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Volume 80 ♦ Number 1

A Walk Worthy of Our Calling

"I, therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called, with all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love; endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace."

Ephesians 4: 1-3

"Therefore."

Undeniable logic. Inevitable deduction. This word makes it obvious that there is a very close relationship between the previous and what follows. It is important to note this relationship here because with chapter four the inspired apostle begins that portion of his epistle where he applies to the lives of the Ephesians the doctrinal truths he taught in the first three chapters.

With the word "therefore," the inspired apostle is showing that there is a very close relationship

between doctrine and life, between the truths believed and the lives lived by those who believe the truths. Our believing the doctrinal truths presented in the first three chapters of this epistle requires a certain walk in holiness. We are called to live out the doctrines we believe.

We must be careful not to separate doctrine and practice. The practical implications of the doctrines must be taken to heart by the more intellectual believers; and the doctrinal truths that are the basis for how one lives must not be minimized by the more experiential believers.

There is in the first verse another word that teaches us that there must be a close relationship between what one believes and how one lives. It is the word "worthy." The walk of a believer as presented in the previous chapters is to be "worthy" of those truths. A "worthy" walk is one that is "becoming to, suitable to, or matches with" the truth. The walk ought not clash with the truth believed. We are called to take care that our life be consistent with the teach-

ings and the calling. One of the purposes of the believer's life is that it is to make the doctrine attractive, to cause people to admire it and to desire it. We are to live the kind of life that adorns the doctrines of Scripture. That is the way our Father who is in heaven will be glorified (Matt. 5:16).

The relationship between what we believe and how we live should be very close. Not always, however, is it so. The flesh of every believer "lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other: so that ye cannot do the things that ye would" (Gal. 5:17). The believer is not always consistent. He believes these wonderful truths, but he does not always evidence them by the way in which he lives. This inconsistency (sin) is a constant source of humility!

The knowledge of this inconsistency is what occasions the inspired apostle Paul to "beseech" Christians. He is urgently asking, imploring, the Ephesian Christians of his day as well as all believers today. A consistent walk is a matter of great concern to the apostle.

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Later he will command them and argue with them, but here he beseeches them — and us.

To strengthen his appeal, the apostle makes it clear that he is writing to them as someone who experientially knows of what he speaks. He appeals to them as “the prisoner of the Lord.” It is believed that at the time of this writing Paul was in prison. He was living the life of a prisoner because he was a slave of Jesus Christ, loyal to Him and striving always to be obedient to Him. As a consequence of his faithful walk, he was imprisoned. So when Paul beseeches the Ephesian believers, he was at that moment experiencing the consequences of a walk worthy of his calling. As a prisoner of the Lord, Paul beseeches the believers to live as he is living — a life that is consistent with what they believe (even if it means imprisonment). They are not their own; they belong to their Lord. They ought therefore to live out of the desire only to please Him — a life that is worthy of their relationship to Him.



Those who are able to believe the truth have been called. This ability is theirs because they have a “vocation.” We have been “called out of darkness into his marvellous light” that we “should shew forth the praises of him who hath called” us (I Pet. 2:9). Those whom God predestinated unto the adoption of children (Eph. 1:5), them He also called (Rom. 8:30). Christianity is not something that a man decides to take up and do. It is something into which we have been called. We received not only the external gospel call heard in the preaching, but also the internal, effectual call made by the Spirit with our spirit. This call separated the Ephesian Christians from all “other Gentiles” (4:17), and this call separates us from all who do not believe. This call moves us into a new position, the position of being

saved, for “whom he called, them he also justified.”

What is the walk that is worthy of the calling to which every believer is called? In general, it is the walk of godliness — it is constantly renewing the spirit of our mind so that we put off the old man and put on the new man (4:22-24). Over the course of the next three chapters Paul will apply the doctrines to the whole life of believers. However, there is one specific area of the worthy walk of the believer that the inspired apostle presents first, namely, preserving the unity of the church. This is of greatest importance. The truths the Spirit used him to explain and acclaim in the first three chapters are pressing on him this specific aspect of the believer’s walk, namely, a walk that preserves the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. For the next sixteen verses Paul will direct himself to this one aspect of the worthy life. And after that he does not leave it and go on to something else. Rather, he uses the need to keep the unity of the church as the basis for several other admonitions in the rest of this epistle.

