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A Doxology to Him Who Is Able

"Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us, unto him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen."

Ephesians 3:20, 21

After explaining the content of his prayers for his fellow saints at Ephesus (14-19), the inspired apostle Paul breaks forth into praise of God. His prayer for the Ephesian converts had been that they "be strengthened with might by His Spirit in the inner man" so "that Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith," and so that they "may be able to comprehend...the love of Christ." What moves Paul now, suddenly, to give praise and glory to God?

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

First, it is the two absolutely amazing and gracious wonders of Christ dwelling in human hearts by faith and the unending love of God in Christ. Second, it is the humble realization of one who truly prays, that, though he is himself totally unworthy, he will be heard and answered because God is not only gracious, but also able to do above what he asks (or even thinks).

This doxology has been the source of much comfort for God's people in every age of the history of this world. Many a pastor has read this passage to distressed and frightened sheep of God. Any meditation on the breadth, length, depth, and height of the love of Christ or on the exceedingly abundant power of God and of His grace comforts God's people, no matter the cause of their distress. The consideration of these truths has compelled many saints to praise their God!

We learn from this doxology that we are given salvation and the

faith to comprehend God's love and power unto the chief end of our praising and glorifying Him. May our hearts be filled unto bursting with the desire to glorify Him. May our mouths open wide to praise Him, individually and especially with fellow-saints in the church in our age.



The theme of this doxology is the greatness of God's power. It is striking to note that in his first prayer for the Ephesian believers (1:19) Paul asked that they be given to know the exceeding greatness of God's power working in them. This power that works in believers is the same power that raised Jesus from the dead and set Him above all things (1:20-22). This power is manifested in the work of graciously saving the totally depraved sinner! The greatness of human depravity requires nothing less than such exceedingly great power! And Paul writes how this power is manifested in uniting the converted

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Ephesian Gentiles with Jewish Christians into one body. The power of the grace that destroyed their alienating prejudices and made them to be united in the body of Christ had to be exceedingly great.

The power of God is infinitely great. This doxology to the power of God strives to put into human language (which is always imperfect) a description of something that is perfect and infinite. Paul is inspired to take a superlative (the best or the highest and greatest) and add it to another superlative: exceeding abundantly. Literally he wrote, "to him who

is able (has power, dynamite) above all things to do exceedingly abundantly above or beyond." We must realize that the greatest superlatives in any language do not adequately describe the power of God. We cannot get beyond the superlatives, because we do not know what is beyond the greatest, the best, or the highest of what we can conceive! So we are to stand before this wonder with open-mouthed amazement; and from our open mouths should come expressions of praise!

From a practical perspective Paul speaks this way because he has prayed for such tremendous blessings (cf. 16-19). These blessings are tremendous works of Him who can do exceedingly beyond our greatest petitions. It is this power that Paul is striving to describe and that Paul desires the Ephesian converts to experience.

God's power is "above all that we ask or think." Often we need to consider God's power when we pray, especially when we ask for something in prayer. There are times that we do not pray because it seems to us that our desire is impossible of being fulfilled. But if we remember the ability of the one to whom we are praying, then we would know we can never ask too

much. If we would exercise our faith, focusing on the fact that God is able to do more than we can ask, then we would understand that our seemingly impossible requests do not exceed the limit of God's ability to grant them. With God nothing is impossible.

God's power is not only beyond what we ask, but it is also beyond what we think. Often what we think about goes beyond what

we would ask. We can think beyond what is possible. Our thoughts can consider things that are impossible in this world. But Scripture teaches us that God's ability and power are

even beyond all that we can think or imagine. God can do more than we can consider in our most inspired thoughts or imaginations.

Let us realize that we often commit the sin of limiting God. We know it is wrong to think that God cannot do something, but there are many times when the circumstances of our lives are such that we find ourselves thinking that God cannot help. While wandering in the terrible wilderness, the children of Israel several times committed this sin. "They turned back and tempted God, and limited the Holy One of Israel" (Ps. 78:41). It is very easy for Christians to look at the circumstances of their lives and to become disheartened and discouraged. In that condition we can quickly limit God. Sarai limited God when she laughed at the idea that someone as old as Abram and herself could have a child. The angel Gabriel had to remind the virgin Mary that with God nothing is impossible (Luke 1:37). Our Reformed theology is solidly based on Scripture when it declares that not one could be saved if it depended on man, but "the things which are impossible with men are possible with God" (Luke 18:27). If we understand the limitless power of God,

then we will not doubt any of God's promises, no matter how staggering they may seem under some circumstances.

God is able! He is able to do exceeding abundantly! He is infinite in His might. His ability is beyond our comprehension — beyond anything we would ask, and even beyond anything we can think.



God's tremendous power is evidenced in a most impressive way in our own experience. God exhibits His great power in all of creation and in His work of obtaining salvation for His chosen ones, but there is an amazing display of His power that takes place within His people. In fact, the apostle is inspired to declare that the exceedingly abundant power of God is an on-going work of God in us — "according to the power that worketh in us." While God's power is beyond our comprehension, it is something with which we have the most intimate contact, for it is in us.

The apostle himself experienced this marvelous power. God's power changed him from being one who was "less than the least of all saints" to being an apostle who would "preach the unsearchable riches of Christ" (Eph. 3:8). In fact, Paul states that he was "made a minister, according to the gift of the grace of God given unto me by the effectual working of his power" (3:7). He had at one time been filled with hatred for the name of Christ and for the church of Christ. He had despised all those who confessed Christ. For such a one as Paul to become not only a Christian but even a preacher of Christianity can be attributed only to divine power.

Paul was not the only one who knew this power. The Ephesian converts also knew it experientially. They had been dead in sin, but they were quickened by this same power (2:2-5). As heathens

The greatness of human depravity requires nothing less than such exceedingly great power!

they were barred from all the blessings tasted by the Jews. They were without hope, without Christ, and without God. Then the power of the irresistible Spirit of Christ made the dead to be alive, enabling them to believe the gospel. The Spirit took those who formerly "walked according to the prince of the power of the air" and overcame that power by the power of God's great love and amazing grace. Instead of being the work of the prince of the power of the air, they became God's workmanship.

Everyone who is saved by grace through faith in Christ has experienced this magnificent power of God. It is God's power that saves us, and it is this same power that keeps us from losing our salvation. According to the effectual working of His power, Christ dwells in our hearts by faith, and according to the effectual working of His power every saint is able to comprehend the limitless love of God in Christ. There is no end to God's power; it is endless and limitless (as is His love and all other of His attributes).

It is knowing this power that is working in us which keeps us from staggering in unbelief at any of God's promises. All of His promises center in that most beautiful truth of the covenant: "I am with you." God is able to enable us to do all things — even in the greatest trial and distress to know that God is with us.

Not only each individual believer, but also the church, is an evidence of the exceedingly abundant power of God. Who would have thought that the huge wall of prejudice between the Jewish and Gentile converts could ever be broken down? The converted Gentiles and Jews are reconciled. Such was and is a human impossibility. It is nothing less than the almighty power of God which, by the Spirit, made the unity of the body of Christ, even though the members of that body come from every cor-

ner and out of every age of the world. The power of God is displayed in the unity of the church. What power!



Hence the doxology: "Now unto him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen." He who has such infinite power is worthy to be praised.

The origin and the continued existence of the church is the result of the power of God. Also it is the church that is the chief instrument by which God is glorified. The praise of this doxology is that glory be given to God "in the church." The church, the gathering of those whom God has graciously chosen and saved in Christ, displays the glory of God in a wonderful and unique way. In fact, it can be said that nothing gives glory to God as does the church. Creation does indeed give God glory, but it cannot express itself with words. It needs man to verbalize the glory it expresses. Only the body of Christ knows how to glorify God correctly. Besides, creation came into existence by the power of God out of nothing. As amazing as that truly is, the power of God to save unto Himself a church is even more amazing, for the church had to be saved out of the horrible power of sin. The salvation of the church required nothing less than the death of Christ Jesus, the Son of God. Therefore, the church glorifies God "by Christ Jesus." This is because the church is made up of those who are saved by Him and thus become members of His body, of His flesh and of His bones. This is because all blessings are in Christ, and they come to us through Him. The church glorifies God by Christ Jesus also because the praise expressed by hu-


mans is acceptable to God only through Christ Jesus.

The doxology is a declaration that praise and glory be given to God. Glory is to be given to God on account of His perfections. God enables His people to know His perfections so those perfections can be enjoyed and celebrated. The glory of God is in the creation of this world. God's glory is also in the preservation of this world. But God's glory is especially in Christ Jesus and His church. The glory of complete salvation is to be ascribed to God because of the power of God's free grace.

We ask that glory be given to God "throughout all ages." Literally this is "age of the ages," that is, age upon age, or an infinite number of ages. We would say, "for ever and ever." When Paul asks that glory be given to God in the church throughout all ages, he implies that the church of Christ exists (and will exist) in every age until our Lord returns and beyond into the eternity to come. He implies that the church of Christ is where the glory of God manifests itself most clearly and magnificently. It is in

us, the members of the church, that the blessings of salvation are known. Such is the power of God that we will be manifesting the glory of God for ever and ever.

Every believer is called to glorify God by exercising faith in Him, the promising and covenant-keeping God. We glorify God by trusting Him and His promises. We glorify God by cheerfully and patiently suffering for His cause and interest, while leaning on His power.

Let us join in singing. Let us consider what the power of God has done in us; and let us consider what He promises to do for us. Let us declare His glory in every age. And to the whole world. Let us ascribe all glory to Him. 

*the church of Christ
is where
the glory of God
manifests itself
most clearly
and magnificently.*

Labor Union Membership in the Light of Scripture (1)

Introduction

By government decree, the first Monday of September annually is a legal holiday in the United States. The holiday is Labor Day. It dates from 1894. In that year, President Grover Cleveland signed a bill making Labor Day a national holiday. 1894 was also the year of the notorious, violent Pullman strike in Chicago.

The intention of Labor Day is to honor the workingman. Labor unions have hijacked the holiday, so that many suppose that the idea of the holiday is honoring labor unions.

The Protestant Reformed Churches "honor" the laborer. Most of the members of these Churches are laborers. The majority of the members of the church throughout the ages have been men who got their daily bread from God by the sweat of their brow with the help of their wife laboring in the home.

The Protestant Reformed Churches do not honor the labor unions. In the light of Scripture, the unions are not honorable.

During my fourteen-year pastorate of a congregation in the Chicagoland area, I came to know firsthand the violence, threats, intimidation, beatings, maimings, murders, mayhem, ruthlessness, contempt for law, and corruption of the labor unions. I remember distinctly the murder of a trucker on I-80/94 east of South Holland, Illinois during a Teamsters Union

strike. Sons of Belial, enforcing the strike, dropped large chunks of concrete from an overpass on the unsuspecting driver.

