

# THE *April 1, 2003* STANDARD BEARER

A REFORMED SEMI-MONTHLY MAGAZINE

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# Saved by Grace

*"For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast."*

Ephesians 2:8-9

**B**efore we look at the positive meaning of this passage, let us take note of the fact that Roman Catholicism teaches the very opposite of what is taught here. Rome teaches that a person is saved by means of works. Original sin and the sins committed before baptism are forgiven by baptism. After that, a person can be forgiven only when he earns forgiveness by doing good works. Penance is doing the good works that the priest assigns at the time of one's confession of sin. These works are necessary for salvation.

Rome also teaches that the works of others may be applied to you. They believe that the virgin Mary and the saints performed more good works than were necessary for their own salvation. Therefore, there is a large reservoir

of works at the disposal of the priest to apply to someone else. An indulgence, which is the forgiveness of sin, is granted on the basis of these good works. A person merely has to pay the church, and the priest will grant an indulgence that will forgive all or part of his sins. Thus he buys the good works of the saints to gain his forgiveness. Even though the Roman Church speaks of Christ and of grace, Christ's work and God's grace are not sufficient to save a person. There must also be works.

This view of salvation is wrong. It is contrary to this passage. We read in verse 9, "Not of works, lest any man should boast." Salvation is not of works. A person does not earn salvation by doing good works. Man's efforts are of no value when it comes to his salvation. This is the teaching of all of Scripture. We read in Galatians 2:16, "Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law...." We read in Titus 3:5, "Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us...."

What saves us? We read in the passage, "For by grace are ye saved...." Notice first of all that

we need salvation. The Roman Catholic believes that man is not so depraved that he cannot help God save himself. Man can do good that will count toward his justification. Man is not utterly lost. He has fallen, but not so far that he cannot climb out of the pit into which he has fallen.

That is not the biblical view of salvation. Biblical salvation implies that we are so utterly depraved that there is nothing that we can do to save ourselves. We are so utterly sinful that even after we have been regenerated, we still can do nothing to save ourselves. We read in Isaiah 64:6, "... all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags...." How can we earn salvation when all our works of righteousness are as filthy rags? The best that the regenerated man can do is not good enough for God. Even the best of our good works are defiled by our sin. That is why we need salvation. Salvation must be all of God and nothing of us. Thus we read in Romans 9:16, "So then it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy."

That is why salvation is said to be of grace in this passage, "For by grace are ye saved...." It is not only

*Rev. Houck is pastor of Peace Protestant Reformed Church in Lansing, Illinois.*

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#### EDITORIAL OFFICE

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

#### BUSINESS OFFICE

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

#### CHURCH NEWS EDITOR

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

#### NEW ZEALAND OFFICE

The Standard Bearer  
c/o B. VanHerk  
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@cprlbookstore.fsnet.co.uk)

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this passage that says that salvation is of grace. So does all of Scripture. We read in Acts 15:11, "But we believe that through the grace of the LORD Jesus Christ we shall be saved...." We read in Romans 3:24, "Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus..." (Rom. 11:5), "...there is a remnant according to the election of grace."

What does it mean that we are saved by grace? The word "grace" means "pleasantness, loveliness, charm, and beauty." That God is grace means that God is in Himself lovely, charming, beautiful. God is also gracious to us, His people. First of all, God has a gracious attitude toward us. His attitude is one of beauty and pleasantness. That is why he has chosen us to salvation. Election is the election of grace because it is His love and pleasantness toward us.

Secondly, God's grace is also the power that saves us. Because God has a pleasant disposition toward us and wants to save us, He does save us. God's grace is not weak. It is the almighty power of God that always results in salvation for its objects. That is what this passage declares, "For by grace are ye saved."

In the third place, this grace of God that saves is undeserved favor. By its very nature it is not something that can be earned or deserved. It is the free gift of God. This idea is in the word "grace." God is gracious to one person and not another because of His own sovereign, free will. Grace has no works in it whatsoever. In Romans 11:6 we read, "And if by grace, then is it no more of works: otherwise grace is no more grace. But if it be of works, then it is no more grace: otherwise work is no more work." Grace and works are opposites. If it is of works, it cannot be of grace. If it is of grace, it cannot be of works. Salvation by grace means that salvation is totally out of our hands. Only God can save us and does save us.

Salvation by grace involves Christ and His suffering on the cross. Romans 3:24, "Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus." Salvation has nothing to do with us and our work because it has everything to do with Christ and His work. God forgives His people and declares them to be righteous on the basis of the blood of Christ. That is why salvation is of grace. Someone else did what was necessary for us to be saved. God Himself, in His only begotten Son, purchased salvation for us. He gives salvation to us as a free gift, because He did it all and we do nothing for it.



Grace is not the only thing that is mentioned in this passage. We read, "For by grace are ye saved through faith..." Faith is necessary for salvation. No one can be saved without faith. Thus we read in Mark 16:16, "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned." That we are to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ means that we believe the truth concerning Christ that is taught in the Holy Scriptures. It also means that we trust Christ for our salvation. We rely totally upon His suffering and death as the only means of our forgiveness. We are confident that Christ's work alone was sufficient to pay the price of our sins and merit for us righteousness and eternal life.

The reason that faith is necessary for salvation is that grace uses faith when it saves. Grace saves through the instrumentality of faith. There are many passages of Scripture that connect grace and faith. Romans 4:16 is just one of them. We read, "Therefore it is of faith, that it might be by grace...." Faith is like grace. It has nothing

*Salvation  
has nothing  
to do with us  
and our work  
because  
it has everything  
to do with  
Christ  
and His work.*

to do with works. Faith is a totally different principle than works. That is why grace uses faith. When the Judaizer tried to get the Christians of Rome to keep the law for salvation, they promoted a principle of works. But the apostle

Paul admonished them that it is not of works, but of faith. It is faith that is counted for righteousness (Rom. 4:3). That makes salvation of grace.

Even though faith, like grace, is much different than works, there are many who teach that faith is something that comes from within man, not God. Roman Catholics do not talk much about faith. Faith is not even a part of most of the works that they perform. They partake of the Lord's Supper in a mechanical way. They eat Christ with their mouths, not with faith. When they speak of faith, it is not so much faith in Jesus Christ as it is faith in the church. Faith is considered the work of man. It is up to man himself to believe in the church for salvation.

This is the common view among most who profess to be believers. A very prominent evangelical Greek scholar says, "Grace is God's part, faith ours." The idea is this. God provides the gift of salvation for man by His grace, but man has to accept that gift by faith. This is free-willism. It is Arminianism. It makes all of salvation dependent upon man and his choice rather than God and His choice. They speak of salvation by grace, but in reality it is a salvation by the free will of man. This view, that faith is man's work, makes the Arminian just as bad as the Roman Catholic. Faith is made a work of man, that is, a condition for salvation. This view of grace is just the opposite of grace. It has the sound of grace, but in reality it takes us back to salvation by works.



In this passage, the words "...that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God..." modify the word "faith." Faith does not come from us. A person cannot simply muster up some faith. The Arminian and the Roman Catholic contradict what this passage says about faith. This passage says faith does not come from you. It does not originate in your heart. You have no faith of yourself. Faith is the gift of God. A man can have faith only when God gives it to him. Not only this text, but all of Scripture declares that faith is a gift of God. We read in Ephesians 1:19, "... who believe, according to the working of his mighty power...." We believe only because God's mighty power has worked faith in us. In John 6:44 we read, "No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him...." No one can go to Christ in faith unless the Father draws him to Christ by giving him faith in Christ. Acts 13:48, "... and as many as were ordained to eternal life believed." Only those who were ordained to eternal life believed. They believed because they were ordained to eternal life.

This is how salvation is by grace through faith. God in His grace elected certain people to be saved. In His grace He sent Christ to suffer and die for them so that He would merit salvation for those chosen people. In His grace God regenerated His elect people and put the power of faith in their hearts. In His grace He called that power into activity so that the elect regenerated person believes in the Lord Jesus Christ. Thus salvation

is by grace through faith because grace gives the faith that is necessary for man to be saved. Not only is salvation all of grace and therefore all of God, but even the instrument that grace uses is from God. Truly, salvation is of the Lord.




Salvation by grace through faith results in something very important. Before we see that, let us consider what is the result of salvation by works. When someone believes that he contributes to his salvation by his works or his faith, the result will be that he boasts in himself. He will glory in himself rather than in God.

The Roman Catholic will boast, "I have not missed a mass in 50 years. I am faithful in regularly going to confession. I have given thousands of dollars to the church." The Arminian will boast, "I have chosen Christ. I have given my life to Christ. I have freely accepted His salvation." But all of this is boasting in oneself. When that happens, God does not receive the honor and glory. To the extent that man boasts in his efforts, he does not glory in God.

Salvation is by grace through faith so that the boasting will not be in man, but in God. Look at the passage, "For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast." We read in 1 Corinthians 1:31, "...He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord." We are to boast. But that boasting is to be in the Lord and only in the Lord. That is what happens when salvation is by grace

through faith. For then we realize that we had nothing to do with our salvation. Then we realize that God and only God saves us. God does everything that is necessary for our salvation. There is nothing left for us, and so we praise Him. We praise God for choosing us to be His children. We praise God for sending Christ to suffer and die for us. We praise God for regenerating us. We praise Him for working faith in our hearts. We praise God because we know that we do not deserve all of this grace. It is God's undeserved favor.

When we boast in God for salvation, it is especially His grace in which we boast. Notice the first word of the passage, "For." This word connects the passage with verse 7, "That in the ages to come he might shew the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness toward us through Christ Jesus." The reason that salvation is by grace through faith and not of works is that grace might be displayed in all of its riches and thus God will be glorified forever. God does not save us as an end in itself. Salvation is a means to an end. It is for the purpose of glorifying God forever. It does that because in salvation grace is displayed. God's grace is seen to be rich and abundant, for it brings with it such overwhelming kindness to man. What wondrous grace that does everything necessary for salvation. What great grace that saves a sinner like me. What grace that sacrifices God's own Son for us. Salvation by grace shows us just how wonderful God is, and it gives all the glory to Him. 

We believe that, to attain the true knowledge of this great mystery, the Holy Ghost kindleth in our hearts an upright faith, which embraces Jesus Christ with all His merits, appropriates Him, and seeks nothing more besides Him. For it must needs follow, either that all things which are requisite to our salvation are not in Jesus Christ, or, if all things are in Him, that then those who possess Jesus Christ through faith have complete salvation in Him. Therefore, for any to assert that Christ is not sufficient, but that something more is required besides Him, would be too gross a blasphemy; for hence it would follow that Christ was but half a Savior....