The Ephesian believers (and all believers with them) have been called out of spiritual darkness in order to live in a manner that illustrates that they were blessed with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ (1:3). A worthy walk is necessary because God chose them in Christ before the foundation of the world, that they should be holy and without blame before Him (1:4). Their walk should manifest the fact that they have been predestinated unto the adoption of children and are now of the household of God (1:5; 2:19). Further, the truth that God is gathering together in one all things in Christ is to be evident in the walk of those who believe this truth — a walk that is consistent with this truth. The converted Gentiles in Ephesus have heard the preaching of peace (2:17), and the wall be-

tween them and the converted Jews has been broken down and they are now one in Christ, who is their peace (2:14, 15). They are one body and one building (2:16, 21, 22).

Is it any wonder that the chief characteristic of a walk worthy of our calling is the keeping of the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace? Election unites all saints in Christ. The one blood of Christ makes each elect to be a part of God’s one family. Over against the disruptive, dividing power of sin, it is God’s purpose to unite all things in Christ, and this is manifested already in the unity salvation makes of the saved Gentiles with the saved Jews. This is why, when it comes to the particulars of the Christian life, the first thing mentioned is the preservation of this unity. The preservation of the church’s unity powerfully reveals to the world that there is one body and one Spirit, one hope and one faith, one Lord, and one God and Father. It is, above all else, the preserving of this unity that gives God glory.

To speak of the unity of the church as the “unity of the Spirit” instructs us concerning the character or nature of this unity. It clearly implies that while this unity may express itself visibly and externally, it is first spiritual and internal. The Spirit works this unity in the spirits of those chosen by God in Christ, testifying to their spirits that they are the children of God — children in the same family, all having the same Father.

Also, the unity of the church is the unity of the Spirit because it is the Spirit who makes this unity. The church is not made one by the human spirit of friendliness. The members of the body don’t produce this unity. The Holy Spirit does! We cannot make this unity. That is why we are called to keep it, that is, not to break the unity already made by the Spirit. This unity is a living, organic unity, arising from within and working itself out. As the unity of the members

of the human body is not made by the members, so the members of Christ's body do not make themselves to be one in Him. The unity of the human body is that there is one life flowing through them all. So the members of Christ's body have one life, the life of the Spirit, flowing through each of them. Further, this unity is experienced only by those in whom the Spirit dwells and enlightens. It was exactly when Peter saw the Spirit in Cornelius that he was convinced of the unity (Acts 10:47). Their nationality was quite different, but that did not destroy their unity. It is the presence of the Spirit in two people that enables them to have true fellowship.



The calling of every member of the body of Christ with respect to this unity is to "keep" it. The word used by the Spirit means "to attend to carefully, to guard or preserve." While we are not to make the unity, we are called to guard the unity that already exists by the work of the Spirit. We are to accept the responsibility of constantly guarding this unity.

To what extent are we called to keep it? We are to "endeavor." Today the word "endeavor" means only that we are attempting to do something. However, the Greek word translated "endeavoring" is more than attempting or trying. It means to be diligent, and comes from a word that speaks of haste. Therefore, the effort called for by the inspired apostle is great. We are to hurry to do something. We are to show great concern. This is not something that we do infrequently, but we are to have a great concern that this unity of the body of Christ is manifested. We are to preserve it at all costs. We are to be diligent to manifest it.

When the Holy Spirit calls believers to endeavor to keep the unity of the church, He does so by having us focus, not on the other members of the church, but on our

attitudes toward others. Three things are to characterize the attitude of one who is greatly concerned about guarding the church's unity: longsuffering, forbearing, and love. "Longsuffering" means that we hold ourselves in control for a long time. This is over against giving way to our desires. As God suffers long with us, so we must endure those in the body who irritate us. "Forbearing" means that we exercise self-restraint and that we tolerantly bear with them. Instead of retaliating or criticizing or demanding that they change, we are called to develop the attribute of forbearance. We are not to dismiss them or be contemptuous of them, but we are to bear with them because we are greatly concerned about maintaining the unity of the Spirit. And positively we are to forbear one another "in love." Instead of just enduring our fellow-saints who irritate us, we are called to love them because between us there is the bond of perfectness (Col. 3:13,14). We are to make the conscious decision to enjoy the bond God has made between us, deciding to be interested in them and concerned about them, praying for them.