The stand against labor union membership by the Christian defended in this and following editorials is principled. It is a stand based on Scripture's condemnation of unionism's constitutional nature. It is also a stand that is well aware of the actual spiritual condition and conduct—the ungodliness—of the unions, which every member willingly joins and for whose constitution, condition, and conduct every member makes himself responsible before God the Judge.

The "Infallible Rule"

Neither the well-nigh universal acceptance of labor union membership by Western society nor the nearly unanimous approval of labor union membership by the churches settles the issue of membership in a union for the Christian workingman. The practice of the world is certainly not the standard of the life of the Christian. But neither is the example of the majority of churches the standard, especially not when it is evident that their approval of labor union membership is not obedience to the Word of God, but mere conformity to the world.

Scripture is the standard of the life of the Christian workingman. Scripture alone is the standard. We Reformed people confess that "Holy Scriptures fully contain the will of God." The "whole manner

of worship, which God requires of us, is written in them at large." This "worship" includes the service of all aspects of our daily life. "Therefore, we reject with all our hearts whatsoever doth not agree with this infallible rule" (Belgic Confession, Art. 7).

This is the basis of the examination of labor union membership that follows, as the title of the editorial indicates: "Labor Union Membership in the Light of Scripture."

The issue is not labor union membership in the light of strong pressures to join unions in Chicago or some other big city; labor union membership in the light of the well-nigh universal tolerance of labor union membership by the churches, particularly the Reformed churches; or even, labor union membership in light of the fact that refusing to join a labor union may mean the loss of a good job, indeed any job at all, and therefore starvation and death.

What does Scripture teach?

Scripture, we Reformed Christians confess, is our only rule for faith and life. Life includes work. The decisive question for the Christian workingman in Chicago or Edmonton at the beginning of the twenty-first century AD, as it was the decisive question in Ephesus, or Colosse, or the regions in the Middle East where the scattered saints lived to whom James wrote in the first century AD, is, "What does God say?"

The question is, "What pleases

God in the realm of labor?" Pleasing God is far more precious to the Christian workingman than job, job-security, good wages, comfortable working conditions, and big pensions. Pleasing God is far more precious to the faithful church than the approval of men.

If Scripture is our basis in the matter of union membership, the issue is clear and conclusive. Scripture condemns labor union membership as revolution against the authority of the sovereign God. Scripture forbids the disciple of Christ to join a union and requires him to renounce membership, if he is presently a member.

These editorials will demonstrate, first, that Scripture addresses the issue of membership in the union and, second, that Scripture forbids membership, especially because labor union membership is revolution against God-ordained authority.

The Stand of the Protestant Reformed Churches

The condemnation of membership in labor unions is not a personal stand of the editor on the basis of his private interpretation of Scripture. Rather, it is the official stand of a Reformed denomination of churches, the Protestant Reformed Churches in America. The Protestant Reformed Churches have condemned labor union membership throughout their history, from the very beginning of their existence in the 1920s to the present day.

Already in 1927, a mere year or two after the formation of the denomination, the classis (there was no synod as yet) took a decision condemning labor union membership. Classis declared that "a member of the Protestant Reformed Churches cannot be a member of the labor union." The decision of the classis was in response to an overture from the consistory of the South Holland, Illinois church. South Holland gave the following grounds for its overture that classis

condemn membership in labor unions:

1. Being a member of a worldly union is definitely inconsistent with membership in the body of Christ. a. There is no communion between Christ and Belial. We cannot serve God and mammon. Children of God may not sit in the seat of mockers. b. It is abundantly proven that the use of force is the chief and most desired means used to attain their goal. c. The unions undermine the God-given authority of the employer.

2. The consistory regards this as a proper time to take a definite stand against unionism before this evil takes root in our churches.

3. The affiliation with a worldly union can only be condoned on the basis of the error of common grace. With all might and main we must show with our deeds that we are willing to fight for our King against Satan and the evil world (citation of the minutes of Classis, June 1927 by Cornelius Hanko, "The Antithesis and Unionism," the *Standard Bearer*, vol. 62, no. 5, Dec. 1, 1985, pp. 115-117).

South Holland has the credit for the stand against labor union membership by the Protestant Reformed Churches. This is significant. The significance is that opposition to the unions by the Protestant Reformed Churches was born in that church which was located where unionism was the strongest and where the members could expect to suffer the most from the right stand on unionism.

This was the very opposite of developments in other Reformed denominations. In other denominations, it was the Chicago churches that pressured the denominations to cave in to unionism.

In late 1940 or early 1941, the consistory of First Protestant Reformed Church, Grand Rapids, Michigan, mother church of the Protestant Reformed denomination, issued a "Testimony" concerning

union membership to its large, five hundred-family congregation. The "Testimony" observed that "it is still the position of the Protestant Reformed Churches that membership of ... a union is incompatible with membership in the Church of Jesus Christ." The consistory of First Church informed the congregation that this position was the conviction of the consistory.

The consistory gave four reasons for its conviction that labor union membership is incompatible with membership in the church. First, membership in a union (as in a corporation or association) necessarily involves responsibility for the principles and acts of the union. Second, the pledge or oath taken upon joining binds the member to abide by all the acts of the union. Third, the union stands for the principle of force and coercion, as is evident "especially from its constant attempt everywhere to introduce the closed shop." Fourth, the union is pledged to violence if it cannot gain its objectives in a peaceful way. Illustrating this violence, the "Testimony" devoted several pages to a vivid description of the violence of strikes in Detroit in 1936 and 1937. The violence of one of these strikes ruined a Fisher Body auto plant and injured many people (the "Testimony" was distributed in the form of a brochure; it was published in full as an editorial under the title, "Our Churches and the Unions," the *Standard Bearer*, vol. 17, no. 9, Feb. 1, 1941, pp. 196-198).

Petitions and Discipline

Such has been the intensity of the opposition on the part of the Protestant Reformed Churches to labor union membership that at least twice the synod of the Protestant Reformed Churches has officially sent a letter to the President of the United States concerning this matter. Protestant Reformed synods are very chary of addressing the civil government.

The first address was in May

1941 to President Roosevelt, known as an ardent supporter of the unions. The synodical letter petitioned President Roosevelt "to cease condoning and supporting the closed shop" and thus "to protect us and so rule," as he was "duty bound" to do, so that our men have "an opportunity to earn a livelihood." The letter stated that "unionism [is a] great evil in the sight of God." The grounds for this condemnation of unions were the following:

We refuse to become members of the Union because we condemn the principles of utter materialism of the Union; because the Union demands in the required oath or pledge loyalty to itself even though this loyalty to the Union would bring us into conflict with the interests of the Church of Jesus Christ our Lord; and because the Union seeks to gain its ends by force, strikes and boycotts, all of which militates against the Word of God which we hold dear and which is the first and last criterion for our conduct on earth ("Acts of the Synod 1941 of the Protestant Reformed Churches," pp. 75-77; synod adopted the letter and decided to send it to the president in Art. 83; in the following article, synod decided to send a copy "to every member of Congress and to every member of the President's Cabinet").

A second official address of the president by synod was in June 1946. On this occasion, synod sent a letter to President Truman, an-

other strong supporter of the unions. Synod appealed to the "Head of the government" to protect Protestant Reformed workingmen "in the exercise of our liberties" under the Constitution. The synodical letter expressed the reasons for the Protestant Reformed conscientious objection to the labor unions.

We, the Protestant Reformed Churches, are opposed to membership in the existing unions: because we believe that the principles of the class-struggle, dividing society into the two opposing camps of capital and labor, are contrary to Holy Writ and to the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ; because we cannot agree with the materialistic motives and purposes that so manifestly actuate the unions, but believe that we should first seek the kingdom of God and His righteousness; because we believe that unionism in often defying authority and taking the law in its own hands, is in conflict with the Word of God which enjoins us to honor those that are in authority over us; because the union seeks its own end through the employment of force and coercion, which militates against the principles and spirit of the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, in short, because we refuse to affiliate ourselves with any organization whose principles and practices are so plainly in conflict with the teaching of Holy Writ ("Acts of Synod 1946 of the Protestant Reformed Churches," pp. 28, 29; in the decision of Article 20, synod had the letter sent "not only to the

President but also to all members of both houses of Congress, the President's Cabinet and to the members of the Supreme Court").

In keeping with this official stand by the denomination, Protestant Reformed consistories have repeatedly disciplined men for joining a labor union. One example was South Holland's decision in 1969 to erase a baptized member on the ground of his impenitent membership in a labor union. "Erasure" is the form that Christian discipline takes in the case of a member by baptism who has not confessed his faith. South Holland asked for the advice of Classis West regarding this discipline. South Holland described the man and his sin this way: "[a member] who persistently refuses to heed the admonitions of the Word of God to terminate his membership in a godless Union." Classis West approved the discipline "on the ground of his continued refusal to repent of the sin of having membership in an anti-christian labor union" (minutes of Classis West of the Protestant Reformed Churches, March 1970).

From the very beginning of their existence, the Protestant Reformed Churches have condemned labor union membership.

They have done so on biblical grounds.

They have bowed to the Word of God.

(to be continued)

— DJE 

Letters

Letters Responding to the Series of Editorials, "The Unconditional Covenant in Contemporary Debate" (*Standard Bearer*, Jan. 1 - April 1, 2003)

I was reading your series [on the Unconditional covenant] in the *Standard Bearer*. It has been truly surprising to me how quickly the rejection of the gospel of grace has spread in my Presbyterian circles.

I now understand that this has been a debate in Dutch circles for the past century. The work that you and your Protestant Reformed colleagues have conducted in that time, I hope will be useful to

counter the various assaults presently underway against the gospel of grace.

Patrick Poole
Scottsdale, AZ

I am writing to say "Amen" to (and to thank you for) your continuing work on the conditional covenant heresy. You have helped me much, especially in seeing how Romans 9:6ff. teaches that the promise to Abraham's seed was not to, or intended for, all the seed (something classic Reformed theology always taught). I especially appreciate how you relate Romans 9:6ff. to the children of believers. All the children of believers are not necessarily elect. The issue is God's election of grace, His sovereign decree. To me, Reformed teaching on baptism too often did not make clear what you make clear: the elect and the elect alone are saved, as with Isaac and Jacob, in contrast to Ishmael and Esau.

You talk about how so much of the church is going apostate on justification by faith alone, and you connect this to the fact that they believe in a conditional covenant, rather than an unconditional covenant of promise. Amen. But if grace alone and faith alone are to be consistently understood and taught, we must continually harken back to the apostolic gospel. Because of your openness to and love of Luther, you may be open to reading the following section of a book by my favorite Lutheran scholar, Gerhard Forde. The section is on the Christian life. It bases the Christian life on justification. The section is pages 395-469 of volume 2 of *Christian Dogmatics* (ed. Braaten and Jensen).