Belgic Confession, Article 22



# The Unconditional Covenant in Contemporary Debate—and the Protestant Reformed Seminary\* (7)

**T**he movement in conservative Reformed churches denying not only justification by faith alone but also all the doctrines of grace is, as it claims, a development of the doctrine of a conditional covenant.

One way the doctrine of a conditional covenant implies justification by works is its teaching that faith is a condition upon which the covenant, the covenant blessings, and the covenant God Himself depend. Faith itself is a human work contributing to covenant salvation. It is a short, logical, and inevitable step to teach that also the works of faith are conditions and, therefore, part of the sinner's righteousness with God. This was the subject of the previous editorial.

## Liberating the Covenant from Election

A second way in which the doctrine of a conditional covenant necessarily implies the denial of the gospel of salvation by sovereign grace is the conditional covenant's adamant refusal to have the covenant determined and controlled by election. Defenders of a condi-

tional covenant state this refusal in a misleading way: "The covenant is not to be identified with election." In fact, no theologian or church has ever been so doctrinally dense as to identify covenant and election. What they mean, of course, is that election, accompanied by reprobation, does not determine who they are with whom the covenant is personally and everlastingly established. Neither does election determine the recipients of the blessings of the covenant. Nor does election determine who are saved in and by the covenant.

The accurate—and honest—way of expressing their position would be, "The covenant with its blessings and salvation is outside the sovereign control of predestination." Or, "the blessings and salvation of the covenant are broader, much broader, than election." Or, "the grace of God in the covenant is universal, whereas the grace of election is particular."

The question that the liberators of the covenant from election never answer is, "Whose will then *does* control and determine the covenant?"

A covenant liberated from election necessarily extends the covenant grace of God in Christ to many more than those only who are finally saved by this grace, posits a death of Christ for many members of the covenant who perish in the end, and allows for the falling away of many who were once united to Christ by covenant grace.

These implications of the doctrine of a conditional covenant are boldly proclaimed today as a new orthodoxy for Reformed churches.

That the covenant is determined by election is the apostle's teaching in Galatians 3:16, 29:

Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He saith not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one. And to thy seed, which is Christ.

And if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.

God established His covenant by promise with Christ personally, who is *the* elect, and in Him with those who are Christ's, that is, all those whom the Father gave to Christ in the decree of election (John 17:6ff.).

On this biblical basis, to the utter confounding of all the Presbyterians who join in the hue-and-cry that "the covenant is not to be identified with election" the Westminster Larger Catechism declares that "the covenant of grace was made with Christ as the second Adam, and in him with all the elect as his seed" (Q. and A. 31). This is clear. This is decisive. This is the truth. And this is authoritative for all Presbyterian officebearers.

Christ is the head of the covenant of grace, as the comparison between Adam and Christ in Romans 5:12ff. implies. "Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that

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\* This is the text of the speech given at the convocation exercises of the Protestant Reformed Seminary on September 4, 2002. The first six installments appeared in the issues of the *Standard Bearer* immediately preceding this one. The speech has been significantly revised and expanded for publication.



all have sinned.... Therefore as by the offence of one judgment came upon all men to condemnation; even so by the righteousness of one the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life" (Rom. 5:12, 18). If Christ is the head of the covenant, then the establishment of the covenant, the blessings of the covenant, and the salvation of the covenant are determined by election.

It is precisely the point of the apostle in Romans 9:6ff. that God's covenant salvation in the Old Testament had its source in, and was determined by, God's election. God's covenant mercy was particular: "I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy" (v. 15). It was freely bestowed only on the children of the promise, who alone were counted by God for the seed of Abraham: "The children of the promise are counted for the seed" (v. 8). And the children of the promise, that is, those descendants of Abraham to whom alone the promise was given and who were begotten spiritually by the power of the promise, were determined by election (vv. 10-18).

Whenever in the history of the church the gospel of grace has been corrupted, the cause has been fear or hatred of sovereign, particular, gracious election.

### **A Universal, Ineffectual Promise**

The third way in which the doctrine of a conditional covenant implies universal, conditional grace, and thus is responsible for the destruction of the gospel of grace that is underway in conservative Reformed circles today, is its teaching of a universal, conditional promise. According to the conditional covenant, God directs His gracious covenant promise to all baptized persons alike, if not to all who hear the preaching of the gospel. The meaning is not that all hear the promise. But God on His part promises to every baptized person alike that He will be his God, that He incorporates him into

Christ and the covenant, and that He will save him.

United Reformed minister John Barach spoke for the movement and, in reality, for those who hold a conditional covenant when he said that baptism is God's promise to every baptized person that he is an elect.

This covenant promise is grace. Given to all, it is grace to all.

But the gracious covenant promise depends for its fulfillment upon the condition of faith. Depending as it does upon the condition of faith, and even upon the works of faith, the gracious promise of the covenant fails of fulfillment in multitudes of instances.

The source of Norman Shepherd's total reconstruction, and complete destruction, of creedal Calvinism, indeed historic Protestantism, is his covenant doctrine. The heart of his covenant doctrine is the teaching that the covenant consists of two parts, a gracious promise and the condition of faith. The gracious promise, made to many more than only those who are finally saved, is God's part. The condition of believing is man's part. Man's part is not of grace. And upon man's doing his part, God's part depends.

No one can examine this doctrine in the light of the Canons of Dordt and come to any other conclusion than that the doctrine is Arminianism applied to the covenant.

This aspect of the conditional covenant, namely, a general promise that depends on the condition of faith, the apostle denies in Romans 9:6ff. The perishing of many Israelites in the Old Testament and the perishing of many baptized members of the visible church today do not indicate that "the word of God hath taken none effect." The word of God is the covenant promise. This promise was not given to every Is-

raelite. It is not given today to everyone who hears the gospel, or who is baptized. The covenant word of promise concerns, and is directed to, "Israel," that is, the true covenant people of God according to election. Though heard by them, and rejected, the covenant word of promise does not concern, nor is it directed by God to, those who are only "of Israel," that is, the reprobate who live in the sphere of the covenant.

The covenant promise did not fail, though many physical children of Abraham went lost in unbelief.

The gracious covenant promise is particular and unconditional. As such, and only as such, it is effectual. It establishes the covenant. It maintains the covenant. It begets its own children: "children of the promise." It works faith in its children *by* (not: *because of*) which it can bestow, and the children can embrace, Christ and all the blessings of the covenant. It bestows the blessings of the covenant. And it saves every member of the covenant.

The gracious, almighty covenant promise, that is, the Word of God, does all these things in the power of the Holy Spirit.

The covenant promise depends upon nothing in the covenant people.

But the covenant people depend upon the covenant promise.

A general, conditional covenant promise, on the other hand, is ineffectual. It is weak. It is as weak as the sinner upon whom it depends. It cannot establish the covenant with a man, or, if it does, it cannot maintain the covenant. It cannot bestow the blessings of the cov-

enant upon a man, or, if it does, it cannot assure their continuance. It cannot save the members of the covenant, or, if it does begin to save, it cannot preserve them in salvation. A gracious covenant

*A gracious covenant promise that is general and conditional is quite "un-sovereign."*

promise that is general and conditional is quite “un-sovereign.” Contemporary defenders of a conditional covenant are making this very clear.

What this doctrine of universal, conditional, losable grace in the (breakable) covenant does to the assurance of salvation is dreadful. It destroys all assurance. Are you object of the gracious promise of God today? No matter; tomorrow, you may be object of His just curse. Are you in living communion with Christ as a baptized member of the church today? It means nothing; tomorrow, you may be cut off. Are you elect today? Never mind; tomorrow, you may be reprobate. But this is the subject of another series of editorials.

### **Rooting Out the Heresy**

The contemporary movement in reputedly conservative Reformed and Presbyterian churches denying justification by faith alone and attacking all the doctrines of grace is logical development of the theory of a conditional covenant. Therefore, it cannot be opposed, not effectively, except by the repudiation of a conditional covenant.

There are theologians who are condemning the movement, although they are few. The silence of most Reformed theologians and churches — silence in the face of one of the gravest threats to the gospel of grace since Dordt! — is deafening. But the theologians who do speak out mostly limit themselves to the error of denying justification by faith alone. They do not get to the root of the evil. They cannot. With the rare exception, they are themselves committed to a conditional covenant.

One of two things will happen.

The theologians and the churches may reexamine their confession of a conditional covenant. Pray God this is the outcome! Then, Reformed theologians and churches will at last seriously confront these questions: Is the covenant conditional, that is, depen-

dent on what the sinner does? Is the promise of the covenant directed in grace to all alike, depending for its realization on the sinner? Is the covenant independent of election? Is the covenant breakable in the sense that God establishes it with a man by gracious promise so that he has the life and benefits of the covenant in his heart, but because of unbelief and disobedience loses the covenant in the end?

If the Reformed churches face these questions, they will also be led to consider whether the covenant is not a warm, living relation of love, rather than a cold contract; whether the covenant in Scripture is not itself the highest good — the very blessedness of salvation—rather than a mere means to some other end; and whether Christ is not the head of the covenant of grace.

Or, the outcome of the present development of a conditional covenant will be that Reformed and Presbyterian churches succumb to the movement and are destroyed as Reformed churches altogether.

### **“... and the Protestant Reformed Seminary”**

What has this contemporary debate over the covenant to do with the Protestant Reformed Seminary?

Much in every way!

At this crucial hour for the gospel of grace, the Protestant Reformed Churches are called to confess, explain, and defend the unconditional covenant. The defense must include exposure and condemnation of the doctrine of a conditional covenant.

The Protestant Reformed Seminary has a vital role in this calling because it trains men as pastors and teachers.

Certain reputedly conservative Reformed and Presbyterian seminaries are fountainheads of the new departure from the gospel of grace. One of them has been a fountainhead of this grievous error for the

past thirty or more years (see Mark W. Karlberg, “The Changing of the Guard: Westminster Theological Seminary in Philadelphia,” The Trinity Foundation, 2001).

Inasmuch as the present attack on the gospel of sovereign grace, centering on justification by faith alone, roots in a conditional covenant, one seminary in all the world, so far as I know, equips preachers of the gospel to resist the modern assault on sovereign grace. One seminary instructs ministers of the Word and sacraments in the truth of the unconditional covenant. One seminary prepares men both to teach the unconditional covenant and to warn against the doctrine of a conditional covenant.

I am emphatically not saying, nor suggesting, nor implying, that at this critical hour for the Reformed faith — the very gospel recovered by the sixteenth century Reformation of the church — everything depends on us. In fact, *nothing* depends on us. This is the humbling, yet liberating, implication of the truth of the unconditional covenant. All depends on the faithful God, who having made His covenant with His chosen, Jesus Christ, will keep it. All depends on the God of truth, who, having sworn unto David His servant, will fulfill His promise (Ps. 89).