The only way any Christian can exercise himself in love, being longsuffering and forbearing, is by consciously developing and maintaining an inner disposition of "lowliness and meekness." Lowliness is humility of mind. It is in sharp contrast to pride and self-assertion. Humility is described in Scripture as one of the chief marks of the followers of Christ, who humbled Himself supremely. Humility is having a clear and correct understanding of our sins and sinfulness, so we recognize ourselves to be the *chief* of sinners and less than the least of all saints (3:8). Most often we cannot forbear and be longsuffering with fellow-members of the body of Christ because we are looking down on them, seeing them as worse sinners than we are, thinking that we would never

do what they did. Humility puts every other member of Christ's body above us, as better than we are.

"Meekness" is the virtue of inner mildness or gentleness. It is the inner strength that accommodates another's weakness. It is to be considerate of another. And it is the willingness to suffer wrong from them. Instead of retaliating, the meek are willing to commit the matter to God who will judge righteously (I Pet. 2:23). It is our sinful conceits that often cause division in the church. The flesh of every Christian quickly takes pride in family, nationality, talents, status, job, and accomplishments. It is this flesh that must be crucified and put off. And what must be put on is humility and meekness.

This beautiful inner disposition of lowliness and meekness is something the Christian is called to exercise "all" the time — "with *all* lowliness and meekness," the text reads. In every situation and at all times. This is to be the fundamental disposition and character of every Christian. Then we can be longsuffering and forbearing. And this is the way we keep the unity of the church in the bond of peace.

The unity of the Spirit is bound together in peace. To the degree that we are peaceable and peacemakers, we will preserve the peace and unity of the church. This is the great end of all the doctrine taught in the first three chapters of this letter to the Ephesians. If you have been called to believe those precious doctrinal truths, then you are called to walk "worthy" of this calling. And the most important part of such a worthy walk is to preserve the unity of the church.

Preserve this unity of the Spirit! Make every effort to preserve it by constantly working to develop the spiritual virtues of lowliness and meekness. 

Labor Union Membership in the Light of Scripture (3)

The Testimony of Scripture

The testimony of Scripture is that God has ordered, or structured, that basic sphere of human life known as labor in such a way that the owner of the farm or business has authority from God to govern. He certainly has a calling from God toward the workers, a calling to give the workers "that which is just and equal," or "fair" (Col. 4:1). But he has authority, *God's own authority*, and the duty of the worker is to submit and obey.

There are other reasons why labor union membership is sinful, and these will be mentioned presently. But the central issue is this: in the realm of labor, the owner, or management, has the right to rule, so that the Christian worker must submit.

Scripture addresses the matter of the Christian's behavior in the sphere, or ordinance, of labor. It addresses the matter repeatedly. Usually, it addresses this aspect of the Christian's earthly life in connection with the other spheres of life: marriage; family (parents and children); state, or civil government; and church.

These passages, among others, are the Word of God regulating the life of the Christian workingman in the sphere of labor:

- Ephesians 6:5-8: "Servants, be obedient to them that are your masters according to the flesh."

- Colossians 3:22-25: "Ser-

vants, obey in all things your masters according to the flesh."

- I Timothy 6:1ff.: "Let as many servants as are under the yoke count their own masters worthy of all honor."

- Titus 2:9ff.: "Exhort servants to be obedient unto their own masters."

- Philemon: the run-away slave, Onesimus, is sent back to his master, to serve him again.

- I Peter 2:18ff.: "Servants, be subject to your masters with all fear"; the apostle adds: "not only to the good and gentle, but also to the froward."

- James 5:1-11, where the description of the godly conduct of the worker is, "he doth not resist you."

In view of the fact that the Word of God orders our life in all other spheres, it would be exceedingly strange if Scripture did not command us how to live in the sphere of labor. Indeed, it would be culpable failure on the part of the Spirit of inspiration to leave us in the dark, how to live in this vitally important sphere of earthly life. The Spirit is guilty of no such failure. The passages quoted above set forth the will of God for the Christian workingman clearly and fully.