Rick Roessing
Holland, MI

Response:

We too have appreciated the work of Gerhard O. Forde. See the very favorable and lengthy comment on his book, *On Being a Theologian of the Cross: Reflections on Luther's Heidelberg Disputation, 1518* (Eerdmans, 1997) in the editorial, "Where are the Theologians of the Cross?" in the *Standard Bearer* 74, no. 13 (April 1, 1998): 292-295.

— Ed.

I have been reading your articles on the conditional covenant. Thank you for that outstanding piece of work.

Charlie Dykes
Clinton, MS

I express my gratitude for the series of articles on the vital issue of the unconditional covenant. These perversions within professing "Reformed" circles are alarming indeed. When men teach that "the righteousness of the guilty sinner, the righteousness of his justification, the righteousness of his *standing before God in judgment*, is and must be in part his own good works" (SB, Feb. 1, 2003, p. 197), one immediately sees how this teaching is supported by the false reading in modern Bible versions at Revelation 19:8, "the marriage of the lamb," where the completed number of the elect appear before God in heaven as Christ's bride. Modern versions all add a word for "works" or "deeds" or "acts" thus: "for the fine linen is the righteous *deeds* of the saints" (ESV) and "for the fine linen is the righteous *acts* of the saints" (NKJV). All modern versions agree in stating here that when the saints appear before God they are dressed in the linen of their *own works righteousness* (which Scripture dismisses as *filthy rags*! [Isaiah 64:6]). It is easy to see how this perverse addition to Scripture lends support as a "proof text" to the idea which is being peddled today. Of course, the concept of works, or acts, or deeds, in Revelation 19:8 has no Greek manuscript support (not even B or Aleph) whatsoever. It is a deliberate doctrinal addition. In Revelation 19:8, the "righteousnesses of the saints" are, for each and every saint, nothing but the *imputed righteousness of Christ*, the only righteousness that we can have before God. The essential doctrine of the imputed righteousness of Christ is thus written out at a stroke from the modern versions. The door is opened for the "faith as a work and

meritorious works of faith" teaching. The saints are told that they can appear before the all holy God in the rages they earned for themselves on earth. How wicked!

I am glad I know I shall appear in Christ's robe placed over me by grace unmerited alone. I should be terrified to think of appearing in the nakedness of anything I have done. One sees again how all aspects of our faith are interwoven, and defense of accurate texts and translation is defense of our doctrinal truths. All stand or fall together. Thanks again to the Protestant Reformed Churches for their insights and faithfulness to our covenant God.

Stephen Westcott
Bristol, England

My wife and I have benefited greatly from, and been greatly edified by, your series on the unconditional covenant. The heresy of which you speak is alive and well in Reformed circles today. I have lost a good friend over this issue. Some months ago, I was asked to read a tract that a friend was writing regarding salvation. In reading it, I noted that parts of it read as an Arminian tract, emphasizing that one had to "do" something to be saved. My pointing this out was not appreciated. It was not until I read your articles that I realized what the problem was: he was teaching a conditional salvation.

But I am getting questions that approach the issue of the relation of faith and the covenant from the standpoint of faith. The argument goes as follows: One is commanded to believe. Therefore, faith must be something one himself does. If faith is something that one does himself, faith is a work.

I have examined the confessions, both the Belgic and the Westminster, and it seems that they teach that faith is something one does. Article 22 of the Belgic Confession says that faith "embraces" and "appropriates" Christ. These

words are being used to prove that man has to “do” something to be saved. Do these words show that man does something in salvation? Or does the present understanding of these terms reflect the product of the creeping in of Arminian influences upon present-day Reformed thought? Is there some other way of understanding the words “embrace” and “appropriate”?

Lee Carl Finley
East Sparta, OH

Response:

You have found the heart of the issue in the present controversy over the false doctrine of justification by faith and by the works of faith—the gravest threat to the gospel of grace in Reformed churches since Dordt. Because faith is an activity of the regenerated sinner and because as such it is called for by the gospel, the enemies of grace make their last ditch stand in defense of self-salvation by turning faith into a human work and a condition and by suspending salvation upon the sinner’s work of believing.

Fundamentally, this was the issue at Dordt in 1618/1619. Therefore, the Canons of Dordt expressly and repeatedly deny that faith is a condition either unto election or unto salvation (I/9, 10; I, Rejection of Errors/3, 5).

The present-day error of making faith a condition unto the covenant and its blessings is only a variation of the Arminian heresy condemned at Dordt as another gospel. The teaching of a conditional covenant, which is not new, imports the Arminian heresy into the covenant. What is taking place today, and *is* new, is the development of the doctrine of a conditional covenant by Reformed and Presbyterian theologians into the heresy of justification by works—the work of faith as a condition and the good works that faith performs. The development is natural and inevitable. If faith is a con-

dition man must perform in order to become member of the covenant, or remain member of the covenant, or receive the blessings of the covenant, man is justified by his own work, namely, faith. And then there can be no objection to adding other works as man’s righteousness with God, especially the good works that faith performs.

The refutation of the argument that appeals to faith’s being an activity of the elect, regenerated sinner is briefly this: Faith is certainly an activity of the child of God, but it is not a work of the sinner upon which God, the covenant, and salvation depend. First, faith is the gift of God (Eph. 2:8). It is gift as the bequest and benefit of election (Acts 13:48). It is gift as earned for the elect by the death of Christ (Canons, II/8). It is gift as bestowed upon and worked into the elect, redeemed sinner by the Spirit of Christ both as regards the power to believe and as regards the actual believing (Canons, III, IV/14).

Second, rather than being a condition unto the covenant and salvation, faith is the means by which God incorporates the elect sinner into His covenant and gives him Christ and salvation and, in dependence upon this gracious work of God, the means by which the regenerated sinner consciously and willingly embraces and appropriates Christ and salvation.

Third, as the activity of the elect sinner, faith is not on his part the doing of a work alongside or along with the work of God in Christ, but the utter renunciation of all human work, including believing as a human work, and a relying on the work of God in Christ alone. It is of the essence of faith to renounce every work, and all working of the sinner himself, *including repenting and believing*, as earning, contributing to, conditioning, or making effectual the saving work of God in Christ, whether the saving work of God in Christ is viewed as justification, member-

ship in the covenant, or the blessings of the covenant.

Fourth, as regards faith’s being a work—a mighty deed—it is not the work of the sinner at all, but exclusively the work of God in the sinner: “This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent” (John 6:29).

The way to combat the devilishly clever lie that goes about to strip God of His glory in salvation by making faith a work of man conditioning the covenant and salvation is not by denying, or even playing down, that faith is an activity of the sinner—embracing, appropriating, etc.—or by denying that the gospel commands us to believe. But the way to combat the error is by maintaining that God gives the elect faith as part of his promised salvation and as a blessing of the covenant of grace. Also, when God works faith in His own—active faith—they believe, not as a matter of fulfilling a condition or doing a work upon which God’s work depends—crassest arrogance and grossest unbelief!—but as a matter of renouncing all their works and trusting the work of God in Christ alone.

Biblical faith does not challenge and compromise grace, but rather reveals, confirms, and seals grace.

Although written against the Roman Catholic error, before the time of the Arminian controversy and Dordt, Question and Answer 61 of the Heidelberg Catechism exposes both the Arminian heresy and the present-day heresy of justification by faith and works on the basis of a conditional covenant.

Why do you say that you are righteous by faith only?

Not that I am acceptable to God on account of the worthiness of my faith, but because only the satisfaction, righteousness, and holiness of Christ is my righteousness before God, and that I cannot receive and apply the same to myself any other way than by faith only.

The reason why the Catechism here, although addressing the false doctrine of Rome, speaks to the Arminian heresy and to the present-day heresy of justification by faith and works on the basis of a conditional covenant is that these last two teachings are essentially the Roman Catholic error of man's salvation of himself, but in subtle guise.

— Ed.

I am currently reading Prof. J. Kamphuis' book on the "Liberation," titled *Een Ewig Verbond*. In it, he emphasizes that the battle for the covenant in the Netherlands was born out of the practical issues of preaching and catechizing (big question: How must I view the congregation?). It seems to me that he thereby implies that true covenantal preaching cannot be done from an unconditional covenant view, since this presumably leaves no place for the obligations of the covenant: repent and believe.

Have you also written on this?

Slabbert Le Cornu
Potchefstroom, South Africa

Response:

In a series of six editorials titled, "An 'Election' Theology of Covenant," appearing in volume 67 of the *Standard Bearer* (March 15 - Sept. 1, 1991), I addressed the issues raised by the "Liberated" and by Prof. Kamphuis in particular. In these articles I responded to Prof. Kamphuis' book, which has been published in English translation as *An Everlasting Covenant* (Launceston [TAS], Australia: Publication Organization of the Free Reformed Churches of Australia, 1985).

A critique of a book espousing a similar covenant theology and making the same charges against the doctrine of an unconditional covenant, *Covenant and Election*, by Dr. J. Van Genderen (Neerlandia, Alberta, Canada: Inheritance Publications, 1995) appeared in the

June 1, 1996 issue of the *Standard Bearer* (vol. 72, no. 17, pp. 393-397) under the title, "'Liberating' the Covenant from Election."

The charge against the unconditional covenant by its foes is that it tends to carelessness, lack of repentance and faith, the loss of a life of good works, and license. Does this sound familiar to you? Is this not the charge that the foes of gracious salvation have raised against salvation by grace alone and justification by faith alone in every age and in every place?

I would be disappointed if foes of the unconditional covenant, that is, a covenant that depends upon the grace of God alone, did not raise this charge against it. If my doctrine of the covenant did not draw such charges as that it tended to licentiousness (a slanderous report, as Paul declares in Romans 3:8), I would reexamine my covenant doctrine to see what was wrong with it.

— Ed. 

All Around Us

Rev. Gise VanBaren

A Time for Self-examination

For some months, and even years, I've considered quoting from articles that relate to our own life-style. Each time, however, I've put aside those articles. There are things contained in them that we all know—yet refuse to face. Of course, objections can be raised to the use of the articles. The quotes are from the secular press. They obviously do not use Scripture to press their point. They are, nevertheless, startling to say the least.

These treat the subject of smoking.

Some might ask, "You are not going to pick on smokers again, are you?" The fact is that within our churches one hardly dares to bring

up the subject. Seldom has it been mentioned from the pulpit. Precious few articles have appeared in print in our literature concerning this subject. After all, we're not Methodists or Seventh Day Adventists.

Others will rightly point out that there are different problems in our life-style that surely ought to be treated as well. There likely are some who overindulge in drinking. (And, to "call a spade a spade," they are drunkards.) Others overindulge in eating and consequently are seriously overweight. Are there not articles published that show conclusively that this is as detrimental to our health as smoking? And what about those who may experiment with illegal drugs? What of those who waste their time in front of the TV?