Nevertheless, as the seminary God has made us by the Word and through our unique tradition, we have a high privilege and a solemn duty on behalf of, and in, the covenant of grace. We professors are called to teach the unconditional covenant. The students must learn the truth of the covenant so that they can hand it over to believers and their children in sermons and catechism instruction. The Theological School Committee is required to see that this teaching and learning take place. The congregations are obligated to support this work and avail themselves of it.

In this way, a witness goes out,



in all kinds of ways, especially to the world of Reformed and Presbyterian churches. It may be that some will now hear the Protestant Reformed testimony to the unconditional covenant. Who knows, as Mordecai asked of Esther, whether we are "come to the kingdom for such a time as this"? It may also

be the case that at this late date in history, when the rot of apostasy has reached the vitals of the best of the Reformed and Presbyterian churches, there is continued resistance and even increased hostility.

The result is in God's will.

Let us do our work. Let us make our witness, whether men

hear or forbear.

As for us, let us seek salvation for ourselves, our children, and our grandchildren in the God of the unconditional covenant, the God of grace.

And give Him, Him *only*, the glory.

— DJE 

## Letters

### The Unconditional Covenant and God's Love for Reprobates

I like to know what position you take on the question of God's love for reprobates. In reading about the unconditional covenant in the February 15, 2003 issue of the *Standard Bearer*, I am not clear about your position. What do the Reformed standards have to say on this question?

Jerry Allie  
Statesville, NC

#### Response:

The doctrine of the unconditional covenant teaches that God, in pure grace and on the basis of the (limited) atonement of the cross of Christ, establishes His covenant

with the elect in Christ, and with them only. The foundation and source in God of His covenant with sinful men and women is His love for them, the love that chose them in the eternal decree of election.

God does not love the reprobates, whom in hatred He has eternally appointed to damnation.


That God does not love the reprobates who are born to believing parents and who have the sign of the covenant is the plain teaching of Romans 9:13: "Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated."

No Reformed or Presbyterian confession teaches a love of God for the reprobates.

All teach the hatred of God for the reprobates. The Westminster

Confession of Faith is representative. Having taught in 3.5 that God chose some persons to salvation "out of his mere free grace and love," Westminster confesses in Article 7 that God passed by and ordained the others to dishonor and wrath for their sin, *withholding His mercy (love) from them as He pleases*.

It would be quite a revelation if defenders of a conditional covenant made with all alike were thus frankly to answer your question. "Does God love the reprobates with whom He (conditionally) establishes His covenant? Does God love them, not, of course, with a 'common grace' kind of love, but with the love of the covenant?"

— Ed. 

## Feature Article

Rev. Angus Stewart

### The Real Saint Patrick (2) Patrick's Life

Leading twentieth century Patrician scholars reckon that he was born between c. 389 and c. 415 and that his death was between c. 460 and c. 493. They estimate Patrick lived be-

tween seventy and seventy-eight years. Many reckon that he was buried in or near Downpatrick, Co. Down. His mission in Ireland occurred between 430 at the earliest and 490 at the latest, and lasted at least thirty years. Augustine of Hippo's dates are 354-430, and the Roman Empire fell in 476. If we think of Patrick laboring in Ireland

from the death of Augustine to the fall of Rome and perhaps beyond, we shall not be far wrong. Thus he stands at or near the fall of the old world and the beginning of the dark ages. But it is doubtful how much he knew of Augustine or of Odoacer's conquest of Rome, for he was on the very periphery of the then-known world.<sup>1</sup>

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



What of his family? Patrick was born into a family with ecclesiastical connections. His father, Calpornius, was a deacon, and his paternal grandfather, Potitus, was a presbyter or elder (*Conf* 1). Hanson writes,

We should not be surprised that both Patrick's father and grandfather were clergy; clerical marriage was countenanced in one form or another well into the Middle Ages, indeed as late as the eleventh century, and in Patrick's day carried no particular stigma.<sup>2</sup>

Patrick's father was a member of the local town council responsible for raising taxes to finance local government under the administrative system of the Roman Empire. He also owned an estate. Thus he was a member of one of the higher stratas of Roman British society. In keeping with his relatively high station in life, Patrick speaks of "the men and women servants of my father's house" and refers to his own "worldly position" and "aristocratic status" (*Letter* 10).

Patrick did not live in one of the major population centers but in "the village of Bannavem Taberniae" (*Conf* 1). We are unsure of its location but it seems safest to conclude that it was on or near the west coast of Britain, either in Scotland, Wales, or England. This was the most accessible region to Irish pirates, and it was through one of their plunderous raids that the sixteen-year-old Patrick, "almost a beardless boy," found himself a slave on Irish soil (*Conf* 1, 10).

Patrick, the young Briton, was sold as a slave by his captors and, like many other men used in the gathering and preservation of the church, was employed for a time as a shepherd (*Conf* 16). This must have been quite a change for Patrick. Hanson opines that Patrick was "perhaps spoiled" and "certainly waited on by servants."<sup>3</sup> Now he was a servant not a master. He experienced many long nights "in the woods or on the

mountain ... in snow and frost and rain" (*Conf* 16). He was also a stranger in a strange land, for Ireland was to him "an outlandish nation" (*Letter* 10).

It is at this point that we gain an insight into Patrick's spiritual condition. Although he was brought up in a covenant home, he had not yet believed in the God of his fathers. Patrick speaks of the days before his Irish captivity: "I was not a believer in the living God, and had not been since my infancy, but I lay in death and disbelief.... Then I used to take no thought even for my own [salvation]" (*Conf* 27-28). At the time of his kidnapping he confesses, "I did not then know the true God" (*Conf* 1). He was converted to God when a slave in Ireland (*Conf* 2). As an old man looking back on his life, he understood that his Irish captivity was God's chastening him on account of his sins (*Conf* 1-3).

Patrick, however, was able to escape. Following the guidance of a dream, he journeyed some 200 miles (*Conf* 17) to a coastal town, where he managed to board a ship. A few years later in Britain, Patrick received another dream.

I saw in a vision of the night a man coming apparently from Ireland whose name was Victorinus, with an unaccountable number of letters, and he gave me one of them and I read the heading of the letter which ran, "The Cry of the Irish [*Vox Hiberionacum*]," and while I was reading aloud the heading of the letter I was imagining that at that very moment I heard the voice of those who were by the wood of Voclut which is near the Western Sea, and this is what they cried with one voice, "Holy boy, we are asking you to come and walk among us again," and I was deeply struck to the heart and I was not able to read any further and at that I woke up (*Conf* 23).<sup>4</sup>

Patrick became a deacon (*Conf* 27) and then a missionary bishop in Ireland.

Roman Catholic scholars have been especially interested in arguing that Patrick received his theological training in Lerins in southern France. This would make it easier for them to unite him to the Roman pontiff. However, Christine Mohrmann, in her 1961 lectures at the Dublin Institute for Advanced Studies, pointed out, "There is nothing in [Patrick's] language which supports the tradition of a prolonged personal contact with Lerins or with any form of Continental monasticism." She notes that the key traits of Continental monastic writings, such as special monastic terms and very frequent reference to the Psalms and demonology, are missing from Patrick's writings.<sup>5</sup>

Patrick did, however, visit France (*Conf* 43; cf. 32); that much is clear. But he was a British bishop sent by the church of mainland Britain to Ireland. Hanson's conclusion bears repeating:

The internal evidence from Patrick's own writing compels us to realize that he was educated for the ministry in Britain, spent his ministry between ordination and

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1. Patrick's *Confession*, though having a title very similar to Augustine's *Confessions*, gives no evidence of inspiration from the African church father. Cahill writes, "Patrick himself probably never heard of Augustine ... and if he did hear of him he undoubtedly never read him" (*op. cit.*, p. 114).

2. Hanson, *op. cit.*, p. 77.

3. Hanson, *op. cit.*, p. 36.

4. It would appear that the Wood of Voclut was the region where Patrick labored as a shepherd. Its location depends on whether the Western Sea is to be understood as west with respect to Ireland (the Atlantic Ocean) or west with respect to Britain (the Irish Sea).

5. Christine Mohrmann, *The Latin of Saint Patrick* (Dublin: Dublin University Press, 1961), pp. 45-46.




the mission to Ireland in Britain, was in fact wholly the product of the British Church, and that later tradition, which sends him with such imaginative abandon to Lerins or to Auxerre or to Rome or to an island in the Tyrrhenian sea, must be discounted.<sup>6</sup>

His thirty years or more of labor in Ireland saw much fruit. Paganism was dealt a mighty blow. Human sacrifice was all but finished. "Within [Patrick's] lifetime or soon after his death," writes Thomas Cahill, "the Irish slave trade came to a halt, and other forms of violence, such as murder and intertribal warfare, decreased."<sup>7</sup> Paganism was not,

however, completely vanquished. One merely has to think of the abiding place of fairies and leprechauns in Irish thought.

Patrick writes of "large numbers" and "so many thousands" of converts (*Letter 2; Conf 14, 50*), with not a few from amongst the ruling classes. Patrick even takes the time to tell us of the baptism of "one blessed Irish woman, an aristocrat of noble race very beautiful and of full age" (*Conf 42*).<sup>8</sup> At his death the church in Ireland had been well established in many parts of the island and was served by the many officebearers he and others had ordained. Some form of monastic life had also taken

root. The church of Jesus Christ in Ireland, in whose formation Patrick was instrumental, was to play a vital role in the evangelization of many parts of Europe in the dark ages after the fall of the Roman Empire. Next time we shall consider the gospel that Patrick preached, D.V. 

6. Hanson, *op. cit.*, p. 31.

7. Cahill, *op. cit.*, p. 110.

8. This reference to the attractive appearance of a female baptismal candidate is not the sort of thing one finds often in the writings of the Ante-Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers.

## All Around Us

Rev. Kenneth Koole

### ■ Relentless Pressure to Make True Freedom of Choice Unlawful

As we mentioned in a previous installment, there is progression in evil. The Evil One, as he plots his strategy, moves his pieces square by square with his sights set squarely on eventually getting at the church. In harmony with this strategy, the political liberals are in the process of pursuing legal concessions that in the end will give them the right to curtail sharply religious freedoms for this nation's citizenry and, ultimately, to place restraints on the church's right to govern her own affairs. David Limbaugh, affiliated with the Creators Syndicate, Inc., alerts us to an interesting instance of this in connection with the legal controversy in which the Boy Scouts organization has been embroiled

over the last few years, namely, the right to exclude homosexuals from serving as Scout leaders.

Liberal and pro-gay organizations have been using various ploys to challenge the right of the Boy Scouts to determine their own membership. They are seeking to prevail upon courts to declare such a 'right' as being unconstitutional and discriminatory. To this point they have been unsuccessful. This has not, however, dissuaded various groups of lawyers (which in too many instances have become synonymous with 'liberal to the extreme') from bringing pressure to bear on the courts to reverse these decisions.