Some attempt to evade the will of God for the laborer, and thus evacuate Scripture of its instruction regarding the sphere of labor, by arguing that the New Testament passages refer to the outdated sys-

tem of slave-master and slave. The argument fails.

First, Scripture sometimes refers to *hired laborers*, to workingmen who are not owned by the master, but rather work for a wage. This is the case in I Peter 2:18ff., which speaks of "servants," not "slaves." This is also the case in James 5, which speaks of the "hire of the laborers" (v. 4).

Second, although it is true that slavery was the prevalent form labor took at that time, the principles laid down by Scripture apply, not to that one specific form, but to all forms of labor in all ages.

Third, the fact that the laborer was a slave does not detract from the calling of the free worker today, to submit, but *emphasizes* this calling *even more strongly*. If slaves had to submit for God's sake, how much more, workingmen today, whose circumstances are in any case far better than those of slaves.

Rebellion

The labor unions, and thus all their members, are guilty of rebellion against lawful authority, just as is the case with a rebellious child, or a revolutionary against the state. Labor unionism is transgression of the fifth commandment of the law of God, "Honor thy father and thy mother," as is evident from the Heidelberg Catechism's explanation of the commandment in Lord's Day 39:

That I show all honor, love, and

fidelity to my father and mother and all in authority over me, and submit myself to their good instruction and correction with due obedience; and also patiently bear with their weaknesses and infirmities, since it pleases God to govern us by their hand (emphasis added).

The labor union is an organization of laborers, not merely for the purpose of collective bargaining, but for the purpose of regulating the business or industry according to the will of the laborers. The labor union enforces the will of the laborers by the strike. This enforcement of the will of the laborers against the will of the employer, which is of the very *essence* of the union, is rebellion. It is rebellion by force and violence, for the strike is the power to destroy the particular business and ruin the owner.

Out of this fundamental evil of the union flows all the violence characteristic of labor unions. The unions are committed to the class struggle propounded by Marx, and many constitutions say so. Naturally, the strike, which is as such an act of violence, breaks out in destruction of property, threat and injury, hatred of "scabs," and murder.

Corporate Responsibility

Every member of the union, whether he participates in the violence or not, whether he wholeheartedly approves or is upset by the violence, is responsible—fully responsible before God—for the union's violence, so that in the day of judgment he will have to account for it. He willingly joined an organization committed to rebellion against God-ordained authority. By his membership and dues, if not by walking the picket line, he supported an organization that forces the owner to submit to the will of the workers, that destroys property, and that injures and kills those who oppose it.

When the enforcers of the strike crushed the head of the truck

driver on I-80/94 east of South Holland, Illinois with chunks of concrete as part of the truckers' strike, every member of the Teamsters Union became a murderer before God. Every member of the Union was guilty of crushing the head of that driver as much as if he had hurled the chunks of concrete with his own hands.

This is the principle, ordained of God, revealed in the Bible, and acknowledged widely in everyday life, of corporate responsibility. "Have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them" (Eph. 5:11). Let the labor union member professing Christianity try once to "reprove" the union and the other members sharply at a labor union meeting! "Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues" (Rev. 18:4).

Other Evils, Spiritual and Civil

There are other biblical grounds for objecting to labor union membership. I mention four.

Scripture teaches that the human may swear unconditional allegiance only to God. "It is written, thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve" (Matt. 4:10). Unions require the member to pledge, or swear, unconditional allegiance and obedience to the union. Typical is the oath required for membership by the International Typographical Union quoted by First Church's "Testimony," referred to in the first installment of this series of editorials:

I hereby solemnly and sincerely swear (or affirm) that I will not reveal any business or proceedings of any meeting of this or any subordinate union to which I may hereafter be attached, unless by order of the union, except to those whom I know to be in good standing thereof; that I will, without evasion or equivocation, and to the best of my ability abide by the Constitution, By-Laws and the

adopted scale of prices of any union to which I may belong; that I will at all times support the laws, regulations and decisions of the International Typographical Union, and will carefully avoid giving aid or succor to its enemies, and use all honorable means within my power to procure employment for members of the International Typographical Union in preference to others; that my fidelity to the union and my duty to the members thereof shall in no sense be interfered with by any allegiance that I may now or hereafter owe to any other organization, social, political, or religious, secret or otherwise ... that I will not wrong a member, or see him or her wronged, if in my power to prevent. To all of which I pledge my most sacred honor (emphasis added).