Yes, yes, yes!! But that ought

not to preclude any reflections on smoking. So—here goes.

The first article is from *Newsweek* magazine and appeared about three years ago (July 31, 2000). The title was, "Smoke Gets in Your Eyes." The sub-title: "A legal drug that's lethal, but can't be banned? Sure. Welcome to the weird world of tobacco." It was written by Anna Quindlen.

Imagine that millions of Americans are addicted to a lethal drug. Imagine that the Food and Drug Administration has repeatedly ducked its responsibility by refusing to regulate that drug. And imagine that when the FDA finally does its duty, an appeals court decides that it cannot do so, that the drug is so dangerous that if the FDA regulated it, it would have to be banned.

Welcome to the topsy-turvy

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

world of tobacco, where nothing much makes sense except the vast profits, where tobacco company executives slip-slide along the continuum from aggrieved innocence to heartfelt regret without breaking a sweat, and where the only people who seem able to shoot straight are the jurors who decide the ubiquitous lawsuits.

...Al Gore, for instance, inspired by the death of his own sister from lung cancer, insisted not long ago that he will do everything he can to keep cigarettes out of the hands of children. But he says he would never outlaw cigarettes because millions of people smoke. Here is a question: how many users mandate legality? What about the estimated 3.6 million chronic cocaine users, or the 2.4 million people who admit to shooting or snorting heroin?

I can almost feel all the smokers out there, tired of standing outside their office buildings puffing in the rain when once they could sit comfortably at their desks, jumping up and down and yelling, "Tobacco is different from illicit drugs!" Because it is legal? Now, there's a circular argument. A hundred years ago the sale of cigarettes was against the law in 14 states. The Supreme Court, which ruled earlier this year that the FDA did not have the power to regulate tobacco, upheld a Tennessee law forbidding the sale of cigarettes in 1900. The justices agreed with a state court that had concluded, "They possess no virtue but are inherently bad and bad only." At the time, Coca-Cola still contained cocaine and heroin was in cough syrups.

...When Dr. David Kessler ran the FDA, he publicly concluded what everyone already knew: that cigarettes are nothing more than a primitive delivery device for nicotine, a dangerous and addictive drug. But the agency never took the obvious next step. The Food, Drug, and Cosmetic Act forbids the sale of any drug that is not safe and effective, and part of the FDA's mandate is to regulate devices. Cigarettes are a device. The drug they deliver is patently

unsafe. Ergo, cigarettes should be banned.

That's not going to happen in our lifetime, which is why even a more aggressive FDA refused to take this to the limit....

...Here is the bottom line: cigarettes are the only legal product that, when used as directed, cause death. The rest is just a puppet show in the oncology wing.

Another article appeared in *U.S. News & World Report*, March 31, 1997 when Liggett, maker of Chesterfield cigarettes, agreed to a settlement in litigation.

Given how many times over the years tobacco company officials have denied that smoking causes cancer, last week's confession from Liggett...was astonishing in its directness. "We at Liggett know and acknowledge that...cigarette smoking causes health problems, including lung cancer, heart and vascular disease, and emphysema," said Bennett LeBow, chairman of Liggett's parent company, Brooke Group, in a written statement. "We at Liggett also know and acknowledge that...nicotine is addictive."

In the *Chicago Tribune*, July 15, 1997, an article points out the high cost of smoking.

Mary Balk figures she could have bought a new car or taken her husband and two children on a luxury vacation had she saved and invested all the money spent over two decades on cigarettes.

"I never really sat down and did the numbers (but)...I smoked 1 ½ packs a day for 22 years. I also probably dry-cleaned twice the rate as I do now...."

...Balk, who quit smoking six years ago, conservatively estimates losses around \$15,000, not including the money spent trying to kick her habit through acupuncture and other methods. (Success came after one \$150 hypnotherapy session.)

A pack of cigarettes sells for around \$2, depending on taxes. At that price, a pack-a-day smoker would spend around \$730 a year,

\$3,650 in five, \$7,300 in 10, \$14,600 in 20 and \$36,500 in 50 years.

Today in Michigan the cost of a pack of cigarettes approaches \$5.00. The article itself points out that the cost of smoking does not end with the cash paid for that pack. Health costs for the smoker are much higher than for the non-smoker. Insurance premiums are higher. Cleaning costs multiply. House and car lose some resale value because of the smoking of the owner.

The article concludes:

"We have a very serious drain on the American economy? I would say that is a gross underestimate," said John Banzhaf, executive director of the Washington-based group Action on Smoking and Health, which helped advise the states in the recent tobacco settlement.

One more quote is from the *Denver Post*, Nov. 19, 1998. It indicates the horrible power nicotine has on its users.

There are few riddles in life more enigmatic than the spell that smoking can cast, even to smokers like Jan Binder, a smart 38-year-old who has walked the horror chamber of nicotine.

It was two years ago, in a hospital room, that a doctor looked into the eyes of her husband, James, and told him, "Mr. Binder, you have lung cancer."

That evening her husband walked in the door at home, switched on a lamp, turned to her and sized up his life.

"I don't regret anything," he told her, "except a few million cigarettes."

Seven months later, he was dead. He was 37. His daughter Mary was 7. Kate was 5.

"When they told Jim he was going to die," Binder said, "and I saw the look on his face, I knew I would never smoke again."

She was certain sheer will power could do it. But it was like willing herself to stop drawing breath.

She has tried going cold turkey. She has tried the nicotine patch. She has tried the drug Zyban.

Nothing has worked for more than a week.

"People look at me and think, 'How can you still smoke?'" Binder said. "...I don't want to smoke. But I am like a slave to it. It rules your life."

This is a woman who scarcely lacks fortitude....

But when it comes to those feather-light sticks of tobacco, she feels helpless.

"Sometimes I think they should just lock me up," she said.

Her girls, Mary and Kate, have come to view cigarettes the way some children think of monsters under the bed. They have thrown their mother's cigarette packs into the trash.

In some cases, they have taken each cigarette out of the pack and broken every single one into pieces.

They have begged, pleaded, and cajoled her to stop. And they have thrown tantrums.

Kate erupted in the kitchen one afternoon after seeing her mother light a cigarette, shouting that she hated her, over and over again.

Binder listened for a long time, motionless and ashamed. She knew that the girls worshiped the memory of their father. In one of those moments of weakness that every parent experiences, and regrets immediately, she looked for mercy. Why, she asked the girls, did they so scorn her for smoking, when they had given a pass to their father when he smoked.

"Because," Kate screamed, her eyes blazing with anger, "I didn't know he was going to get tumors and die."

It is the rare smoker who does not wish to quit. A recent survey found that two-thirds of smokers have tried seriously to stop, most of them three times....

What is not as commonly understood is the way that smoking makes people feel guilty and ashamed, looking at themselves as failures for not being able to kick a habit.

"I am going to quit—I have to," she vowed one recent day, as a

cigarette burned on a plate, a makeshift ashtray, in the kitchen of a house that falls quiet, too quiet, in the nighttime. "I just don't know how."

One final article from *Newsweek* (February 1, 1999) by David W. Cowles. The title: "The Price of Smoking." The sub-title: "I finally kicked the habit after 50 years, but I couldn't escape lung cancer and emphysema."

I'm not going to waste your time trying to persuade you to quit smoking. You've already heard or read all of the reasons that you shouldn't light up. You've seen the surgeon general's warnings on every pack of cigarettes and in every tobacco ad. You've been lectured by friends and family. You're aware that more people die from lung cancer than from breast cancer, prostate cancer and colorectal cancer combined—and that almost all lung cancer is caused by smoking.

The fact is, until you're ready to break the habit, none of the arguments proffered by anti-smoking advocates will have even the slightest impact. But, since you've read this far, I'll give you the benefit of my experiences.

I tried my first cigarette when I was 15. Always a scrawny kid, I thought that smoking made me look more adult and sophisticated and therefore more attractive to the opposite sex. Plus, I liked the slightly intoxicated buzz that inhaling provided. Before long, I was hooked and smoking a pack a day.

Fifty years later, I still enjoyed cigarettes. With my morning coffee. After a good meal. Relaxing in front of a video-poker machine at my favorite Las Vegas casino....

My cardiologist tried his best to persuade me to stop. He said I'd reduce the risk of having a heart attack or stroke, lower my blood pressure and improve my circulation. I felt that he was probably right—for other people. After all, *my* father had smoked all his life and lived to his 90s. I would listen politely, eager for the good doctor to finish so that I


could get out to my car and light up.

The author continues by reciting how he did half-heartedly try to quit a number of times. When his health became obviously affected, finally he decided to quit. He speaks of an addiction that had affected all of his activities for 50 years. Even after he quit, he kept reaching for his pocket repeatedly. Now his health seemed to improve. But a routine physical showed him to have emphysema and, horrors, cancer in his lung. After a painful surgery, the cancer seemingly has been fully removed. The doctor said he was fortunate. And his conclusion?

But I felt anything but lucky. For days after the operation I was in such horrendous pain I believed I'd never leave the hospital alive. For more than a month the excruciating pain continued. Even now, I am still very short of breath.

Yes, I genuinely enjoyed smoking. But I certainly wish that I had found my pleasure elsewhere.

All of the articles quoted above, written five to seven years ago, reflect on the seriousness of the problem. Our readers all know of this. Changes have been taking place. Our churches no longer allow smoking within the building. Restaurants are either non-smoking or at least have a non-smoking section. Motels have smoking and non-smoking rooms. Many of our homes are in effect "non-smoking" areas. Many have quit this habit. Too many still continue. They want to quit but "just don't know how."

We must not forget that there is a spiritual dimension to all of this. The above articles give medical, logical, practical reasons to cease and desist in this addiction. Scripture, however, must convince us first of all and finally. But this is something I would consider with you next time. 

Jacobus Arminius and Arminianism (2)

Arminius' Views

Arminius died at the age of 46. But his teachings lived on in the preaching of his former students, and his heretical views were disseminated throughout the churches.

As far as his views are concerned, Arminius made the doctrine of predestination the object of his attack. He taught that God ordained Christ to be the Mediator and, having done this, God determined to accept in Christ all penitent and believing sinners, and to condemn all impenitent and unbelieving sinners who remained such even though the gospel was preached to them. In addition to this, God, foreknowing who would believe and who would not, foreordained some to salvation.

This was an open attack on the truth of sovereign predestination and an introduction into the church of a false doctrine that made both election and reprobation dependent upon man's will. God's decree of election and reprobation was conditioned on man's faith or unbelief. Thus man's faith determined whether he was elect, and man's unbelief determined his reprobation. God's decree was only a

prediction of the future conduct of man.

Arminius taught various other related doctrines as well, but this constituted the heart of his errors. It is a striking thing that those who do not want the doctrine of sovereign and particular grace attack the doctrine of predestination. It is no wonder, for the truth of sovereign and double predestination is the foundation of all the doctrines of sovereign and particular grace. And, as often as not, of the two, reprobation is the first to come under attack, apparently because enemies of sovereign grace consider that truth to be the Achilles' heel of the Reformed faith.