Regardless of how one views membership in the Boy Scouts, legal concessions made to those who want to dictate to the Boy Scouts whom they may or may not exclude (on the basis of morality) will have serious repercussions on religious freedom down the road. In an article entitled "Tolerance, Liberal Style," Limbaugh (who also happens to be an attorney) points this out.

It might be easier to stomach liberals sermonizing about tolerance, inclusion and religious freedom if they didn't come to the tolerance table with such thoroughly unclean hands.

Just as the best way to confirm that a pathological liar is lying is to see his lips moving, the surest sign of liberal intolerance in progress is a liberal's denunciation of conservative intolerance. The louder he protests, the more certain you can be of his own culpability.

Two current news stories illustrate the point. One involves liberal mania over the freedom of California judges to associate with the Boy Scouts of America. The other concerns the controversy over President Bush's nomination of a conservative Christian physician to serve on a Food and Drug Administration advisory commission.

(Please note, in this article we are concerned only with the case involving the Boy Scouts.)

Two California bar associations are pressuring the California Supreme Court to amend

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



California's Code of Judicial Conduct to prohibit judges from associating with the Boy Scouts. The Los Angeles Bar Association and the Bar Association of San Francisco claim that if judges affiliate with the Boy Scouts, they will create a perception that they have an anti-homosexual bias.

Why? Because BSA has a policy — ruled legal by the United States Supreme Court — of excluding homosexuals as scout leaders. Presently, the California Judicial Ethics Code prohibits judges from belonging to organizations that practice "invidious discrimination on the basis of race, sex, religion, national origin or sexual orientation."

"Nonprofit youth organizations" are an exception to this rule, but the two bar associations are determined to close this "loop-hole." They are saying, in effect, that California judges should be denied their right to participate in groups whose policies reflect values with which they disagree.

Now notice, as Limbaugh perceptively points out, where this challenge will inevitably lead if adopted as law.

What's the difference between affiliation with the Boy Scouts and membership in a church that not only excludes homosexuals as pastors but openly condemns homosexual behavior as sinful? You can be sure there are plenty of such churches. Does that mean that California judges should not be allowed to be members of those churches lest they give the impression that they may carry the church's values (biases) into the courtroom?

You can dress this up however you want to, but what this boils down to is militant liberal thought police trying forcibly to impose their secular values on our society. If you dispute this, then tell me whether you think these groups or others like them, would be in favor, for example, of barring the judges' membership in "gay"-rights organizations. Couldn't an argument just as reasonably be made that a judge's af-

filiation with such organizations would create a perception of his anti-Christian bias?

No, these groups are not champions of tolerance, inclusion or religious freedom, but a certain set of politically correct values. And if you don't share those values, you will not be tolerated, included or accorded religious freedom, much less freedom of choice or association.

This is perceptive. This is frightening. Even should those who are challenging the right of an organization such as the Boy Scouts to "discriminate" on the basis of ethics (excluding from membership due to behavior defined as sinful) be defeated this time, the reality is, it is this mentality of intolerance of freedom of religion and conscience that is gaining the day and that is going to prevail in the end. In time, not only will one be prevented from being a judge if one belongs to an organization (a church) that discriminates against various sinful "lifestyles," but pressure will be brought to bear upon every work-place that dares hire those who are members of such "intolerant, bigoted organizations." The days are coming. The handwriting is on the wall.

### ■ A Casino Coming to Your Area Soon

Recently approval of building a local casino has been a lively issue in the West Michigan area. Actually, it is now all but a foregone conclusion — a casino to be built with state approval; and that despite the citizens of the area who opposed the project, followed the lawful way all the way to the state legislature, and secured a favorable vote to prohibit building said casino in the area. It did not matter. Those in power have ways and means to dismiss the will of the people and to impose their own will. Some Indian tribe will get its wish to build a casino in our "backyard." They are an "oppressed mi-

nority," after all. What exactly is oppressive about keeping their casinos out of a given area is another question. But this is becoming common practice across this great land of ours.

Be that as it may, it might be well to remind ourselves of the sinfulness of gambling and its attending evils. Gambling has become an American way of life, from the local convenience store to the gas pump. Lotto tickets anyone? Ronald A. Reno, in an article entitled "Gambling's Impact on Families" (on *CitizenLink*, a web site of Focus on the Family), points out what deeply rooted evils the sin of gambling begets. We do well to be warned.

The tragedy of gambling addiction reaches far beyond the more than 15 million Americans who are problem or pathological gamblers. Employers, work associates, friends, and taxpayers often pay a steep price as well. However, it is family members who bear the brunt of the pain and misery that accompanies this addiction. In addition to material deprivations, family members frequently experience the trauma of divorce, child abuse and neglect, and domestic violence.

#### Divorce:

\* In a survey of nearly 400 Gambler Anonymous members, 28 percent reported being either separated or divorced as a direct result of their gambling problems.

\* The number of divorces in Harrison County, Mississippi, has nearly tripled since the introduction of casinos. The county, which is home to ten casinos, has averaged an additional 850 divorces per year since casinos arrived.

\* A nationwide survey undertaken for the National Gambling Impact Study Commission found that "respondents representing 2 million adults identified a spouse's gambling as a significant factor in a prior divorce...."

#### Child Abuse and Neglect:

\* In Indiana, a review of the



state's gaming commission records revealed that 72 children were found abandoned on casino premises during a 14-month period.

\* Cases of child abandonment at Foxwoods, the nation's largest casino in Ledyard, Conn., became so commonplace that authorities were forced to post signs in the casino's parking lots warning parents not to leave children in cars unattended....

#### **Domestic Violence:**


\* According to the National Research Council, studies indicate that between one quarter and one half of spouses of compulsive gamblers have been abused.

\* Domestic violence shelters on Mississippi's Gulf Coast reported increases in requests for assistance ranging from 100 to 300 percent after the introduction of casinos.

\* A University of Nebraska Medical Center study concluded that problem gambling is as much a risk factor for domestic violence as alcohol abuse....

And the beat goes on. What galls one about this whole matter is that our society and its politicians are well aware of these studies with their alarming findings. Yet they continue to approve the building of casinos left and right. These are the same men who for their own political ends can fume about the evils of big tobacco companies with sanctimonious concern for their fellow man. Yet they blithely ignore the statistics that expose the even greater dangers and evils of the gambling industry. If these same evils showed themselves every time a certain Sunday School program estab-

lished itself in an area, you may be sure such would be shut down within a week and inspectors would be visiting local churches to make sure none was teaching this curriculum behind closed doors. The media would be relentless in its scathing exposés of the evil loose in the land. But when it comes to gambling casinos, not a word. Why not? Because gambling is a vice and satisfies a sinful appetite. Satisfaction of carnal appetites is something our society will not deny itself, no matter who is damaged and destroyed. To engage in sinful, anti-biblical behavior is an inalienable right, after all. Much like homosexuality and abortion, for all their attendant evils. Ask almost any lawyer loose in the land.

The hypocrisy of it all. 

*Go Ye Into All the World*

*Rev. Jason Kortering*

## *Mission Preaching in the Established Church (2)*

# *The Biblical Perspective of the Local congregation (concl.)*

**H**aving set forth different views of the congregation and the problems associated with them, we now turn to the correct view, which is called the "organic" view of the church. This term was coined by Herman Hoeksema, especially in his book *Believers and Their Seed*. Let's allow him to speak for himself as we quote a short segment from this work. We begin on page 114.

God's people in this world are pictured to us in nature as a plant, of which some of the branches bear fruit and others do not. You are acquainted with such plants. Think, for example, of our well-known tomato plant. You have there an organism, growing out of one root. The entire organism is called by the name of the fruit-bearing plant. As such, it is fertilized; as such, it receives rain and sunshine. But when presently the organism of that plant has developed, then you discover that there are nevertheless two kinds of branches shooting forth on that one plant. There are fruit-bearing

branches; but there, between them, you also find suckers, which indeed draw their life-sap out of the plant, but which never bear any fruit. Such shoots and suckers are then also cut out, in order that the good branches may bear more fruit. Thus it is with many plants. Thus it is also, for example, with the cucumber or with the grapevine. And in this you have the Scriptural figure of the people of God as they exist in the world. God forms His covenant people in the line of believers and their seed. As such, they manifest the figure of such an organic whole. He, then, who would refuse to call that

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



people by the name of the people of God, he who would refuse to address them as God's people, he who would refuse to assure them as God's people of the riches of God's promises in Christ, he who would refuse to point them as God's people to their calling as those who are of the party of the living God in the midst of the world, but who would rather treat them as a mixed multitude, without any spiritual character or stamp – that man would surely err sorely. Yet on the other hand, he who would think that he may presuppose that there are absolutely no unregenerate and reprobate individuals among that people, and who therefore would refuse to proclaim woe as well as weal to them if they do not walk in the paths of God's covenant, that man would err just as sorely. No, that entire people must be addressed, treated, comforted, and admonished as the Israel of God. And yet, at the same time, you may never forget that not all is Israel that is called Israel. There are branches which never bear fruit, which bring forth wild fruit, and which are presently cut off.

This organic view of the church relates not only to the local congregation, but also to the church throughout the entire world. She is to be viewed as one organic whole, living out of Jesus Christ and in Him bearing much fruit. At the same time, she is not the church triumphant but the church militant, still doing battle against sin and death, without and within. Therefore, it is proper that whether the established church is within a mission setting such as Singapore, or within a mature denomination such as the Protestant Reformed Churches in America, the pastor views his congregation in this manner.

The Bible sheds abundant light upon this subject.

The prophet Isaiah used this language in Isaiah 5:1-7:

Now will I sing to my well-beloved a song of my beloved touch-

ing his vineyard. My well beloved hath a vineyard in a very fruitful hill: And he fenced it, and gathered out the stones thereof, and planted it with the choicest vine, and built a tower in the midst of it, and also made a winepress therein: and he looked that it should bring forth grapes, and it brought forth wild grapes. And now, O inhabitants of Jerusalem, and men of Judah, judge, I pray you, betwixt me and my vineyard. What could have been done more to my vineyard that I have not done in it? Wherefore, when I looked that it should bring forth grapes, brought it forth wild grapes? And now, go to: I will tell you what I will do to my vineyard; I will take away the hedge thereof, and it shall be eaten up; and break down the wall thereof, and it shall be trodden down: And I will lay it waste: it shall not be pruned, nor digged; but there shall come up briars and thorns: I will also command the clouds that they rain no rain upon it. For the vineyard of the Lord of hosts is the house of Israel, and the men of Judah his pleasant plant: and he looked for judgment, but behold oppression; for righteousness, but behold a cry.

