adapting the gospel to the spiritual level of the congregation. But our focus of interest here is on the message itself. Is the preaching of the gospel message different in the ERCS from that in the PRCA? Let me put it this way. Should God by His mercy bring into our service here in the states a non-Christian, should we expect the preaching of the gospel to be adequate to convert him under the blessed work of the Holy Spirit just as much as we do in Singapore?

For the sake of convenience, we will call this "mission preaching." By this we simply mean that the pastor brings the message God wants an unconverted person to hear, viz., a call to conversion, to repent and believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. In the mission setting, such a call unto salvation is expected and obviously necessary; in the established church this may easily be overlooked or disputed.

Upon some reflection, my con-

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

clusion is that the content of the preaching is not any different, nor ought it to be any different, in the established church or the church in the mission setting. If the preaching of the gospel in the established church is done faithfully, and God brings a non-Christian into the worship service, he will hear the call of the gospel necessary for conversion and salvation. The whole church may eagerly bring such people into the worship service, for they know such a person will hear the gospel as well. By this wonderful work of salvation by our sovereign God, we learn anew of His power to save us.

If we reflect on the field of labor for a missionary, it is easy to conclude that he has to busy himself with mission preaching as defined above. His task as missionary is to focus on non-Christians for the most part, for they are without Christ and without God in this world (Eph. 2:12). If his labors are blessed, he may expect unconverted people to come under his preaching. He needs to expose sin, call men to repent and convert, to turn from their evil way lest they perish. Central in this message is the hope of faith in Jesus Christ as the only way to the Father.

Yet, if a pastor understands the established church properly and has a biblical view of the congregation, he quickly learns that there is no essential difference between his congregation and the missionary's field of labor. If the congregation and pastor are busy in their outreach ministry, God will from time to time place among them one who is unconverted. Besides that, if you stop to think about it, the pastor needs to bring to his own flock the same message of sin and misery, salvation through conversion and faith in Jesus Christ, and the necessity of

leading a thankful life of holiness. This is the threefold knowledge that the Heidelberg Catechism describes as necessary to live and die happily in the comfort of our Heavenly Father.

We should take a moment to say a few things about the nature of the local established congregation. How ought we to view such a church in relation to a mission church?

1. The Bible makes no significant distinction between a mission church and an established church as far as divine instruction is concerned. True, in the historical account given in the book of Acts, the mission labors of Paul included groups of people who were in the process of being established. This was true during the missionary journeys. The first contacts were made in various areas of Asia Minor and even extending into

Macedonia and Greece. Paul and Barnabas made initial contacts during the first part of the first missionary journey; and during their return visit, elders were ordained in all the churches (Acts 14:23).

We can conclude from this that there was a process of instituting the churches through mission labors. The message of Christ to His church throughout the world at that time, however, was not one message for churches in the process of being instituted and another for churches already instituted. Instruction to preach the gospel, including how to preach it, came to the churches no matter whether they were meeting in someone's house (Rom. 16:5, 23; I Cor. 16:19; Col. 4:15; Philemon 2) or the congregations scattered throughout all areas (Rom. 16:4; I Cor 7:17, II Cor. 8:18). The preaching of the gospel is the same for all.

2. The seven letters from

Christ to the churches in Asia Minor (Rev. 1-3) further confirm this. In these letters, Christ focuses on the strengths and weaknesses of seven congregations, which represent the entire church in the world. Among them, Philadelphia represents the church that has mission opportunities. We must not isolate that congregation as if that was unique for her. Rather, she represents all the churches from the perspective of outreach. All the other six congregations have to face the same issues as Philadelphia, only in various measures. We must receive the seven messages today as well. We do not read them and preach on them as if we have to discover which of the messages to the seven churches apply to us. Rather we have to examine how all seven messages relate to us as an individual congregation. We can conclude from this that the mission concern of Philadelphia's "open door" is the mark of every faithful congregation.

3. The so-called "great commission" (Matt. 28:18-20) given by Christ to the disciples who were about to become the apostles represents the commissioning of the church by Christ Himself. The command to make disciples of all nations comes to the local congregation first. Because of the office of believer, every Christian is anointed by the Holy Spirit to function as prophet, priest, and king (cf. Heid. Cat., L. D. 12). Such believers come together, institute a church, and appoint from among themselves gifted men who can serve in the special offices (their gifted prophets become pastors, their gifted priests become deacons, and their gifted kings become elders). They possess all that is needed to serve as a church of Christ. That is not the end of their calling however. They also must take into consideration the need for unity among Christians and churches. Hence, they take seriously the need to federate as local congregations. In doing this they

The content of the preaching is not any different, nor ought it to be any different, in the established church or the church in the mission setting.

delegate some of the authority, which Christ has given to them, to the federation. This relates to mission work. Some mission work can better be done by the churches in common, the federation. Thus the congregations labor together to do this work.