This is idolatry.

Scripture calls the believer to brotherly communion only with fellow believers and forbids fellowship with the ungodly. "Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers" (II Cor. 6:14). The unions are "brotherhoods." Constitutionally, they are brotherhoods. A Christian who is member of a union expresses that he views unbelieving, ungodly men and women as spiritual brothers and sisters (obviously the unions are not referring to physical brotherhood); that he shares their principles and goals regarding labor; and that he cooperates with them—is "yoked together" with them—in achieving their goals as member of their family. This is flagrant breach of the antithesis.

Scripture instructs the Christian to seek the kingdom of God first, and not earthly things. "But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things [food, drink, clothing] shall be added unto you" (Matt. 6:33). The labor union puts wages and benefits above all else. This is materialism, *naked* materialism. In its appeal to President Roosevelt in 1941, the synod of the Protestant Reformed Churches declared, "We

refuse to become members of the Union because we condemn the principles of utter materialism of the Union."

A fourth reason for objecting to labor union membership is often overlooked. The Word of God demands that we promote the kingdom of Christ with our money. This is an aspect of our stewardship regarding all our life in the world, for which we shall also give account in the final judgment. "A certain nobleman went into a far country to receive for himself a kingdom, and to return. And he called his ten servants, and delivered them ten pounds, and said unto them, Occupy till I come.... Wherefore then gavest not thou my money into the bank, that at my coming I might have required mine own with usury?" (Luke 19:11-27).

As *World* magazine pointed out in the issue of November 30, 2002,

the labor unions spend billions of dollars of the members' union dues every year to support the most liberal political candidates and their anti-Christian agendas. Thus, the unions aggressively, and effectively, promote abortion, the homosexual movement, the outlawing of capital punishment, and the like. In fact, the labor unions, through their political lackeys, are one of the most powerful forces driving the liberal agenda in the United States.

Many [unions] have moved on to funding liberal causes such as abortion-on-demand and school-based sexual-health clinics, opposing conservative causes such as school choice and welfare reform, and strongly supporting liberal candidates ("Dues & Don'ts," *World*, Nov. 30, 2002, pp. 17-19).

By his voluntary membership, the member of a labor union contributes to and promotes the swelling tide of corruption in our country. Knowingly and willingly, he pays for the coming of Antichrist.

In addition to these biblical condemnations of labor union membership, labor unionism is un-American. The demand that a worker join a union in order to have a job and the exclusion of a citizen from the workforce because he refuses to join a union are contrary to the Constitution of the United States. Certainly one of the most precious aspects of the earthly freedom recognized and guaranteed by the Constitution is the right to work. All those politicians who support big labor by working for the closed shop are enemies of freedom.

(to be concluded)

— DJE 

New Editor Sought

The editor of the *Standard Bearer* presented the following letter to the staff of the magazine (writers and managing editor) at their annual meeting this past June.

I accept your appointment to be editor of the *Standard Bearer* for another year.

I will not be available for reappointment next year.

In 2004, I will have served as editor for sixteen years. I desire to be relieved of the burden.

Also, next year, if God gives me life, I will be sixty-five. I think it good for the magazine and its witness that another, younger man assume the responsibility of editor.

I advise the staff to appoint a committee at this meeting, to find a man who will take over the

editorship of the *Standard Bearer* beginning October 1, 2004.

In accordance with the advice of this letter, the staff is presently seeking a new editor. He will take over as editor with the October 1, 2004 issue of the magazine.

Following the proposals of their editorial committee, the staff decided on two changes of the content of the magazine in the next volume-year (beginning October 1, 2003).