Even though Israel/Judah had apostatized and made themselves ready for judgment, yet God approaches her as "my well-beloved." For among them rest the remnant of grace out of whose body shall come forth the promised Messiah.

The Lord Jesus uses the same approach in His ministry. This is found in John 15:1-6:

I am the true vine, and my Father is the husbandman. Every branch in me that beareth not fruit he taketh away: and every branch that beareth fruit, he purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit. Now ye are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you. Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me. I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth

forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing. If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered; and men gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned.

Here He pictures the church as a living vine made up of many branches. Some of the branches must be cut off because they do not bear fruit. Others must be pruned so they bear more fruit. The church is viewed as such a vine, upon which the Father as husbandman performs all his work of gathering the fruits.

Paul follows this same example when he refers to the church throughout all of history as an olive tree (cf. Rom. 11:16-27). We will summarize the teaching of the inspired apostle. He sets forth the church as being one church, made up of natural olive branches (believing Jews) and wild olive branches that have been engrafted into the olive tree (believing Gentiles). God is constantly working upon this olive tree by the preaching of the gospel. This activity of God was not to eliminate the Jews. Rather, He included believing Gentiles in this one tree to provoke the Jews to jealousy, so that they might in turn also embrace Jesus Christ, and in this manner both "all Israel is saved" and the "fullness of the Gentiles" is come in. The entire church of all ages, made up of believing Jews and Gentiles, is viewed as the one olive tree.

This explains why the same apostle, in his letters, addressed the churches as "the church of God." See, for example, I Corinthians 1:2: "Unto the church of God which is at Corinth, to them that are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints, with all that in every place call upon the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, both theirs and ours." He was well aware that there were all sorts of problems in this church, and he had to address severely in this letter many erring members. Yet he does not view them as



mixed or lost, but rather as saved in Christ who need to hear the message of the gospel.

In keeping with this biblical teaching, the pastor addresses the congregation at the time of worship as "Beloved in our Lord Jesus Christ." He does not approach them as lost souls, nor as a mixed multitude, nor as all saved, but rather as the church that is in Jesus Christ. Just because that church is still in the midst of this world, it needs the instruction of the truth of salvation. The members must hear over and over again the call to repentance and faith, to convert unto God, to live new and holy lives. Sprinkled throughout all the epistles are exhortations and warnings against sin and a call to repent and believe.

The danger that a preacher who holds to this clear teaching of the Bible faces is that he may draw a wrong conclusion, that he is to preach to the church as those who are saved and secure in Christ, who do not need to hear a call to repent and believe because they are saved already. If this is his view, he would conclude that there is no need for "mission preaching" as we explained it in our former article. Such neglect would have a devastating effect on the local church.

Herman Hoeksema warns against this in his *Reformed Dogmatics*. I quote from pages 654 and 655:

The preaching of the Word in the sphere of the covenant must be both distinctive and upbuilding. It cannot proceed on the assumption that all the children of the covenant, that is, all those that are born in the sphere of and under the covenant, are elect and regenerated. The theory of presumptive regeneration, according to which it is presumed that all the children that are born under the covenant are regenerated, is certainly not Scriptural; not all are Israel that are of Israel; and not the children of the flesh, but the children of the promise are counted for the seed. Nor can it

be said that those who are under the covenant, but who are and remain carnal and never come to saving faith or true conversion, belong to the exceptions. The history of the Old Testament church teaches quite the opposite. Always it was the carnal seed that abounded in the covenant of the old dispensation, and the remnant according to the election of grace was saved. Nor does this appear different when we look at the church of the new dispensation in general. If we consider baptized Christendom as a whole, it would seem that those who have apostatized from the faith are far more numerous than the faithful believers. Always, therefore, there is a carnal seed in the church. And the theory of presumptive regeneration, that presumes that all the children born in the covenant are elect, is not only unscriptural, but it is also dangerous. Dangerous it is, not because, as the popular saying goes, it tends to let the people go to hell with an imaginary heaven: for that is quite impossible, at least where the truth is preached. But the danger is that because it presumes what is not true, according to Scripture, it leaves the carnally minded in the church, and thus the church of Christ is corrupted. And therefore the preaching must be directed not only to the elect, but also to the reprobate; not only to the godly, but also the ungodly. It must be so distinctive that under its influence the reprobate and ungodly cannot remain, but will reveal themselves as haters of the truth of God and His Christ.

Moreover, even the elect and regenerated are not perfect. Even as regards them, there is much flesh in the church. Daily they have to strive with the desires and lusts of the flesh, and must be admonished steadfastly to walk in the way of the covenant, to hate sin, and to fight against it and flee from it.

Therefore, the preaching in the sphere of the covenant must always be distinctive. This does not mean that it must divide the church into elect and reprobate, converted and unconverted, and address them separately. Rather,

it means that the whole church, as it organically exists in the world, must be brought under the influence of the very same preaching. The same Word must be directed to all. All must be exhorted to be converted and to convert themselves, to repent in dust and ashes. All must be admonished continually to walk in the way of sanctification and to live antithetically, as of the party of the living God in the midst of the world. Such preaching will have the result that it is a savor of life for those whom God has chosen unto everlasting salvation, but at the same time a savor of death unto death for the rest. Only under such preaching alone will the church be built up, and believers will be edified.

This same idea is expressed forthrightly in our Heidelberg Catechism, Lord's Day 31. Our purpose in making this reference now is not to go into detail concerning what is to be said. We will consider that in our next article. Rather, we refer to this Lord's Day from the point of view of the congregation needing the keys of the kingdom of heaven. Obviously, the keys of the kingdom are given to the established church, which has officebearers doing their work as assigned by Christ. The two keys of the kingdom include the preaching of the gospel and the exercise of Christian discipline. Notice with me, there are in the local congregation believers who need God's Word. "...according to the command of Christ it is declared and publicly testified to all and every believer, that, whenever they receive the promise of the gospel by a true faith, all their sins are really forgiven...." Added to that is mention of other members of the congregation who are called unbelievers. "...when it is declared and testified to all unbelievers, and such as do not sincerely repent, that they stand exposed to the wrath of God and eternal condemnation...."

From this we conclude that, even though we rejoice in the clear

teaching of the Bible that the church is viewed organically as the people of God, and the pastor ministers to them as such, nevertheless this does not make missionary preaching unnecessary. The unconverted must be called to repent and believe. The pastor must be fully aware of this fact, and therefore his preaching must always be that of a two-edged sword that will cut the hearts of God's people so that they cry out in sorrow and repentance. It will also speak to the unbelievers that they stand exposed to God's wrath and punishment. As we learn in II Corinthians 2:15, the preaching of the gospel will be a sweet savor of Christ in them that are saved and in them that perish.


The established church, whether in a mission setting such as Singapore or in our churches here in America, preach the same gospel. There is only one gospel, that given to us on the pages of the infallible Word of God. That Word is full of exhortations to repent, to forsake evil, to know and embrace the God of creation, to stand by faith at the foot of the cross of Jesus and receive Him as God's Redeemer, the only One

through whom we can become righteous before God. All who truly embrace Jesus as their Savior come to know Him as their Lord. Salvation and holy living go together. One cannot be saved and continue in sin. Rather he forsakes all sin and seeks to walk in a new and holy life with God. We acknowledge that the heart of the gospel is Jesus Christ, and that every sermon must have Christ at its center. This can be true only if we recognize that every sermon must be addressed to sinners who need to be converted to God and come to realize that true liberty in Christ is to be victorious over sin. Thus every sermon beats with the vibrancy of the good news of salvation, which we call here "mission preaching."

This is the idea of Heidelberg Catechism preaching as well. So-called catechism preaching is not limited to an exercise in dogmatic instruction. It is preaching the gospel every Lord's Day. A proper understanding of the threefold knowledge necessary to live and die happily in comfort makes this clear. The threefold knowledge of the catechism makes up the good

news of the gospel. The sins I know Sunday morning when I get up to go to church are the sins that make me miserable that very moment, and I need to hear the gospel of comfort that very morning. Growing in the consciousness of sin is what makes me miserable. The older I get, and the more mature I become, the more I see how terrible my sins are and how impossible it is for me to be saved apart from the love and mercy of a Heavenly Father who gave us His own Son.

My point is this, that if we preach such a gospel in the setting of the established church and God brings a non-Christian or unconverted man off the street, we don't have to change the message or hold a special service for him. He can come anytime into our services and he will hear "mission preaching." There may be differences, in that certain passages are more conducive to this, or that the emphasis may be upon various aspects of our Christian faith, nevertheless, every sermon will have Christ at its center, and with Christ, the good news of the gospel.

We will focus on this a little more in our next article. 

## Search the Scriptures

Rev. Martin VanderWal

# The Hypocrite's Reward

*Take heed that ye do not your alms before men, to be seen of them: otherwise ye have no reward of your Father which is in heaven. Therefore when thou doest thine alms, do not sound a trumpet before thee, as the hypocrites*

*do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may have the glory of men. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward. But when thou doest alms, let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth: That thine alms may be in secret: and thy Father which seeth in secret himself shall reward thee openly.*

Matthew 6:1-4

## Rewarded of Men

**T**hrough the dusty streets of the city echoed the clear note of a trumpet. Though it was not a call to arms or battle, all within hearing left whatever dealings engaged them at the moment. They quickly made their way to the place whence the trumpet beckoned them. In the midst of the gathering throng one man stood apart. Fine clothes adorned

Rev. VanderWal is pastor of Hope Protestant Reformed Church in Redlands, California.



him. His manners bespoke great wealth. In his hand he held a bag of considerable weight. The multitude fell silent, watching this man and his bag. He stepped forward. The bag he opened. Into it he put his hand, drawing out a gold coin. He threw the coin into a great chest arranged to receive his money. How it flashed and glinted in the sunlight! The hand went back into the bag. Another coin drawn out, and cast into the chest. Another coin, then another coin, then another and another. The multitude counted ... 200 solid gold coins!

For days to come that rich man was the talk of the town. His name received the highest honors. An honorable man he must be, to have given such a sum to the poor. The rich man that day gained many friends. Many would go to him, seeking his advice. And the people were certain that God's favor shone upon him.

He received his reward from men. Men gave him glory. Men gave him their praise. They lifted up his name. However, heed the judgment of Christ. "Verily I say unto you, They have their reward." He received all his reward in those praises of men. There was nothing for him from God.

That reward of men was, after all, the goal of this rich man. He was a hypocrite. He had no heart for God. He was not thinking about God at all. Instead, his whole purpose was consumed with men. He had the trumpet blown, the multitude gathered about him, so that they might see him. He wanted the glory of men. As far as this hypocrite was concerned, he received exactly his heart's desire.

How true must be, then, the words of Christ. "Otherwise ye have no reward of your Father which is in heaven." "Verily I say unto you, They have their reward." There is nothing for this hypocrite from God. God has turned away from his so-called worship!