However, we must not conclude from this that the local congregation may *relinquish* her calling to do mission work. That may never be done. In principle, the local congregation has the mandate to do outreach work, and she must take that seriously. There is no essential difference between a missionary and a pastor. The missionary is called and ordained to focus upon a ministry that will reach outward and draw inward those whom God is pleased to gather unto the establishing of a congregation. The pastor focuses upon a congregation already established, yet includes in his ministry an effort to increase the church. This is not limited to internal covenant growth by begetting children. It also pertains to outreach to those lost in sin. The words of Acts 2:47 give comfort and hope to all pastors and missionaries: "the Lord added to the church daily, such as should be saved."

The divine mandate to make disciples comes to the local congregation first. For this reason, we also appoint a local calling church to oversee both domestic and foreign missionaries. We recognize this principle. Real mission work is not done by the denomination but by the local church. The federation joins in to consolidate funds and manpower to make it more effective. The denominational mission committees represent the churches in common in doing this work as a check and balance. This is a workable arrangement and must always be kept in view. The authority and commission to preach the gospel,

however, rests in the local church.

Critical for mission preaching, the call of the gospel to the unconverted, is the preacher's view of his congregation. There are a number of possibilities, and we ought to determine which is biblical.

1. He could possibly look at them as lost in sin and needing conversion. Historically, this is the approach of the Arminian preacher. Because his focus is upon lost sinners who need conversion, he is thumping the trail to "win souls for Christ." He does this in the mission field as well as the local congregation. Every time he opens his mouth, he is pleading with sinners to accept Christ. This fits his theology because he firmly believes that one can be a true believer one day and lose it the next, so the preacher constantly needs to be busy saving such people. True saints among them soon complain, "We are always saving souls but totally neglect the souls already saved." The emphasis on soul-winning takes such priority that careful expository preaching, which helps the believer to grow in his faith and equips him for meaningful service of his Master, is lacking. We must not fall into this error of viewing the congregation as lost and in need of salvation.

2. Neither must the minister swing into the opposite direction and view the congregation, in its entirety, as saved. He must not imagine that the only thing they need to be instructed in is in the realm of their salvation — how to be assured of it, and how to enjoy its benefits. The old threat of "presumptive regeneration" can relate not only to children of believers, but to

our view of the entire congregation as well. Such a view is contrary to fact (not all members of the church are truly saved, they were not in the old covenant, and they are not in the new either). Besides, such

an approach to preaching will produce such deadness that the congregation will soon be lulled into complacency and spiritual hypocrisy.

3. Perhaps the pastor ought to view his congregation as a mixture of believers and unbelievers, as converted and unconverted. They more than likely are that, to be sure; but we are not talking about *objective fact*, but about how the preacher must *view* them when he preaches. If he takes this approach, he will inevitably fall into a terrible error. He will begin to place the members of his congregation into one or the other of the two categories. He will become judgmental and soon think it his duty to address those in his congregation who are yet unconverted or say certain things to those who are converted. Before you know it, he will be making one greater mistake, that of playing God by thinking he has to determine who are elect and reprobate. His preaching will become personal, in that he thinks it is his duty to run out of the church all the wicked who are there and to protect all the righteous.

4. There is a better approach, one which is thoroughly biblical. It comes out of the coined expression, "organically." The pastor must view his congregation as the church of Christ united in true faith, but he must be fully aware that among them may be those who are not even converted unto God. And there are those who are true believers but need daily to be converted unto God. If this is his perspective, he will include "mission preaching" regularly in his messages. At such time when God may be pleased to bring an unconverted person into the worship service, he will hear God's call to repent of sin and embrace the Savior. This is regularly heard in such preaching.

We will examine this in detail in our next article. 

The divine mandate to make disciples comes to the local congregation first.

Mission Activities

Our denomination's missionary to the Philippines, Rev. A. Spriensma, writes that the work continues to progress in Manila. The saints there are eager to listen to lectures and sermons and ask questions. In February Rev. Spriensma and his wife, Alva, hope to go to Bacolod to repeat the pastors conference that they sponsored in Manila in December. Presently there are twenty or more signed up for it, and in March, the Lord willing, the Spriensmas will probably go again to visit in the Daet/Labo area.

On Thursday, January 30, Rev. W. Bruinsma, pastor of the Kalamazoo, MI PRC, along with Mr. Henry Boer of the Hudsonville, MI PRC, left for our churches' annual visit to the mission work in Northern Ireland on behalf of the calling church and the Domestic Mission Committee. Synod 2003 will be seeking a progress report on the work there, and advice from Hudsonville and the Domestic Mission Committee for the future. The emissaries will be inquiring into the welfare of Rev. Angus and Mary Stewart, conducting family visitation with them, and bringing greetings to the Fellowship. Plans called for them to stay two Sundays and return, the Lord willing, on February 10.

Denomination Activities

In the past couple of months, two radio stations have been added to the list of outlets over which the Reformed Witness Hour can now

be heard. The first is radio station KARI in Lynden, WA. The RWH can be heard there on Sunday mornings at 8:30 A.M. And the second station is Gospel 846AM in Northern Ireland. Plans call for the RWH to begin broadcasting there on Sunday, March 2, in an 8:30 A.M. time slot.