The Remonstrants

The death of Arminius did not stop the spread of his teachings. In fact, a distinct Arminian party was formed in the church. Probably because the Arminians felt themselves to be sufficiently strong to make their views the official teachings of the Reformed churches in the Netherlands, they frequently asked for a national synod, but for purposes of changing the two creeds of the Reformed churches, the Heidelberg Catechism and the Confession of Faith.

It is not at all uncommon for heretics, even today, to operate in much the same way in which the Arminian party operated. They follow a program like this. As they begin to teach their views, they clothe their views in Reformed lan-

guage and make their views sound as much like the truth as they possibly can. In this way they deceive the unwary.

When it begins to become apparent that they are not succeeding altogether in deceiving the churches and when sound and orthodox men begin to expose their errors, they, unable to deny that their views are different from what is accepted in the church, ask for their positions to be tolerated. Toleration becomes their motto. They plead that their views can be held without damage to the truth of Scripture. They claim that the confessions allow room for their position. They plead that they only want discussion of their proposals and that they are willing to be proved wrong. They speak of the value of a certain elasticity in various areas of doctrine. They are more than willing to allow those who disagree with them to maintain their own position, for they are not trying to cram their views down the throats of anyone. They ask for themselves only what they are graciously willing to give to others.

But these are devious stratagems for which people easily fall. When they gain power in the church, and a sufficiently large following to press their position, suddenly they are the most intolerant of all and insist that the church conform to their position. Suddenly there is no room any longer for those who disagree with them.

Prof. Hanko is professor emeritus of Church History and New Testament in the Protestant Reformed Seminary.

So it was with the Arminian party. When their number was sufficiently large, they began to agitate for a national synod, but only for purposes of revising the creeds. Their confidence that such a synod would follow their desires was also based on the fact that the government, sympathetic to their cause, would control the synod and stifle opposition. Then the creeds could be modified to suit their own views.

All these efforts were successfully resisted when the orthodox objected that no synod could legally be called for purposes of revising the creeds. And the government commission, authorized to call a synod, decided that, if a synod could not be held, the particular synods ought to be advised to drop all discussion and debate concerning the differing views within the churches on the grounds that the differences were insufficient to warrant dissension. The churches were thus warned to drop all debate over the issues which the Arminians had brought up. This, in itself, was a triumph for the Arminian cause.

Emboldened by this decision of the government commission, the Arminians came together in the capital of the Netherlands, the Hague, in 1610 to draw up a document in which they set down their theological views. It was submitted to the government commission in the hopes that this document would settle the problem. This document became the famous "Five Articles of the Remonstrants."

This is an important document, for it became the basis for the condemnation of the Arminian position at the Synod of Dordt, and each of the five chapters of the Canons is an answer to one of the five articles that the Arminians drew up.

We are not able to quote the articles in full, but a few brief remarks will give their main ideas and general purpose.

The articles teach a conditional election based on foreseen faith. They flatly deny irresistible grace and speak of a universal atonement of Christ. They are ambiguous on the questions of total depravity and preservation of the saints.

They make an attempt to sound Reformed by using Reformed language and including several Reformed views, but they omit certain important doctrines from the articles important to the Reformed faith, particularly the doctrine of sovereign reprobation.

They appeal only to Scripture and deliberately avoid the confessions. They knew that the confessions condemned them, and they therefore wanted no part of them. In a direct appeal to Scripture, they appealed to individual texts, taken out of their contexts, which they could use to bolster their heresy. Luther had long before said that any heresy under heaven could be proved by appealing to individual texts apart from the context and the teaching of the whole Word of God.

The Political and the Ecclesiastical Situation

While all this was going on, the political and ecclesiastical situation was deteriorating.


In the churches many Arminian preachers were in control. Faithful people of God who decried Arminian error were also present in these congregations, but their protests only resulted in persecution. Frequently, in many parts of the Netherlands, they were forced to meet separately on the Lord's Day for worship. They nevertheless did not leave the Reformed Church, for there was no other church to which they could go. They spoke of themselves as *dolerende kerken*, that is, churches of the Reformed Church who were "grieving" over the sad state of affairs in their church, which they could not leave.

The political situation was also in disarray. Technically, the nation was still at war with Spain,

although there were no hostilities. Because of the constant threat of renewed fighting, a strong and united Netherlands was necessary. But now the nation was torn in pieces by the deep divisions between the Calvinists and the Arminians. Further, the government, under Oldenbarneveld, favored a loose confederation of provinces, each of which was more or less responsible for its own rule, while Prince Maurice favored a more centralized form of government as being better able to cope with the Spanish threat.

Pressures were growing for a national synod to be held. Many of the provinces urgently requested a synod to ease the turmoil that was becoming increasingly harmful to the unity of the nation. Prince Maurice pressed strongly for it, although his motives were political. Where a provincial government did not favor the Arminian party, the Arminians threatened to take up arms against the authorities and outright rebellion loomed. And, strangely enough, King James I of England wanted a synod in the Netherlands and instructed his ambassador to convey his wishes to the Dutch government officials. James' request was given considerable weight because the Netherlands badly needed the support of England in its war with Spain.

When Oldenbarneveld was arrested for entering into secret peace negotiations with the Spanish, the time came for a synod to be called. The government came under the control of Prince Maurice, and one of his first decrees was the ordering of a national synod. The classes were instructed to choose delegates to meetings of the provincial synods, and the provincial synods were instructed to choose delegates for a national synod.

More on this synod, and its canons, in our next article. 

The Indispensable Qualification for the Gospel-Ministry (2)

So when they had dined, Jesus saith to Simon Peter, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me more than these? He saith unto him, Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee. He saith unto him, Feed my lambs....

John 21:15-23

Love for Jesus Christ on the part of the minister is certainly right (as was shown in the opening article, in the July 2003 issue of the *Standard Bearer*). What needs to be emphasized is that love for Jesus is the indispensable qualification for the ministry. Love is the indispensable qualification because love is the mighty motivation for the work—the *hard* work—of the gospel-ministry. After all, faith is basic to love. We cannot love Jesus, if we do not know Him and trust Him in true faith. It is faith that works by love. But in John 21:15ff. Jesus did not ask Peter, “Do you *believe* on me?” He asked, “Do you *love* me?”

Love moved Christ to redeem us: “[he] loved me, and gave him-

self for me” (Gal. 2:20). Even in everyday, earthly life there is no power like love, to motivate humans to work. No one could pay a woman to do the work that a mother freely, gladly does for her children out of love. So also the work of the ministry demands the motivating power of love.

Love Moves the Minister

The work of the ministry is difficult, demanding, tiring, discouraging, and sacrificial. This is not all it is, but it is this, especially at certain times. Only love for Jesus will move you who now graduate from seminary to do the work of the ministry, and do it rightly. Only love for Jesus will keep you going in the work of the ministry.

Week in, week out; month after month; year after year, you will work diligently on your sermons, *because you love Jesus*.

There will come a time when you are deeply discouraged by lack of fruit, and even wonder whether there is any power in the Word at all. You will carry on, *because you love Jesus*.

You will be tempted not to call on a sinning member, because he is obviously hardened. Besides, he dislikes you intensely and has made your life miserable. You will call on him, *because you love Jesus*.

You will have to preach a truth that some, or even many, of your congregation oppose, and you dread the trouble preaching that

truth will cause. You will preach it, *because you love Jesus*.

At classis or synod, you will have to defend an unpopular position, against your own respected colleagues, incurring their anger and criticism. You will do it, *because you love Jesus*.

The week has been busy, very busy. Perhaps it is the time of the Christmas and New Year holidays, with one sermon after another. While others are relaxing and having parties, you are in the study working, all day and perhaps all night too, *because you love Jesus*.

There will come the Monday morning when you drag yourself out of bed and into the study, half angry and half despondent, because in spite of your best efforts—*good* efforts—men and women have unfairly, and brutally, criticized you. Or, what is even harder on you, you are down because you yourself judge that your sermons were poor. Then Jesus Christ will put this question to you, “Paul, son of Peter,” or, “William, son of Harry, do you love Me?”

John Calvin, speaking as much from experience as from the text in John 21, wrote this about the indispensable qualification:

No man ... will steadily persevere in the discharge of this office, unless the love of Christ shall reign in his heart, in such a manner that, forgetful of himself and devoting himself entirely to Christ, he overcomes every obstacle.

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Love that Confesses Christ

Love for Jesus is the indispensable qualification of a minister, but this love is not a substitute for confessing Christ, nor an excuse for corrupting the truth of Christ. On the contrary, love for Christ necessarily issues in a bold confession of Jesus Christ—a confession of Jesus Christ *in truth*.

"I love Jesus," says the liberal, and promptly denies that Jesus is the Messiah, the eternal Son of God.

"I love Jesus," says the contemporary evangelical, and then proceeds to deny that Jesus effectually redeemed all for whom He died.

"I love Jesus," say many Reformed pastors, and immediately go on to deny that in the preaching of the gospel Jesus sovereignly saves everyone to whom He is gracious and whom He wills to save.

They do not love Jesus, not in the teaching of these false doctrines at any rate. They do not love Jesus, no matter how they profess love, with pious face, tender tones, and flowing tears. For their doctrine, their teaching, denies Him.

Love confesses Him! Love confesses Him in His divine person; His two natures; His substitutionary death and bodily resurrection; His drawing of the elect church to Himself by the irresistible grace of the sovereign Spirit; His keeping of every one of those whom He draws unto life eternal.

Confession of Christ in truth arises out of faith. It is love, however, that lends fervor to the confession. As children who love their father are keen to speak well of him, so is the minister who loves Jesus keen to speak well of Him. The same love accounts for the minister's readiness to defend Jesus' good name against all defamation, just as children will defend their father's reputation against those who would defame it.

It is common today—all too common even among us—to charge a minister who passionately defends the truth of Christ, and ve-

hemently condemns all lies about Christ, as being unloving. Nothing could be further from the truth. The minister uncompromisingly proclaims the full and exact truth about Jesus and pitilessly condemns false doctrine because he is a loving man. He loves Jesus Christ.

It must not be overlooked that when Jesus asked Peter whether he loved Him, the Lord was restoring to office a minister who was suspended from office for *denying Christ*. Denial of Christ was the minister's offense. Love for Jesus is the qualification for the office of the ministry to which the minister is restored, because love for Jesus will not deny Him, but confess Him.

Denial of Christ is hatred of Him, no matter how sweet the liberal, how pious the evangelical, or how earnest the Reformed pastor. And the teaching of false doctrine is denial of Christ.