There is another side to the "reward," of course. The wrath of

God rests upon all those who engage in such practices only for show. The reward for such is the reward for all sin. And how much greater is that reward — condemnation — for the hypocrite. Knowing the will of God, following it in its form, and yet doing so with a heart so far from God, must bring awful condemnation. That condemnation is furthered even by his act of almsgiving. He will show his mercy and keep it in connection with his own name. He refuses to connect the name of God with that mercy. Against these hypocrites God must vindicate the glory of His mercy.

What is the hypocrisy of this trumpet-attended almsgiving? It is the horrible combination of external religious service mixed with the desire of human praise. The hypocrite uses religious activities to bring glory to his own name, rather than to bring honor and glory to God. The using of the things of God in the service of men is the hypocrisy. How contrary to the practice of true religion: men serving their God!

However, the point that Christ makes is a kind of equality. What the hypocrite gives in this worship is exactly what he receives. He engages in this form of worship in order to be seen of men. By men he is seen and praised. From men he receives his reward.

### **Rewarded of God**

This same idea of equality must also serve the opposite, the good and the true worship of God. Christ indicates this true worship of God in contrast to the worship of verses 1 and 2. "When thou doest alms, let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth." This is the language of exaggeration. So much must other men be ignorant of the giving of alms, even the giver's own left hand must be ignorant. With this language the point is driven home: "that thine alms may be in secret."

The great divide between

hypocritical and true alms-giving centers in this purpose. The purpose of hypocritical giving is to be seen of men. The purpose of true giving is not to be seen of men. It wholly avoids the sight of men, that God may see.

Why is this so? Surely God does not see only that which is done in secret. He sees the giving of the hypocrite. He takes note. Its wickedness shall be fully revealed at the last day, and the hypocritical giver shall be punished by God.

Rather, we may put the difference this way. Both the hypocrites and the true givers desire someone to see and recognize them and what they do. The hypocrite desires men to see, to recognize, and to reward. The true desires another. He desires God. He desires God to see, to recognize, and to reward. According to that desire, so corresponds the word of Christ: "and thy Father which seeth in secret himself shall reward thee openly."

Therefore, this secret giving of alms is an act of true worship in the kingdom of God. This giving has God's eye upon it. It is the only giving that God sees. It alone is acceptable worship. He beholds it in order to bless it.

The secret giving of alms is blessed by the Lord.

That secret giving is not blessed merely because men do not see it. Nor is it blessed because only God sees it. Those things treat only the formal act. The point is that secret giving demonstrates the condition of one's heart before God. Does this giver worship God in His heart? Were no man to know of his giving, would he still give? In other words, does he give even of his material goods out of his heart, out of love to God who alone seeth in secret?

That secret giving is blessed also because of its deepest root. We look further back than the act of giving, even done in secret. We look to the reason of that giving. It does



not come out of a mercenary motive. He does not give secretly so that the Father alone sees it, and will reward it publicly. He gives secretly because he has received mercy from God. This religious activity has its origin in the heart: love to God kindled by God's first love to the giver. Out of the heart, the hand exercises itself in secret, before God who seeth in secret.

Our Lord Jesus Christ then holds out the end of secret giving. It will be rewarded, and that after a public manner. That reward is blessed indeed. For it is the reward, not of men, but of God. It shall be declared that God was pleased with such giving. He will bring forward the name of the giver: This man! He will declare the gift: This he gave. He will reward the giver with divine approval. All this He will do before all men. That true, spiritual worship God will vindicate. The other, carnal worship, He will condemn.

### **Worship of God**

We must go to the source of this true, spiritual giving. Only when we examine its root are we able to see its praiseworthy character before God.

The hypocritical giving, mentioned first in this passage, is always the giving of the natural man. The hypocrite bears enmity in his heart toward God. Should his gift be only a matter of giving for God's sake, He refuses. He cannot give in secret. He desires no reward from God. He will give to exalt himself even against God. He will strive to believe that He can show mercy, without the mercies of Jesus Christ. Such is the giving of all men by nature. Their giving is sinful, and always merits the wrath of God.

The giving required by the King of the kingdom is a true, spiritual giving. That giving is undertaken only by a spiritual man. He has been born again into the kingdom of God by the Holy Spirit. His eyes have been opened to see God, who has shown him such mercy.

Receiving that mercy of God freely he gives to God. He gladly gives in secret, seeking to please God alone. His desire is not to receive reward from men, their praise. But he desires to receive the reward of God, to know that what He has done is pleasing to Him alone.


The reward, therefore, is a reward of grace. It is public, accomplished before all men. It is given to the one who has given in secret. Ultimately, though, God has crowned His own work in that man. That makes the giving blessed indeed!

True almsgiving is an act of worship of God. Through this almsgiving, God receives the glory, not men. The idea of giving alms we ought to have clearly before us: giving out of the mercies of God toward men. As God has blessed His people with His mercy, so were they to show mercy to others. Out of the abundance God had given to some of His people, so were they to be instruments of God's abundant mercy towards the poor. In true almsgiving the glory of God's mercy is maintained.

There is, therefore, a twofold way in which the mercy of God is known in this true, spiritual almsgiving. The mercy of God is remembered by the one giving alms in secret. Self-promotion and self-glorification are prohibited by the Lord. He must not consider his own work in giving, but must consider the Lord's work to him, the showing of mercy. Second, the mercy of God is shown to the recipient of those alms. Because the giving was in secret, he has no human name and no human face to put with what he received. He is led to the divine name of God, and the light of God's countenance upon him.

The secret giving of alms must ever be nourished for the sake of true religion, that religion of the heart that is acceptable with God. The church in which alms are given must guard its giving, to see that it is done in secret. It must not publish by any means the names of almsgivers. This secret giving must be cherished by the people who give. Hypocrisy must be rebuked and secrecy encouraged among the saints.

### *Questions for Meditation and Further Study:*

1. Compare this passage to Mark 12:41-44, Acts 4:34-5:11, II Corinthians 9:1-7. How do these passages complement and strengthen the teaching of Matthew 6:1-4?
2. How do we tend towards this hypocritical worship? How can we guard against it?
3. Are there practices among us that fall under the condemnation of this passage, e.g., the envelope system for general funds, or contributing to other causes? Why or why not?
4. Is the "reward" identified in verse 4 in conflict with the truth of sovereign grace as it touches our worship? 



# Friend

**I**n the Greek New Testament there are several words that express the idea of love, fondness, affection, or friend; the most common of these words is *philos*. *Philos* is found in many compound forms, giving us lovers of God, lovers of contention, lovers of pleasure, lovers of wisdom, lovers of children, lovers of honor, and lovers of preeminence. We will deal primarily with *philos*, which can have a broad range of meanings, such as friend, associate, or companion, indicating various degrees of closeness.

The Hebrew Old Testament has basically two words that express friendship and affection. One has a wide range of meanings, much as *philos* above. The other is very much restricted in its use to indicate intimate love and a close relation of friendship. We must appreciate these nuances of meaning in the original languages, lest our English translations lead us to a certain amount of confusion and untenable conclusions.

The words we examine here are extremely important to a proper conception of the covenant of grace. It is not an exaggeration to say that there can be no correct understanding of the covenant of God with us and with our children unless Scripture's own emphasis upon friendship is appreciated and included.

First, then, a number of passages that show that there is a natural friendship between members of the human race, and that some-

times the term friend can mean only acquaintance or associate. David was deeply grieved that his own familiar friend had lifted up the heel against him (Ps. 41:9). A whisperer separateth friends, in the church or in the world (Prov. 16:28). Wealth maketh many friends or associates (Prov. 19:4). Business acquaintances are called friends; "Friend, I do these no wrong; didst thou not agree with me for a penny?" (Matt. 20:13). Political friendships are formed for selfish reasons. Pilate and Herod became friends because they discovered that they both hated Jesus and His kingdom (Luke 23:12). The Jews threatened Pilate with the loss of his political appointment, saying, "If thou let this man go, thou art not Caesar's friend" (John 19:12). And, during the famine in Tyre and Sidon, the citizens of that area made Blastus their friend, that the king might supply nourishment (Acts 12:20).

Of more importance to us are the passages that reveal a more intimate, deeper, and lasting kind of friendship. We begin with Abraham, with whom God established His covenant (Gen. 17:7), and whom we know as the father of all believers. God drove out the inhabitants of Canaan, "... and gavest it to the seed of Abraham thy friend for ever" (II Chron. 20:7). Israel is assured of God's help: "But thou, Israel, art my servant, Jacob whom I have chosen, the seed of Abraham my friend" (Is. 41:8). Abraham was called the friend of God (James 2:23) — not once or twice in the Old Testament was he called this, but that was the well-

known, common description of him, so called by believers and unbelievers. And we can add that humble servant of God, Moses, with whom the Lord spoke face to face, "as a man speaketh unto his friend" (Ex. 33:11).

Why were such children of God as Enoch, Noah, Abraham, and Moses the friends of God? Because they walked with God (Gen. 5:22; 6:9), because they believed in God, because all enmity between them and God was removed by Jesus Christ (James 2:23), because God chose them in eternity and loved them (Eph. 1:4, 5), and because God embraced them in His redeemed family as Father. The knowledge of faith regarding such truth is the basis of friendship with God!


Are you a friend of God? Every believer is in the covenant of grace and experiences friendship with God! Jesus is the Friend of publicans and sinners (Luke 7:34). He called Lazarus His friend (John 11:11). Most beautiful of all, in my estimation, is John 15:15: "Henceforth I call you not servants, for the servant knoweth not what his lord doeth: but I have called you friends; for all things that I have heard of my Father I have made known unto you." Clearly, the covenant relation of friendship thrives in the most intimate possible way, upon the basis of knowing God. This is eternal life!

The friendship that we enjoy with God in Jesus Christ is a friendship that we also share with all other believers. The Apostles' Creed calls this the communion of saints. A friend loveth at all times (Prov. 17:17), sticketh closer than a



brother (Prov. 18:24), will point out our sins and faults (Prov. 27:6), and even shows how great his love for us is by being willing to lay down his life for his friends, using Jesus as the example (John 15:13).

Covenant friendship with God implies that we walk antithetically before Him. We are the friends of Jesus according as we keep His commandments, rejecting all that is con-

trary to them. We know that the friendship of the world is enmity with God (James 4:4). As God is light, so we strive to walk with Him as children of light (I John 1:5-7). 

*In His Fear*

*Rev. Richard Smit*

## Both Coins (3)

**W**ould you have given the second coin?

By nature both we and the poor widow of Mark 12:41-44 would have kept the second coin. By nature we do not love God so much that we would have given the second coin. "Me" always comes first. We will try to get away with robbing the Lord's treasury as much as we can, before we will ever be forced to give to it. We will not give sufficiently unless we really have to or unless it comes to the point, for example, that our schoolteachers are starving, or the school will close tomorrow if we do not give today.