Congregation Activities

Sunday evening, January 19, the congregation of the Grandville, MI PRC officially welcomed their new pastor, Rev. K. Kooles, and his family to their fellowship with a welcome program. A light lunch followed the program. The members of Grandville were also able to enjoy each others' fellowship the night before the welcome to the Kooles, with a family ice skating party. Organizers were looking for a minimum of 100 people to sign up, so undoubtedly Grandville's members had something to talk about Sunday morning after church.

A web site is under construction for the congregation of the First PRC in Edmonton, Alberta, Canada. You are encouraged to take a look at <http://www.members.shaw.ca/firstPrcEdmonton>.


On Wednesday, December 18, the congregation of First in Edmonton was invited to attend their Christmas Children's and Choir Program under the theme, "Christ's Birth Foretold and Fulfilled." Looking over their program, which they thoughtfully sent along with bulletins, shows lots of participation from the congregation and children. We thought it rather interesting that for the final number of the program the congregation sang, "Eere Zij God" or "Glory to God." They had their choice —

they could sing either in Dutch or in English. The song was sung only once, which must have been a rather unique sound, reminding us once again that the church is made up of every nation, tribe, people, and language.

Members of the Lynden, WA PRC were invited to a Game/Social Night in their church basement on the evening of January 1. The congregation was asked to bring their favorite appetizer and game.

Speaking of Lynden, I am reminded to remind you that now that the Netherlands Reformed Church in Lynden has completed the renovations to their church building and are finished using Lynden's building, Lynden has voted to hold their church service times at 10:00 A.M. and 6:00 P.M. each Lord's Day. So make a note if you plan to be there over a Sunday any time soon.

Minister Activities

The congregation of the Faith PRC in Jenison, MI extended a call to Rev. B. Gritters, presently serving our churches in Hudsonville, MI, to be their next pastor. From a trio of the Revs. S. Houck (Peace PRC in Lansing, IL), J. Slopesma (First PRC in Grand Rapids, MI), and C. Terpstra (First PRC in Holland, MI), the congregation of Southeast PRC in Grand Rapids, MI has extended a call to Rev. C. Terpstra. Rev. R. VanOverloop, pastor of Georgetown PRC in Hudsonville, MI, has received the call to serve our churches as missionary to Ghana with Rev. W. Bekkering. 

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

Announcements

NOTICE

The Protestant Reformed Special Ed Board is seeking applicants for a full-time teaching position in our Special Education program at Heritage Christian School in Hudsonville, Michigan. Applicants should have a desire to work with special-needs children and have some knowledge in areas of Special Education.

Interested persons may contact Kurt Kaptein, at kurt@spectrumweb.net or phone 1-616-669-1693. They may also contact Dave Moelker at (616) 453-7077.

LECTURE

The Lord willing, a lecture on the subject of
**Labor Unions
in the Light of Scripture**
will be given by

Prof. David Engelsma.

This lecture is sponsored by the

Evangelism Committee
of Peace PRC
Lansing, Illinois.

Light refreshments and fellowship will follow the lecture. The church is located at **18423 Stony Island Ave., Lansing, Illinois.** Plan to attend this timely lecture on

**Friday, March 21 at 8:00 P.M.
at Peace PRC.**

NOTICE!

FAITH CHRISTIAN SCHOOL, Randolph, WI, is seeking applicants for a middle room teacher (grades 3-5). Interested applicants may contact the administrator, Mr. John Huizenga, at school: 920-326-6090, home 920-326-6186, e-mail: Huizenga@powercom.net or contact the school board president, Mr. James Kooiker, at 920-326-4434.

Family Conference

The Evangelism Committee of First PRC of Edmonton Alberta, Canada is holding a Family Conference, D.V.,

July 4, 5, 6, 2003 following the topic:
"The Covenant Home"

- I. July 4th ~ Maintaining Marriage in an Age of Adultery
by Rev. S. Key
 - II. July 5th am ~ Bring Forth Children in an Age of Selfishness
by Rev. A. Brummel
 - III. July 5th pm ~ Promoting Obedience in an Age of Rebellion
by Rev. M. DeVries
- July 6th ~ Sermons by Rev. S. Key & Rev. A. Brummel

For more information, visit our website @
www.members.shaw.ca/firstPrcEdmonton/

Plan to Attend!!

NOTICE!!

All standing and special committees of the synod of the Protestant Reformed Churches, as well as individuals who wish to address Synod 2003, are hereby notified that all material for this year's synod should be in the hands of the stated clerk no later than April 1. Please send material to:

Don Doezeema
4949 Ivanrest Ave.
Grandville, MI 49418

RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The Men's Society of Hope PRC, Redlands expresses its Christian sympathy to the Meelker family in the death of

MR. BEN MEELKER;

and to the family, relatives, and friends in the passing away of

MRS. BETTY EKEMA.

"I will not leave you comfortless:
I will come to you" (John 14:18).

Jonathan denHartog, Secretary

Reformed Witness Hour

Topics for March

Date	Topic	Text
March 2	"Grow in Grace!"	II Peter 3:18
March 9	"Grow Up!"	Ephesians 4:14, 15
March 16	"Abide in Me!"	John 15:1, 5
March 23	"Fight the Good Fight!"	I Timothy 6:11, 12
March 30	"Into God's Hands"	Psalms 31:5