The minister who loves Jesus Christ will confess Him. He will confess Him by teaching the truth as revealed in Scripture and as systematized in the confessions of the church. He will confess Him by teaching the truth without any corruption of that truth. Insofar as a minister corrupts the truth, he denies Jesus Christ. And insofar as he denies Jesus Christ, he does not love Him.

Confessing Christ as Pastor of the Flock

The minister confesses Christ by feeding the flock with the truth of Christ and by tending the flock according to the will of Christ. "Feed my lambs," "feed my sheep," "feed my sheep" is the threefold charge of the Lord to a Peter who loves Him, and who has publicly declared that he loves Him (John 21:15, 16, 17). Love for Jesus is the basic qualification for the *ministry*. The ministry consists of feeding Jesus' sheep. Love for Jesus in a minister, therefore, will take form in the feeding of Jesus' sheep. Love

for Jesus will move the minister to feed Jesus' sheep. That is, love for Jesus will move a man to be a true pastor, a shepherd, of the flock.

Although the King James Bible translates both words as "feed," in reality Christ used two different words to charge Peter with his duty in his restored office. In verses 15 and 17 of John 21, the word means "feed." In verse 16, the word means "be a shepherd," or, "tend the flock." The minister is called by Christ to tend the flock, including good rule of the congregation, special help of the needy, and recovery of the straying. Chiefly, his task is to feed the flock with the Word. With the Word, he feeds. By the Word, he tends.

The flock includes lambs, who are to have particular attention: "Feed my lambs" (John 21:15). Christ has a covenantal view of His church. Jesus sees the church as made up of believers and their children. Jesus Christ is the fulfillment of the shepherd of Isaiah, who shall "gather the lambs with his arm, and carry them in his bosom, and shall gently lead those that are with young" (Is. 40:11).

Since love for Christ is the indispensable qualification for the work of the gospel-ministry, woe to the undershepherd who neglects the flock because he busies himself in other, secular work, or because he loves to play, or because he is lazy. Woe also to the undershepherd who starves the flock with scanty fare, or who kills his flock with false doctrine. Woe also to the undershepherd who scatters the flock by self-willed, foolish rule.

All such ministers hate Jesus Christ.

Love for Jesus feeds and tends His sheep and lambs.

The connection between love for Jesus and feeding the sheep, Jesus Himself points out: "*my lambs*," "*my sheep*" (John 21:15, 16, 17). The church is Christ's. God gave the church to Christ in election (John 6:37, 39). Christ pur-


chased the church with His blood (Acts 20:28). The Spirit of Christ unites the church to Christ by regeneration and the call of the gospel (Gal. 4:6).

Such is Christ's love for His church that He directs the minister's love for Him towards the

care of the church. Love for the church *for Christ's sake* (I emphasize: "*for Christ's sake*") is love for Him, because the church is one with Him in the mystical union. It is one with Him as a wife is one with her husband.

What an encouragement this is

to the faithful pastor. Christ counts the minister's service to the church love for Himself: every hour of study; every sermon; every pastoral call; every counseling session; every prayer for the congregation, denomination, and universal body.

... to be concluded. 

Taking Heed to the Doctrine

Rev. Steven Key

Our Adoption

The biblical concept of adoption is not usually included in a treatment of the order of salvation. It is a wonderful truth, however, that ought not be overlooked. We treat it now as a benefit of justification.

Rooted in Election

Our adoption by God is a wonder of grace rooted in sovereign election. So we are taught in Ephesians 1:4-5. God has predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will.

It is striking in Ephesians 1:4-5 that two different words are used with reference to divine election. In verse 4 we read that God has "chosen" us in Christ, the word "chosen" being the word that might commonly be translated by "election." But verse 5 uses the word "predestinated."

Both words, it is clear, speak of an absolutely sovereign act of God. The idea of both words is similar and inseparable, each referring to God's eternal decree, a decree which does not merely fore-

see events, nor merely precede the thing, but *brings it about*. But there is a distinction that must be maintained in the terms used by the inspired apostle.

While the word "chosen" means that God has made separation, chosen, out of the whole human race, a people in Christ Jesus, and speaks of God's determinative will with direct reference to persons, "predestination" speaks of that decree as *things* or *circumstances* stand in relationship to the persons who are the objects of that decree. We have been predestinated "unto the adoption of children" by Jesus Christ unto God Himself — and all of this "to the praise of the glory of his grace."

We who were lost, we who had no connection to the family of God, have been made His own children!

Drink deeply this truth! How refreshing you will find it!

No Longer Children of Wrath

The very idea of adoption, after all, points us to the reality of our former state and condition. Prior to this adoption, as God accomplishes it in time, you and I were outside the fellowship of His family.

God has only one natural Son, the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth (John 1:14, 18).

In Ephesians 2:3, Paul tells us

that we were by nature the "children of wrath," even as others. That expression, "children of wrath," is a very expressive Hebraism. When a person was condemned to death, for example, the Hebrews would refer to such a person as "a child of death." One who was very poor would be called "a child of poverty." So, because by nature we were under the wrath of God, we were called "the children of wrath."

That phrase also expresses another unpleasant truth, namely, that our entire nature was characterized through and through by that which God could not look upon except with wrath. The way in which some speak about man's honor and capabilities, and promote the idea of man's dignity and self-esteem, even the deity within man, is nothing but idle talk. The judgment of Scripture (Jeremiah 17:11) is that "the heart of man is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked." In the heart of every person lurks everything evil. It is indeed as Jesus said, "Out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witnesses, blasphemies."

I need not say more about the sinfulness of our natures, nor of our total depravity by nature, because you who have been saved

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know your own sinfulness and that from which God has saved you. Not only were we "children of wrath" by conception and birth (Ps. 51:5), as well as by nature and practice; but if God had not saved us by regenerating and converting and justifying us in Christ, we should have had to endure the wrath of God forever in that everlasting abyss of separation from God. I speak of hell, where not a single ray of hope nor one soothing drop of consolation will give relief to the miseries of those who hear the dreadful sentence of Christ, "I never knew you."

It is God's grace alone that has made all the difference between our continuing as children of wrath and our being now the children of the living God.

Given a Place in God's Family

"But when the fulness of time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, To redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons. And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father. Wherefore thou art no more a servant, but a son; and if a son, then an heir of God through Christ" (Gal. 4:4-7). That is the good news of the gospel, as proclaimed by the apostle to the Christians in Galatia.

He speaks the same in Romans 8:14-17: "For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God. For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father. The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God: And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together."

No longer are we the children of wrath, when by faith in Christ we are counted the sons of God.

But when we remember that

Christ alone is the eternal and natural Son of God, the question arises: What is our place as sons and daughters of the living God, from whom we by nature were alienated?

We are children by adoption. We are children adopted of God by grace for Christ's sake.

There is a special significance in the use of this term *adoption*. After all, the nature of the Christian as a new man is not determined by adoption, but by regeneration. We become children of God when we are born again. It is by the Spirit's wonder work of regeneration that we become partakers of the divine nature. But adoption conveys a different idea.

The term adoption speaks of a *legal* standing, which *declares* our new relationship to God. That is why we speak of it as a benefit of justification. Even as among us, so also with God, adoption speaks of a legal act. A couple who would take and raise children who are not their own natural children can do so only by the decree of the court. So it is in the highest sense when we become the children of God.

When God pronounced us justified through the redeeming blood of His Son, our adoption papers were signed with indelible ink. In redeeming us, Christ not only purchased our adoption, but sealed it with His own blood. He made us co-heirs of all that He Himself possesses. By adoption, therefore, we are introduced as the children of God and given a place as sons and daughters in His family.

Understand well, there was nothing in us that made us worthy of that adoption by God. He didn't sit down and look through a book of persons, reading their biographical sketches and picking out the ones that had a certain skin color or physical beauty pleasing to Him. We didn't have to exceed a certain level of IQ or fit within a certain age bracket, in order to be worthy objects of God's adoption. We didn't need to attain to a high level

of Bible knowledge or have a certain income, in order for God to adopt us. He adopts His family sovereignly, by grace, from eternity. He declares us legally His. We are the sons and daughters of the living God!

That adoption is realized by Christ. In the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, God established our adoption. In Christ we have obtained the inheritance incorruptible and undefiled, that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for those who shall be the heirs of salvation.

But we are partakers even now of that inheritance! To be an heir of God through Christ is to be a partaker of all the privileges of children in Father's house, and a partaker of all that belongs to Him. As His adopted children we enjoy His love, His care, His teaching, His protection, His provision, and, not least, His loving chastisement, which directs us on the right way. But there is more.

We are heirs of all that God has! That could never happen in an earthly family. If a father were rich and had several children as heirs, then perhaps one son would have one house and business, and another son a different house and business, and each of the daughters would receive so much. But the fact is, no matter how rich, a parent's possessions are limited.

Our inheritance as heirs of God is truly remarkable. When by grace we become the children of God, we become heirs of all that God has. All the blessings of salvation belong to every one of His children and heirs. All His promises belong to you who believe. They belong also to me. All His truth belongs to you. It belongs also to me. Regeneration is yours. It is also mine. Justification belongs to you. It belongs to me as well. You have Christ and I have Christ. You have the Spirit; so do I. You have the Father, and I have the Father. You have peace with God. That blessed possession is mine also. "The LORD

is my portion" is the repeated confession of all God's children.

A Unique Adoption

But there is another element to this adoption that is on the foreground in Galatians 4. I refer to the fact that our adoption by God is itself unique. Not only does He take us as His children by adoption *legally*; but He actually *makes us His children*. He does that in a way that cannot possibly be duplicated by a husband and wife who adopt children.

God makes us look like His children!

He forms us after the image of His own dear Son. He does so by regenerating us. Not only are we adopted, therefore, but we are born into the family of God, and thus become "partakers of the divine nature" (II Pet. 1:4).


From this blessed reality flows the fountain of sanctification, the fruits of Christ's life in us. It is only in the consciousness of this truth that we bring forth the fruits

of thankfulness that are the marks of our sanctification. That is evident in Galatians 4:6. The Galatians were not living in the consciousness of that reality. Mistaking the purpose of the law, they looked upon it as a sort of code according to which they worked for their wages. They viewed their place in the church as a place where they might earn their way to heaven. And Paul says, "Children don't work for wages." The church in Galatia had to be reminded that they were sons. So we also must remember our blessed place as members of the family of God, partakers of His covenant of grace. Then alone are we under a spiritual compulsion to live in gratitude.

Finally, because "it does not yet appear what we shall be" (I John 3:1,2), there is yet to be revealed in the last day what Romans 8:19 refers to as "the manifestation of the sons of God." In that day when our bodies also are redeemed from

the travail and corruption of sin, we shall receive the final manifestation of our adoption, to the glory of God our Father.

What an amazing benefit of our justification is our adoption! There is no higher position in all the world than what we have been given by grace! The inspired apostle John put it this way in I John 3:1: "Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God!"