How desperately we need the mercy of God to rescue us from robbing His treasury of the means to support the ministry of the gospel, the poor, and the cause of covenant instruction in our homes. How earnestly we need to seek God in humility and repentance for His grace and Spirit to give what is required and to give in true thanksgiving, like the poor widow.

Giving as she did, by the grace of God, means that we fill up the treasury of God. It means that we teach our children and young people to give already when they begin to make an income from odd jobs. We teach them that giving

unto the Lord is not a burden, but a privilege. After all, it is a privilege to give unto the Lord what He has given to us as an undeserved blessing in Jesus Christ.



In that way of faithful giving there is a blessed expectation. Scripture teaches that there is a blessed expectation in giving faithfully to the Lord as illustrated by the poor widow.

Immediately, we in unbelief would object to the truth that there was a blessed expectation for the poor widow in her sacrificial, self-denying, and spiritually complete giving. By nature, we would judge that poor widow as very foolish because the lot of the poor widows in those days was terrible. The widows had not only a very hard life because of their loneliness, but also had a very oppressive life financially. Seeing the poor widow throw in both coins, we would judge her as foolish. She was giving away her daily bread to the temple treasury! She was risking hunger! How could there be any advantage and blessed expectation in that kind of giving? Our old, corrupt nature would judge her as reckless.

However, the fact is that our old corrupt nature is a fool. We say by nature that all our things are "mine." We will give to the Lord on our own terms according to our own wisdom. We behave

most often like a spiritually greedy octopus: clinging with all our arms and tentacles to all our possessions, not willing to let even one penny go, except for our own vainglory and pride.

We are prone constantly to ignore willingly that all our possessions are the Lord's, and that all our coins, right down to the last two pennies, are not our own, but belong unto the Lord. We are required to use them as good stewards, and be ready to give them unto the Lord cheerfully, faithfully, liberally, sacrificially, and in humble gratitude unto the Lord.

To do that requires the painful death of the old man of sin, because it is impossible for us to see the wisdom and blessedness in the poor widow's giving. For that painful death of our covetous old man of sin, we stand in absolute need of the Spirit and grace of our Lord Jesus Christ to purify us in that life of giving even our last two coins, if necessary, in gratitude to our God.

Then, by the Spirit's work in our hearts, we learn the heavenly wisdom of true, faithful giving. The man of wisdom understands the necessity of the financial sacrifices needed to maintain our own parental, covenant schools for the instruction of our covenant youth in the fear of Jehovah. He realizes that the world calls such giving an oppressive bondage and financial suicide, but he regards that spiri-

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*Rev. Smit is pastor of the Protestant Reformed Church in Doon, Iowa.*

tual sacrifice for the covenant seed as a duty, a privilege, and a spiritual investment. Therefore, he sows his seeds liberally. He casts his bread liberally upon the water. He gives in true thanksgiving unto the Lord, knowing that he shall inherit the earth and that he and his spiritual seed are heirs to a spiritual fortune whose wealth cannot be calculated. The man of wisdom gives with his heart in the assurance that he and his seed will possess very soon the full wealth and glory of the Lord in His everlasting kingdom in the heavenly Canaan.

That is the blessed expectation upon which we set our eyes of faith as we truly give unto the Lord in our worship.



In that expectation, the poor widow could expect confidently that the Father would continue to provide for her in this life. She expected that the Father would provide her daily bread. She did not worry about her daily bread. She was given the spiritual courage to trust in the Lord completely, not only for her salvation, but also for her daily bread. When having to part with that second coin, she in her faith did not worry about hunger, starvation, or death. She gave willingly and did not fret about tomorrow. To paint her contentment and trust in modern terms, we would say that she did not worry when giving both coins that her electricity would be turned off, that the telephone service would be cut off, or that she might have to go through the day with one less meal.

Yet, that is exactly what we sinfully worry about.

We worry about what will happen to us if we give too much. Part of the problem is that we expect to have certain things in life. We have become so accustomed to the affluence of our day, that we expect a certain level of living as though we have a right to certain

kinds of possessions and a right to a certain amount of possessions. On that basis, we worry that we will give too much and then be left with not enough for ourselves. We worry sinfully that we will have to forgo the savings account or spend the retirement funds to support the kingdom causes. In that worry we are prone to hold on to that second coin as long as we can. We are prone, for example, with respect to the church budget to calculate to the last penny what is our share of the budget so that we do not pay a penny over our share, even though we may have the God-given means at our disposal to give much more. We think we have to make sure that we have enough first.

But, that is wrong. By doing so, we are not only robbing God of the gifts that we should be giving freely and liberally, but most importantly we are robbing Him of the thanksgiving and honor due His name. The sinful hesitancy in giving what God demands and what God deserves at the offering plate is not according to the example of the poor widow. That's not the kind of life of gratitude to which Christ has redeemed us. We have been redeemed unto that life of gratitude and called unto that kind of giving as stated in Malachi 3:10, "Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in mine house, and prove me now herewith, saith the LORD of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it."



It is upon that promise that the faith of the poor widow stood. That is true because true faith always stands upon the promises of God and in obedience to the commands of the Lord.

The Lord commands us to seek His kingdom even in our giving. We are called to seek God's king-


dom by our faithful giving in worship. We are called to seek the kingdom of God by supporting the ministry of the gospel and the seminary. We must see to it that the poor, whom we always have with us, are properly supported. We must seek the kingdom by maintaining our own parental, distinctively Reformed, Christian schools for the faithful instruction of our covenant youth. We must seek the kingdom of God by procuring the necessary earthly means for the support of these things and then seek the Lord's wisdom to be wise and good stewards of the earthly means God gives us. The bottom line, however, is that the kingdom of Christ must come first in our hearts and minds. Our obligations to these things must be first and foremost. The treasury of the Lord must be first.

When we seek His kingdom first, the Lord promises that He will add all these other things unto us. He will provide us with our daily bread. He will provide us with the earthly means for the maintenance of the gospel and the instruction of the generations after us in His fear.

The Lord will not let His promise go unfulfilled. He will not forsake you, for Christ's sake. He will provide all that you need in body and soul. And, most importantly, He is pleased to bless you through those earthly means for the sake of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Appreciating that salvation in the shed blood of Christ which God has freely given us and in which He has established us, we will cheerfully and faithfully labor to give freely and thankfully in love to the Lord and for His glory. That is learned in the way of daily conversion by the work of the Lord's Spirit.

The fruit of His work is the giving of both coins in His fear, like the poor widow.

May the Lord by His grace so work that in us more and more unto His glory. 



# Dating and the Deep Blue Sea... and the Way of Christ (7)

**I**n the March 15 issue of the *Standard Bearer*, "Grace Life" elaborated upon these seven theses of covenant marrying:

1. The father of the Christian home must earnestly endeavor to know who his children are to marry.
2. Father's knowledge of God is crucial for the father's superintending the marriage of his children.
3. The godly father will seek to know God's will for a mate for his children through his knowledge of families.
4. Mates will be pursued in the church.
5. The church will be actively involved in the marrying of the children of the church.
6. There are things covenant men must know and be *first* if they will know God's will for marriage.
7. Godly men will reflect Christ in their preparation for marriage and pursuit of a maid.

For explanations of these theses I refer the reader to the last *Standard Bearer*. For the rest, read on!

8. A godly woman will be as Christ's Church in receiving a man who comes as Christ.

**Explanation:** A virtuous woman—who can find her (Prov. 31:10)? As rare as faith, these days, I fear. But where there is grace there is virtuosity, though it be only a small beginning...*in women.*

All her life the godly girl and then woman, guided by her parents, cultivates in herself and in her life this virtue. It is a constant cultivation. It is a difficult cultivation. For virtue does not naturally grow, and thrive. Vices do, as so many weeds, thorns, and thistles. Pleading God's mercy, relying on God's mercy, God's women, godly women will make *virtue* their beauty. This goal of this kind of beauty, because of their love for God, and their love to show His loveliness, will be their prayer life. To be virtuously beautiful will be why they read the Bible. Their growth, their education, their use of their talents, their relationships are all to bear witness to the truth of the sanctified body, the Holy Spirit enlightened mind, the time that is our gift for Christ's service, friendships in the Lord. And all of the godliness, the faith, the grace, the joy, the cheerfulness, the kindness, the purity, the righteousness, the winsomeness, the longsuffering these women beauties show is thus to show off the beautiful Savior, the fairest among ten thousand, our Lord Jesus.

This relentless, this sacrificial, this all-consuming pursuit and cul-

tivation of virtue is necessary for, and the privilege of, any member of the body of Christ. It is also vital for the woman's attracting no Casanova, but one who is as Christ. And it is for her preparation to picture the church in her marriage — adorned and bedecked with the ornaments and jewels of the Savior-Husband's own beauty (Ezek. 16:8ff.; Eph. 5).

Especially meekness and patience and quietness will mark this woman as she waits on God, to know and to do His will concerning marriage. These virtues will, indeed, be her adornment, even as a young maid (I Pet. 3:1-4). They will serve her well in her submission to her lord husband. They will distinguish her present single life from wilting Esmeralda's secret life of desperation and from loud and aggressive hot-lips Hoolahan, and *as a blessed, virtuous, and peaceful life of communion with her precious Lord!*

So the beauty the virtuous woman seeks in all is Spirit deep. The rare virtuous woman actively pursues virtue. She humbly and meekly waits for a virtuous man, if the Lord would have her have one, all the while going on in her life, growing spiritually in her life, useful in her life, loving the Man, and the God who is her life.

Having said that, we all acknowledge that there is a beauty of the skin. About that, the godly woman will be content with the way and the form the Lord has

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*Rev. Dick is pastor of Grace Protestant Reformed Church in Standale, Michigan.*

made her. Whatever endowments she has, she will not flaunt them. And she will be modest. Whoever you are, ladies, whether you think you are among the haves, or among the have-nots, or among the halves—please don't be dying to dye, tanning for Dan, piercing for praise, or dressing for the death of a young man! But then also this must be said: don't dress in burlap sacks (to be modest, so beautiful, is not to be a prude, so weird), eat so that you look like a potato, or chew tobacco. Men, after all, are attracted to and will marry a soul that they truly will love, and a body (and white teeth) that they truly like.

What needs to be remembered is this: *priority!* Growing in the knowledge of God is the priority. Remember we are in the world, yet not of it. Be spiritually sensible, and not carnally sensual, nor making otherwise good men bug-eyed and delirious.

The godly woman, if approached by a man, receives that man, *and that man only*, who comes through her godly father to her. For she knows her father is her head until she be given in marriage, and she is wise to discern also that if any man does not honor her father in seeking her hand, he will surely not honor her in marriage.