The rubric "Search the Scripture" will take the form of thorough exposition of entire books of the Bible. Such exposition will help our readers in their systematic study of Scripture, perhaps in preparing for the Bible study classes in the congregations. Eventually,

some of these explanations of entire books may be published as commentaries in book form. We begin with an exposition of Haggai by Rev. Ron Hanko. Our thanks to Rev. Martin VanderWal for his past work with this rubric.

We are dropping the rubric "Contending for the Faith." We thank Rev. Bernie Woudenberg for his contributions.

The editorial committee has planned a special, Reformation issue on John Calvin. It is high time that we feature the life and work of the Reformed Reformer. This will be the October 15, 2003 issue.

Although this has nothing to do with the staff meeting, I take this opportunity to thank Judi Doezeema for the comprehensive index to volume 79 of the *Standard Bearer* that


appeared in the September 15 issue.

The issue of October 1, 2003 begins volume 80 of this magazine. Eighty years of continuous publishing of the *Standard Bearer*! Eighty

years during which the message of the magazine has not changed! In October 2003, as in October 1924, the message is the riches of the Reformed faith and life as set forth in the "Three Forms of Unity" on the

basis of inspired Scripture.

Long may this witness to the glory of our sovereign God and to the comfort of His covenant people continue in the *Standard Bearer*!

— DJE 

A New Work on New Testament History

The Protestant Reformed Sunday School Teachers Association has just published a complete explanation of the history of the New Testament in three hardcover volumes. The set is titled *Upon This Rock*. Volume one treats "Jesus Christ: His Earthly Ministry"; volume two, "Jesus Christ: His Death and Resurrection"; and volume three, "Jesus Christ: His Acts Through the Apostles."

The author is long-time writer of the "Our Guide" Sunday School materials, Don Doezema. The three volumes publish in book form articles Mr. Doezema wrote some years ago for parents to use in teaching their older children.

The books arrange the history of the New Testament in chronological order. They relate the history in simple, lively, engaging fashion. But they do more than tell the story. The books explain the history, bringing out the doctrinal and practical meaning of the historical events. In treating the history of Simon the Sorcerer, in Acts 8:9-24, Mr. Doezema writes:

We do better, before we leave the story of Simon, to consider for a moment how the inclusion of that bit of history in the biblical record can be profitable for us. It is a warning, certainly, against the sin of simony—a sin that might seem a bit far removed from us. We do well, however, to consider carefully the nature and purpose

of spiritual gifts. Notice first of all that they are *gifts* of the Spirit, conferred by the grace of God. Note further that they are to be used, not for personal gain (other than spiritual, that is) but for the edification of the church. Simon wished to use the gifts of the Spirit for mercenary reasons. We do the same today if in our use of spiritual gifts we are motivated by a desire to put ourselves on the foreground or to win the esteem of men. Think on what Calvin says concerning the purpose of gifts of the Spirit: "... that each one may unassumingly apply the gift, that he has received, for the common benefit of the Church; and that the superiority of no individual may prevent Christ alone standing out above them all" (vol. 3, pp. 96, 97).

As the quotation shows, one of the valuable features of the work throughout is Doezema's apt citation of good, solid biblical scholars, including Calvin, Edersheim, Lenski, Herman Hoeksema, Ophoff, and Herman Hanko. The quotations are always brief, never tedious. In this way, the reader benefits from the insights of worthy scholars without the trouble of looking up the passages in their books or articles.

This treatment of New Testament is succinct. Each chapter, explaining a particular event or a number of related events, runs from six to eight pages.



Helpful, and interesting, is the light shed on events from the history of the Old Testament and from extra-biblical sources. The explanation of the appearance of the angel to Zacharias in the temple informs the reader concerning the ceremony of burning incense (vol. 1, pp. 2-5). The treatment of Paul's work in Corinth indicates the notorious depravity of that city—the San Francisco or Amsterdam of its day (vol. 3, pp. 266, 267).

Doezema does not avoid the difficulties. Where there are legitimate differences of opinion, he gives both possibilities and leaves the issue an open question (although often stating his own judgment on the matter). An instance is the question whether the Ethiopian eunuch was literally a eunuch. Lenski says he was; Calvin says he was not. Doezema leaves "the question undecided," but not before expressing his preference for the view of Lenski (vol. 3, pp. 101, 102).