What a glorious light this shines upon the union of the church with Christ, and the fruit of that union! How close, how intimate, must be that relationship between us and Christ, if by virtue of it the Father loves us with the same love, rejoices over us with the same delight, as He does toward His only begotten Son! So we may look forward to the day when the only begotten Son, our Lord, will say, "Come, ye blessed of my Father; enter thou into the joy of thy Lord." 

In His Fear

Rev. Daniel Kleyn

Love for the Church (1)

God loves His church. She is precious to Him as the bride and body of Jesus Christ. So great is His love for her that He sent His Son to die for her. The church is His. He delights in her. Jehovah "loveth the gates of Zion more than all the dwellings of Jacob" (Ps. 87:2).

Since God loves His church, so ought we. The church is beloved

of God and precious to Him. That's what she should be to us.

To love God's church means, first of all, that we love the church as the universal body of Christ. That, after all, is what the church is – the great company of the elect. She is the body of those God eternally chose from every tribe and nation under heaven, and that He now gathers by His Word and Spirit in every age of world history. That church is to be the object of our love.

This involves loving the individual members of the universal

body of Christ. Our love should not be limited just to the saints that live where we live, that have the same skin color as we have, and that speak the same language as we speak. The child of God who loves the church knows God has His people in all nations under heaven. He loves the people of God regardless of their physical, earthly differences. In this way he loves the church as the universal bride and body of Jesus Christ.

But we are to love the church also as a church institute. The reason for this is that the church as

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the universal body of Christ comes to manifestation in this world as the gathering of believers and their seed in the institute. Wherever there is such a gathering, that congregation of God's people is a manifestation of the body of Christ in a particular place.

Not all church institutes, however, are that. Not just any gathering of people that calls itself a church is a church. The church as the universal body of Christ comes to manifestation only where a church, by the grace of God, maintains the three marks that distinguish her as a true church of Christ. That is, a church is a church only when the pure doctrine of the gospel is preached, the pure administration of the sacraments is maintained, and Christian discipline is properly exercised. Only such a church is loved of God, and is to be loved by us.

As we consider our calling to love the church, we focus especially upon love for the church institute. This involves loving the church of which you are a member — loving the local congregation, and loving the denomination as a whole. If, by the grace of God, a congregation or denomination is faithful to His truth and maintains the three marks of the true church, you are to love her. If God has given you a place in such a congregation and denomination, that church is to be the object of your love.

Our tendency is to take the instituted church where we are members for granted. We do so because the church has always been there. We have been members of her all our lives. We have never been prevented, because of persecution, from attending both worship services each Sunday. We have always been able to hear faithful preaching of the gospel. We have always had the opportunity to be a part of the communion of the saints, not only on Sundays, but also at Bible studies during the week. The church and all that is

connected to her has always been readily available for us to participate in and to enjoy. As a result, we often fail to appreciate and love her.

This becomes evident when we have a casual attitude toward the church and our membership in her. We are not very interested in the preaching. We do not have a concern for the church's welfare. We are involved as little as possible in church life. We do not have the time to help out and encourage our fellow saints. The church does not have a prominent place in our lives. Worship on Sundays is rather routine and mundane.

Sometimes God must take something away from us before we truly appreciate it. We know this from experience. Sometimes it happens with a family member — a spouse, a parent, a child. We take that loved one for granted until something serious happens to him or her, or until God takes that person from us. Then we wish we had loved that individual more than we did.

May it never be necessary for God to do that with regard to the church. Let us be sure we sincerely love her.

What should motivate us to love the church are the positive things about her — her strengths.

It is certainly true that the church also has many weaknesses and sins. The church of Christ in this world is far from perfect, for believers have only a small beginning of the new obedience. On account of this, it is often difficult to love the church of which one is a member. We first of all see weaknesses in ourselves. By God's grace we acknowledge and strive to overcome these weaknesses, but nevertheless they are there. We also see weaknesses in other members. We notice members whose walk and conduct is very troubling and brings shame to the church and to the name of Christ. As a result we want very little to do with them, or with the church because of them.

Their behavior makes it very difficult for us to love the church.

At other times we see general weaknesses in a congregation or in the churches as a whole. We sense a lack of interest in doctrinal distinctiveness. Or we notice a tendency toward legalism. Or we find little interest in mission work. Or we see some pushing for changes in the way we worship. We then become discouraged and disappointed with the church and find it difficult to love her. That is especially so when those weaknesses and sins seem to threaten the church's very existence, and apparently very few notice or care.

If the only thing one sees and notices are the church's flaws and weaknesses, it is not only difficult but almost impossible to love the church as we ought. For that reason, the Scriptures tell us we are to notice the strengths of the church and to love her because of them. This does not mean that we ignore her weaknesses. We may never do that. We may not shut an eye to errors in doctrine and ungodliness in life. These things must be noticed and must be dealt with. And in fact, as we hope to see in a future article, that in itself is an important way in which we manifest our love for the church. But as regards being motivated to love the church, we are to stop and take note of her strengths.

This is pointed out in Psalm 48:12, 13a where we read, "Walk about Zion, and go round about her: tell the towers thereof. Mark ye well her bulwarks, consider her palaces." This is an admonition to the people of God to take a look at the strengths of the church of which they are members.

The Old Testament believer was to do that. He was told, as it were, to go outside the city of Jerusalem and to take the time to notice many things about that city. He was to walk around her and look at her from every angle. He was to notice her towers, her bulwarks, and her palaces. He might

not merely take a superficial glance at the city of God, but he was to make a thorough and careful observation and study. He must see what it was that made Zion such a magnificent city, a city that was beautiful and glorious, a city that was strong and safe.

That's what the New Testament believer is to do. Jerusalem and her temple represent the church of Christ. We are to take the time to notice her strengths and beauties. We are told, as it were, to put aside for a moment the church's weaknesses, and to focus on what she is positively. We are to notice the


things about the church that make her spiritually strong. Noticing those things, we will be motivated and enabled properly to love her.

How do we do that? When the church is made up of sinful members and has many weaknesses, how do we see her as beautiful and strong? We do that by looking at the church from the viewpoint of what God has made her to be.

The church does not have strengths because of men. The faithful church of Christ is not faithful because of herself. She is beautiful and strong because God is in her midst and blesses her.

Psalm 48 makes that clear. The church is the city of the great King (v. 2). She is strong and safe because God is her refuge (v. 3) who protects and defends her from her enemies (vv. 4-7). God establishes her for ever (v. 8). He is the God of His church for ever and ever, guiding her even unto the end of time (v. 14).

Noticing what God has done and continues to do for His church, we will love her. Remember, God loves her. She is precious to Him and loved by Him. May we love her too.

... to be continued. 

Book Reviews



A Theatre in Dachau, by Hermanus Knoop. Tr. Andrew Petter. Ed. Roelof A. Janssen. Neerlandia, Alberta, Canada/Pella, Iowa: Inheritance Publications, 2001. Pp. 143. \$12.90 (paper). [Reviewed by the editor.]

Reformed Christians, young and old, ought to read this gripping, sobering account of one man's suffering in the Dachau concentration camp. Hermanus Knoop was a Dutch Reformed preacher who resisted the antichristian assault of Nazism upon the Christian church and the godly life of the people of God in the Netherlands in the 1940s. His "resistance" was the necessary resistance of the proclamation of the Word. In the face of the Nazi idolatry, Knoop courageously and uncompromisingly preached, and wrote, the Lordship of Jesus Christ and the calling of the Reformed saints to honor that Lordship in all of life. For this—for the sake of the witness of Christ — Knoop was condemned by the Nazi tyrants and their Dutch collaborators to the living death of Dachau. From April, 1942 to October, 1943, Knoop was "slowly but surely tortured to death by German S.S. devils, assisted by captive German Communists." Knoop survived.

Although the torture was extreme—and the book describes it graphically—the theme of the book is not human suffering. Neither is it human endurance of inhuman brutality. Rather, the book extols the worth of Jesus Christ. He is worthy that His people suffer shame and pain for His sake. "Theatre" in the title is the "spectacle" of I Corinthians 4:9: "For we are made a spectacle unto the world." And the grace of Christ is sufficient even for the experience of Dachau.

Knoop's amazing admonition and confession at the end of the book rejoice the heart.

Perhaps the urge might arise in someone's heart as he reads of all the suffering and tortures, to pity me. I beg you, do not pity me. For one, to whom the Lord has shown so much purifying, sanctifying, encouraging, comforting, and sustaining grace, is not to be pitied, but rather to be envied. If the great word *martyr* should rise to your lips, I beg you do not utter it; restrain it. To be a martyr is truly more than this. It is—I can say this without any pathos—it is an unspeakable privilege, a great unmerited favour, to have been in Dachau, to have been a theatre to the world and to angels and to men (p. 128).

From this history, brief though it is, there is much to be learned. The church and the believer can be confronted by the Nazi-like deification of the State, whether from the right or from the left, at any time and in any country. The church and the believer *will* be confronted by the godlike State in the near future. Hitler's Nazi Germany was a mock-up of Antichrist.

Under the pressure of persecution, there are always those in the church, ministers as well as members, who compromise their confession and discipleship, to save their skin and even merely to keep their comforts. More despicable, if this is possible, than the Nazi monsters were the ministers in the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands—*leading* ministers—who made peace with the Nazi overlords, accommodating their preaching, praying, writing, and governing of the church to the dictates of godless Nazi ideology. Inevitably, these colleagues of Knoop actively opposed him. Knoop speaks of the "tragedy of the 'leaders.'"

Knoop notes with more sadness than anger that, as soon as the initial shock of the Nazi invasion wore off, many Dutchmen quite readily gave themselves to the in-

fluences of Nazi thinking simply because they wanted to survive. In addition, "the Dutch business mind also awoke again very soon—the mind-set which pays attention to the business of making money without asking how.... Doing business, earning money, keeping what one had and adding to it, even though the manner was not at all above suspicion — that seemed to be the highest plane to which many people could bring themselves" (p. 31). When these Dutchmen were


members of Reformed churches, their favorite text became Jesus' exhortation to be "wise as serpents."

The story of the abject surrender of the kingdom of Christ to the Third Reich by the Protestant churches and theologians in Germany is available in English (see Klaus Scholder, *The Churches and the Third Reich*, 2 vols., Fortress, 1988). Is there a solid, well-researched, detailed study in English of the same mixture of bedazzlement and cowardice on the part of Dutch churches and theologians?

Or is there such a study in Dutch that might be translated into English?

Klaas Schilder has a moving preface introducing the work.

The book has a curious Protestant Reformed connection. It was originally translated into English by Andrew Petter and published in installments in the late 1940s in *Concordia*.

You will be hard pressed to put this book down. It will be still more difficult to forget it. 