She will discern other things, as well, of course. Does this man have the *stigmata*, the distinguishing marks of a dying-unto-self-living-unto-God disciple of Christ? Or are all his scars just from playing hockey? Is this man serious? Is he ready? Does he know me, and has he decided among some that I am the one, or is he playing the field here? What does it mean that this man just rode up on a Harley? She will see. In light of the Word of God, and by faith, she will have wisdom.

If father speaks to her of a godly man who is desirous of her hand, and tells her that he approves of this, and would encour-

age this, the godly woman must follow her heart, yes or no (for she must willingly enter the marriage state!), but must make sure, prayerfully, and by rigorous self-denial, that her heart is following her head, truly submissive to the godly reasoning of her father, and trusting, *more even than her own judgment*, the wisdom of her appointed father head. Here, no wild dreams may enter, nor images of magazine models distort one's discerning between godliness and holly-woodiness. Her Christ-like man may have no form that she should desire him only for that (though there *must* be some physical attraction — guy to girl, and girl to guy!). And her man's strength may only be that he is a humble servant of the Lord. Will she be so appreciative, so receptive, *of that kind of fellow?*

May the beautiful covenant woman, in her trust, and her humble and glad receptivity, and in the harmony of her spirit with the Spirit of the Lord within, be as *Christ's graced church, hearkening to Him* when He calls, when a certain man calls, Christ's way, according to the will of the Father's fathers, saying...*be mine!*

**9. Having been led to one another covenantally, in the context of family and church, and hitherto trusting the guiding hand of God, a man and woman can know for sure very simply if they are meant to be married.**

Explanation: Right. There is a man who has been graced with godliness. God has caused him to mature, and to know he must needs be married. He knows a godly, marriageable woman, and she knows him. They both are eager to know and to do God's will and father's will for marriage. The man has been sent by his own father, and goes, willingly, to the father of this woman, to ask if he may proceed to confirm if it is God's will that he marry this father's

daughter. The woman has consented to the man's overtures. Now then, there is one thing left for the two....

And it is not to get to know each other! Right now, at this point, they do not date, or grope, or smell and be smelled, or go to Cygnus on Friday or to Florida on spring break to get to know each other. They are not, when they come together (with the express purpose of pursuing marriage *with each other!*) asking questions about one's beliefs, where he worships, and what she thinks of Christian education...as if they are not familiar with each other's views on these things. Nor are they discussing favorite meals, hobbies, and whatnot, as if this were the way of *knowing* God's will for a mate.

This kind of "getting to know" each other is exactly what "dating" is all about. This is understandable, this mad goal of Dating. For the two who "date" often do not know each other from Adam (or even, for that matter, whether the one or the other is still *in* Adam or not!). As well, though they be Christian, daters have thought there were no principles in the Bible to follow in order to know, specifically, whom to marry, and that is why they are dating! And besides, it is the mangy feature of Dating that the daters' parents either do not know, or do not approve, or do not lead the daters; instinct, cologne, and the discernment of the youth are the dubious matchmakers.

So Dating is a "getting to know," a "trial and error" sort of thing, there having been only a slim (sometimes very slim!) and unprincipled narrowing of the field before the Dating begins....

But the godly, covenanting man and maid couple already know each other before they come together in any kind of relationship other than friendship in the Lord. They must already know of each other that they are confessedly and decidedly godly, and that



each is ready for marriage if God so wills. Fathers will have seen to this, and in the family relationship and church setting, and in Bible studies, and social functions the persons themselves will have attained this knowledge of each other. And they will know, as well, that there is an attraction for each other that is *compelling them* to investigate the possibility of marriage to each other.

And more: if they have been led to the point where they are together, and that, in the way described above, *the two can be confident that they are meant, by God, for each other in marriage!*


The reason is this: *they have,*

*with godly intentions, and by seeking to uphold the principles of covenant set forth in God's Word, followed God's way of covenant marrying.* They can believe, therefore, that Father has led them neither to doubt, nor on a wild goose chase, but has truly led them to marry!

So now, there is confidence! It is the confidence of faith, the confidence of faith in God's Word! So this couple, when they have been so led, do not now say: "We'll see if this works out." Nor do they grope. Nor are they now second-guessing the leading of God hitherto. They believe. And their way, from henceforward, is not

finger nail biting, line after line drawing, parent troubling, three years and counting Dating...but peace!

There *is*, to be sure, this one thing that remains. There needs be *confirmation* of faith. The man and maid who have followed the course laid out by biblical principles for marrying will now *together, and having begun the biblical way of marrying*, confirm what they have been led to believe of God's will for them in marrying.

Just how is this "confirmation process" to proceed? "Grace Life" will offer an answer to that question next time, God willing. 

## News From Our Churches

Mr. Benjamin Wigger

### Mission Activities

**F**irst we have to correct a mistake from mission activities reported in the January 15<sup>th</sup> issue of the "News." In that report we wrote that there was encouraging news coming from Northern Ireland and the Fellowship there, for not only had a family moved to the area of Ballymena to join the group, but one family that had left when the church disbanded had also rejoined the group. This was not correct. No family that left the CPRC of NI when it disbanded has returned. We apologize for any embarrassment or confusion that this may have caused.

Rev. J. Mahtani, our churches' missionary to Pittsburgh, PA, was happy to inform the Steering Committee of the Mission there that the council of Southwest PRC in Grandville, MI, the calling church for eastern home missions, has decided to proceed with confession of faith in the Pittsburgh Mission later this year. Those who make confession of faith will have their membership papers in Southwest

church until a congregation is organized in Pittsburgh in the Lord's good time.

### Evangelism Activities

**T**he Evangelism Committee of our Bethel PRC in Roselle, IL has produced an audio witness tape for the use of their congregation entitled, "A Brief Explanation of the Gospel." Their pastor, Rev. C. Haak, prepared this short explanation of the gospel from a message that had originally aired on the Reformed Witness Hour. Members of Bethel were encouraged to use this new tool in their personal evangelism efforts. Bethel was also encouraged to pray that our Father in heaven would give them an opportunity to share the gospel with others. They were reminded to be prepared, by having several tapes in their car, at work, at home, and at school. Their evangelism committee also placed a tub of past sermon tapes in their church's kitchen for use by their congregation. Members could use the tapes in a couple of ways. They could listen to the tapes on their daily commute to work or at home during the week. Or they could pass some tapes on to their friends, family, or

co-workers. Good reminders to us all! Perhaps the Lord will use efforts such as these to bring others to our congregations.

### Congregation Activities

**F**riday evening, February 28, our congregation in Edgerton, MN hosted a Request Night Program. An offering taken went to help support their Young Adults Retreat planned for later this summer. The program included special numbers from our churches in Doon and Hull, Iowa, along with numbers from various groups in Edgerton, including their choir and catechism children.

Sunday evening, February 23, the auditorium of our Hudsonville, MI PRC was filled to capacity with members from our west Michigan churches who had gathered to hear a concert entitled, appropriately, "Praise with Piano and Organ." There were eight organ and piano duets performed by eight different twosomes. What a wonderful and worthwhile way to bring the Lord's Day to a close. Personally we hope these concerts continue. We have truly been blessed, as churches, with men and women who have God-given musical talents and who

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



are willing to share them with others. From all of us there that night, a thank-you to each one of you for all you did to make an hour go by all too quickly.

The Jr. Christian Fellowship Society of the Hudsonville, MI PRC invited the senior members of their congregation to join them for a night of food, games, and fellowship on February 21.

## Young People's Activities

The young people of our Southwest PRC in Grandville, MI enjoyed an outing recently which included pizza and a Griffins hockey game in Grand Rapids. You might also be interested to know that the

young people of Southwest have been asked, and have accepted an invitation from our Federation of Young People's Societies, to organize and sponsor the 2004 PRYP Convention.

## School Activities

Parents and supporters of Eastside Christian School in Grand Rapids, MI were invited to attend a speech given by Mr. Rick DeVries, a teacher at Covenant Christian High School, on European Unification. This material was first given at the Fall PR Teachers' Convention, and later at a PTA meeting of Hope PR Christian School. Mr. DeVries' speech dealt with recent developments in

Europe that parallel some of the events that are predicted for the last times. This could be of help to parents and others as they attempt to give their children a Christian perspective on current events.

## Minister Activities

Rev. R. VanOverloop, pastor of Georgetown PRC in Hudsonville, MI, declined the call he was considering to serve as our churches' second missionary to Ghana. The Byron Center, MI PRC extended a call to Rev. R. VanOverloop to serve as their next pastor. Also included on that trio were the Revs. S. Key and D. Kleyn.

## Announcements

### TEACHER NEEDED

South Holland PR School is accepting applications for a kindergarten and sixth grade teacher for the 2003-2004 school year. Please contact the Education Committee Chairman, Mr. Bruce Verborg, at (708) 474-9799 or [verborg@menholatum.com](mailto:verborg@menholatum.com) or Mr. Ryan VanOverloop at (708) 825-1716 or [prcs60473@msn.com](mailto:prcs60473@msn.com).

### RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The Martha Society of the Doon PRC express their Christian sympathy to Ann Miersma in the death of her brother-in-law, **MR. JAKE JABAAY.**

May our heavenly Father strengthen her by His Spirit, and words of comfort in Psalm 116:15: "Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints."

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

### NOTICE!!!

Classis East will meet in regular session on Wednesday, May 14, 2003 at the Grace Protestant Reformed Church. Material to be treated at this session must be in the hands of the stated clerk by April 14, 2003.

Jon J. Huiskens,  
Stated Clerk

### WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

With gratitude to our heavenly Father, the children and grandchildren of **DEWEY and ELAINE VAN DER NOORD**

announce their 40<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary on March 15, 2003. We give thanks to God for the covenant faithfulness He has shown to them and us over the years and pray that He will continue to be near to them in the years ahead. We praise God for the godly guidance and Christian love they have shown to us. "For the Lord is good; his mercy is everlasting; and his truth endureth to all generations" (Psalm 100:5).

- \* David VanDerNoord
- \* Randy and Shelly VanDerNoord
- \* Lee and Brenda Wiltjer
- \* John and Deb VanKalker
- \* Ryan and Melanie Zandstra
- \* Kayla (in glory), Courtney, Alec, Cody
- \* Ryan and Stephanie Regnerus
- \* Anna

Lynwood, Illinois

## Reformed Witness Hour

### Topics for April

Date	Topic	Text
April 6	"Wait on the Lord"	Psalm 27:14
April 13	"Jesus Given Over to Death"	Mark 15:1-5
April 20	"The Risen Lord and the Gathered Church"	Luke 24:36-46
April 27	"The Resurrection of the Body"	I Corinthians 15:35-38