The account of Paul's mission labors recorded in Acts, in volume 3 of the set, refers to corresponding teachings in the epistles. The treatment of the Jerusalem Council, for example, as recorded in Acts 15, calls attention to Paul's epistle to the Galatians and the doctrinal issues in this epistle.

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— DJE 

Letters

■ Excess Introspection

Your editorial on Jean Taffin's little book [*The Marks of God's Children*, Baker, 2003] in the August 2003 *Standard Bearer* was a blessing. Especially I was heartened to find another who so well described my feelings about excess introspection combined with a deficit of trust, joy, assurance, and praise. I have put the editorial in my assurance file. It should also guide me away from some "Reformed" preachers and groups.

Lewis Price
Batesville, AR

■ Lying

Please allow me to make a few remarks on the matter of lying, addressed in *SB* of April 15, 2003, p. 322, and *SB* of July 2003, p. 415.

We should be weary of applying our Western, static notion of truth and falsehood to God's Word. We always expect the word "truth" to be used as a predicative attribute or adjective as in "this is the truth." However, the Bible uses expressions such as "to walk in the truth" (I Kings 2:4; 3:6; Ps. 26:3; II John 4; III John 3, 4), "to obey the truth" (Gal. 3:1; 5:7; I Peter 1:22), and "to do (work, perform) the truth" (II Chron. 31:20, Micah 7:20, John 3:21, Rom. 2:8, I John 1:6). This indicates that the truth is not an ab-

stract entity that can be easily judged externally but that it pertains to a lifestyle that is desirous to have a good conscience toward God, accompanied with actual deeds, yielding completely to Him, who is the Way, the Truth, and the Life.


That some instances of lying in the Bible seem to be condoned cannot be satisfactorily explained because personal motives would have been pure or that there were compelling circumstances, but it can be explained because there was a conflict between a lower command and a higher command, between an earthly treasure and a spiritual treasure. Jacob's priority was to have the covenantal blessing of Isaac, whereas Esau despised his birthright. Mary's priority was to sit at Jesus' feet, whereas Martha could not set the household needs aside (Luke 10). Jesus deals with this priority theme in the parable of the Unjust Steward (Luke 16). For the midwives there was a conflict between the command of lower pharaoh to kill and the command of almighty God not to kill. For Rahab there was a choice between perishing with the Canaanites and finding protection with the people of God. The key to understand the condoning of the lying is found in the fact that they feared God more than men. Con-

cerning the midwives it says emphatically in Exodus 1:17 and in 1:21 that they feared God. In Joshua 2:9-11, trembling Rahab expresses her fear because of the terror and the mighty acts of God.

When there is a conflict between obeying God and obeying men, Christians should have no problem making a choice (Acts 5:29). It is my conviction that those who lied against the Nazis in WW II did so because they feared God, who commands not to kill, more than Hitler, whose intent was to annihilate the Jews. Let us, who live sixty years away from WW II, stand in awe of the heroic deeds of faith whereby these "liars" risked, and many times paid with, their lives.

Nevertheless, the point of your article is well made. We are prone to lie because of selfish, earthly reasons. Then our heart will condemn us (I John 3:20, 21). We must certainly be critical of our own motives and see whether they are genuinely rooted in the fear of God. But I am sure that betrayal of a Jew would have gnawed more at the conscience than speaking a lie to a Nazi.

May God continue to bless your beautiful magazine!

J. L. Reckman
Aylmer, Ontario
Canada 

Jacobus Arminius and Arminianism (3)

The Synod of Dordt

It is not our purpose to give a history of the Synod of Dordt in this article, but we do wish to sum up the work of the synod, particularly its composition and adoption of the Canons, and the significance of this synod for the history of the Reformed faith.

Over the years a debate has been carried on between defenders of the Westminster Confessions and people loyal to Dordt over the question of whether the Synod of Dordt or the Westminster Assembly is the greatest assembly of divines in post-Reformation times. I am not interested in entering the debate. Nor is there any answer to the question that will satisfy. The meetings were for different purposes. They were brought about by different circumstances. They produced different types of documents. And they are of significance for different parts of the Calvinistic church world.

Nevertheless, the Synod of Dordt was one of the great ecclesiastical assemblies of all time. To note a few reasons why this is true would be worth our while.