News From Our Churches

Mr. Benjamin Wigger

Congregation Activities

Friends of Cornerstone PRC in Dyer, Indiana invited friends and supporters from our other churches in the Chicago area to join with them for an Open House-Dedication on July 28. There was an open house of their new church building from 6:00 - 7:30 P.M. followed by a dedication service starting at 7:30.

Last year the Sunday School children and young people of the Byron Center, MI PRC contributed money and items for our mission work in the Philippines. In response to that support, Rev. A. Spriensma, our missionary to the Philippines, gave a slide presentation at Byron Center after a Sunday morning service to show especially the younger members of the congregation the people and his work as missionary there. The "older members" were also invited to join them.

The congregation of the South Holland, IL PRC gave approval to their council to proceed with the purchase of approximately 20 acres of land in Crete, IL. Money from their building fund will be used for the purchase and a drive will be

held at some future date to cover the remaining cost.

Cornerstone PRC in Dyer, IN sponsored a Vacation Bible School this summer entitled "Growing in the Son." It was held the mornings of August 4-8 and was planned to include children ages 4 years to 5th grade.

Thursday, July 3, 21 members of the Georgetown PRC in Hudsonville, MI, plus three others from neighboring PR churches, flew out of Grand Rapids, MI for a two-week stay in Romania. Plans called for the group to visit remote villages to extend a hand of help and encouragement in the name of Christ.

Mission Activities

Plans have been approved for cooperative labors in Allentown, PA by our eastern home missionary, Rev. J. Mahtani, and Rev. D. Overway, pastor of Covenant PRC in Wyckoff, NJ. Rev. Overway planned to make a visit to Allentown in early August. A joint visit, by Rev. Mahtani and Rev. Overway, is being planned for October. Covenant PRC is also planning a picnic in the Allentown area the first week of September, to which the Pittsburgh mission is also invited. Also, Rev. Overway and his family planned on vaca-

tioning in the Pittsburgh area and hoped to spend time with our missionary discussing mission labors, touring their mission office, and learning about the work done there.

The Covenant of Grace Reformed Fellowship in Spokane, WA is now meeting in the building that they have leased. The building is a storefront type business on a fairly busy road in Otis Orchards, WA. You can see a picture of the building and pictures of all the members on their newly designed web site. The address is <http://home.earthlink.net/~tcm50.=20>.

Rev. and Mrs. R. Miersma returned home from Ghana in late July, thankful for the Lord's safe keeping through all the many miles traveled, as well as during their labors in Ghana.

Evangelism Activities

The Reformed Witness Committee of Doon and Hull, IA PRCs, along with members from the Edgerton, MN PRC has arranged an additional broadcast of the Reformed Witness Hour. It will now be aired on KCRO 660AM in Omaha, Nebraska at 4:30 P.M. Sunday afternoon.

The first weekend in July marked the much-anticipated dates for the "Family Conference" spon-

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


sored by the congregation of the First PRC in Edmonton, Alberta, Canada. This weekend saw well over 300 persons from Canada and the U.S. gathered in Edmonton to enjoy good Christian fellowship and a weekend looking at "The Covenant Home." Friday evening, July 4, Rev. S. Key, pastor of the Hull, IA PRC, spoke on the theme, "Maintaining Marriage in an Age of Adultery." This was followed the next morning by Rev. A. Brummel, pastor of South Holland, IL PRC, speaking on "Bringing Forth Children in an Age of Selfishness." Later that afternoon Rev. M. DeVries, pastor at First in Edmonton, spoke on "Promoting Obedience in an Age of Rebellion." Each speech was followed by a question and answer period. Parents also had the option to allow their children 10 years old and under to participate in organized activities during the speeches on Saturday. Some meals were also pro-

vided. These included a pancake breakfast, lunch on Saturday, a lunch between the worship services on Sunday, and a light supper Sunday evening. The conference concluded with worship services on Sunday. Rev. Brummel preached in the morning from I Samuel 2:11-36 under the theme, "Eli's House Cut Off," and Rev. Key preached in the afternoon from Psalm 127:1a on "Building a Home." With thanks to God we can say without doubt that this Conference gave Edmonton and their guests a time of rich fellowship and edification together.

Minister Activities

On July 13 our Southeast PRC in Grand Rapids, MI extended a call to Candidate W. Langerak. Rev. W. Bruinsma declined the call from Byron Center, MI PRC. Since that decline, Byron made a trio of the Rev. Dick, Rev. Slopsema, and

Candidate Langerak, and extended a call to Candidate Langerak to be their next pastor. Rev. J. Slopsema declined the call he received from Faith PRC in Jenison, MI. Rev. C. Terpstra declined the call he received to serve our churches as missionary to Ghana with Rev. W. Bekkering. Rev. B. Gritters accepted the call to serve our churches as professor in our Seminary, eventually replacing the retiring Prof. R. Decker. July 6 the Hudsonville, MI PRC extended a call to Rev. A. Stewart to serve our churches as missionary in Northern Ireland. Rev. Stewart has since accepted that call. Hudsonville PRC called Rev. Haak as pastor on August 10 from a trio of the Revs Bruinsma, Cammenga, and Haak.

With apologies to Rev. M. Dick and his wife, Grace, we pass along our overdue congratulations to them on the occasion of the birth of a son, Joseph Timothy, born on May 21. 

Announcements

RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The Christian Fellowship Society of Hull PRC extends its sympathy to Dave and Missy VanEgdom and family in the death of her mother,

MRS. JOYCE DAALE.

May God give them comfort and assurance with the promise that "if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens" (II Corinthians 5:1).

Pastor S. Key, President
Michelle Key, Secretary

RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The council of Hope PRC, Redlands, extends sincere Christian sympathy to fellow officebearers John Feenstra, Randy Hendriks, and Gary Gaastra in the passing of their mother and grandmother,

ANNA VAN MEETEREN.

May God be with them in their time of sorrow. "I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills, from whence cometh my help. My help cometh from the Lord, which made heaven and earth" (Psalm 121:1, 2).

Pete Meulenberg, Vice-All

WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

On August 1, 2003, our parents and grandparents,

PROF. and MRS. DAVID ENGELSMA, celebrated their 40th wedding anniversary. We give thanks to God for giving us godly parents. We thank our parents for providing us covenant instruction and for the Christian examples they have set for us.

"But the lovingkindness of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting upon them that fear him, and his righteousness unto children's children" (Psalm 103:17).

- ✳ Rebecca and Troy Maatman
Lucas, Jacob, Caleb, Anna
- ✳ Stefan and Kristin Engelsma
- ✳ Kristin and Calvin Dykstra
Lydia, Abigail
- ✳ Joel and Kristi Engelsma
Claudia
- ✳ Jennifer and Brian Bleyenbergh
Benjamin, Alyssa, Jessica, Micah
- ✳ Cara and Eric Dykstra
Erica, Jason
- ✳ Paul and Melisa Engelsma
Joshua
- ✳ Dewey and Dawn Engelsma
Lillian
- ✳ Emma Engelsma

Grand Rapids, Michigan

RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The council and congregation of Hope PRC, Redlands, extend Christian sympathy to the families of John and Beverly Feenstra, and Chuck and Betty VanMeeteren in the death of their mother, grandmother, and great grandmother,

ANNA VAN MEETEREN,

who was taken to glory on July 24, 2003.

May the families be comforted with the words of Psalm 73:24, "Thou shalt guide me with thy counsel, and afterward receive me to glory."

Pete Meulenberg, Vice-All

NOTICE:

Several of our West Michigan churches are presenting a pair of lectures on October 30 and 31. The first, by Prof. Russell Dykstra, is on the topic, "Tried by Fire: Why the Protestant Reformed Churches had to endure the split of 1953"; the second, a Reformation Day lecture by Prof. Herman Hanko, on "Conditional Theology and the Road Back to Rome." The time and place will be announced later.

Reformed Witness Hour

Topics for September

Date	Topic	Text
September 7	"Holy Scripture: Its Perspicuity"	Deut. 30:11-14
September 14	"The Blessing of Christian Education"	Prov. 22:6
September 21	"Like-minded in Marriage"	Romans 15:5-7
September 28	"Walk as Children of Light"	Ephesians 5:8

RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

On June 25, 2003, the Lord took unto Himself

MR. SIETSE SPRIENSMa

at the age of 80 years, beloved brother of our member Mr. Tom Spriensma. May the Spriensma family find their comfort in Paul's instruction to us in II Corinthians 1:3, 4: "Blessed be God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort; Who comforteth us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble, by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God."

Men's Society
Hudsonville PRC
Erv Kortering, Secretary

NOTICE!!!

With thanks to God we rejoice with our husband, father, and grandfather, **PROF. ROBERT D. DECKER**, who has by God's grace been given the privilege of completing thirty years of teaching in the Protestant Reformed Theological Seminary. To God be the glory!

- * Marilyn Decker
- * Douglas and Deborah Altena
Jared, Amanda, Rachel, Michael
- * Daniel and Denise Decker
Blair, Paige, Danae
- * Timothy and Kathy Decker
Tyler
- * Jonathan and Sarah Decker
Jordan

Jenison, Michigan

WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

On August 10, 2003,

JOE and MARY BRUMMEL

celebrated their 30th wedding anniversary. We, their children and grandchildren, are thankful to our heavenly Father for the covenant upbringing and guidance they have given us and continue to give us. To God alone be the glory.

"And now abideth faith, hope, charity, these three: but the greatest of these is charity" (I Corinthians 13:13).

- * Ryan and Marijo VanOverloop
Trevor, Ryanne, Caleb
- * Joel & Belinda Brummel
Noah
- * Ted and Shannon Brummel
- * Lori
- * Sarah
- * Andrew
- * Katie (in glory)

Grandville, Michigan

ANNUAL MEETING

Reminder: Annual RFPA meeting will be held in Trinity PRC on September 25. Plan to attend.

WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

With gratitude to God, we celebrated the 40th wedding anniversary of our parents and grandparents,

KEN and MARILYN SCHIPPER,

on August 15, 2003. We are thankful to God for the years He has given them together and for the godly heritage they have passed on to us. We pray that God may continue to bless them in their marriage and care for them in the years to come.

"I will sing of the mercies of the Lord forever; with my mouth will I make known thy faithfulness to all generations" (Psalm 89:1).

- * Randy and Lorraine Schipper
R.J.
- * Steve and Deb Kuiper
Paula, Mark, David, Holly, Cynthia
- * Ron Schipper

Grandville, Michigan

The Southeast PRC's Evangelism Society presents:

Professor David Engelsma,

Professor of Dogmatics, Protestant Reformed Seminary

&

Dr. Richard Mouw,

President, Fuller Theological Seminary

A Debate on Common Grace

Sunshine Community Church

3300 East Beltline NE, Grand Rapids, MI

Friday, September 12, 2003

7:00pm

FREE Admission

Please plan to attend this historic lecture/debate regarding the vitally important doctrine of common grace and its effects upon your worldview!