First of all, the Arminian controversy itself is instructive and enlightening, because it gives us an insight into the way heretics usually operate in the church. Her-

etics attempt to clothe their erroneous positions in ambiguous and outwardly orthodox language. Their motive is deception. They attempt to present aberrations from the faith as genuine Reformed doctrine. They plead that they are simply stating old truths in new and fresh ways, or that they are giving the people of God fresh and innovative insights into long-cherished doctrines. But they lie.

A noted Presbyterian theologian of the last century, Samuel Miller, writes thus of Arminius:

This is a painful narrative. It betrays a want of candour and integrity on the part of a man [Arminius] otherwise respectable, which it affords no gratification even to an adversary to record. It may be truly said, however, to be the stereotyped history of the commencement of every heresy which has arisen in the Christian church. When heresy arises in an evangelical body, it is never frank and open. It always begins by skulking, and assuming a disguise. Its advocates, when together, boast of great improvements, and congratulate one another on having gone greatly beyond the "old dead orthodoxy," and having left behind many of its antiquated errors, as they "differ from it *only in words*." This has been the standing course of errorists ever since the apostolic age. They are almost never honest and candid as a party, until they gain strength enough to be sure of some degree of popularity.

As heretics spread their views in the church and attempt to persuade others, they plead for tolera-

tion, but toleration only so long as they are in the minority. As soon as they detect that their views are ready to be received into the church, they become, towards those who oppose them, the most intolerant of people. One author writes: "The toleration which these men [the Arminians] pleaded for, was precisely like that which Papists demand as emancipation — that is, power and full liberty to draw over others to their party by every artful means, till they become strong enough to refuse toleration to all other men."

The Canons arose out of controversy in which the truth of God Himself was at stake.

Secondly, the significance of the synod lies in the fact that it was international in character. Delegates from every Reformed country and province in Europe were present, with the exception of delegates from France, who were refused passage out of their country. The intellectual and spiritual gifts of the delegates are astounding. The list of delegates reads like a "Who's Who" of Europe's outstanding theologians. They were all devoted to the Reformed faith — though some to a greater degree than others. The only real sympathizers of the Arminian position were the delegates from Bremen and two of the delegates from England. The Canons are an expression of what Europe, one hundred years after the beginning of the Reformation, considered to be the truth of Scripture, of the Reformed confessions, and of the Reformed churches of Europe.

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Thirdly, the Canons are a sharp and unambiguous condemnation of all forms of Arminianism. It would be difficult to improve on the Canons in any respect, for their negative refutation and positive statement of the truth are unexcelled in the history of the church. One will not find a clearer statement of the error of Arminianism than there is in the declarations of the synod that met in Dordrecht.

This implies several other truths concerning the Canons. In the first place, the Canons connect unmistakably the error of Arminianism with the error of Pelagianism, and, indeed, call Arminianism the old Pelagian heresy resurrected out of hell.

In the second place, the Canons repudiate all the implications of the Arminian error, even a conditional salvation. Dr. Fred Klooster, long-time professor of theology in Calvin Theological Seminary, could say: the Canons refute an "Arminianism [which] is characterized by conditionalism." The very word "condition," when it appears at all, is found in the mouth of the Arminian.

Thirdly, the Canons repudiate every effort to smuggle into the church Arminianism under the guise of a grace common to all men and a general desire on God's part to save all men. But, while the Canons are devastating in their repudiation of the Arminianism implied in these doctrines, the Canons do not become hyper-Calvinist or radically one-sided. They insist that the gospel must be preached to all to whom God is pleased to send it. They teach clearly that in the gospel is both the promise of salvation to all who believe and the command of God that men turn from their sins and believe in Christ. And when dealing with predestination, the Canons are careful to point out that election and reprobation are one decree, that that one decree is absolutely sovereign, but that the conclusion

may not be drawn that as election is the fountain and cause of faith, reprobation is "in the same manner" the cause of unbelief.

Fourthly, the Canons are solid in their discussion of the extent of the atonement. In their statement concerning this doctrine, they specifically state that the extent of the atonement, also in the purpose of God, is limited to the elect "and to them only." This is stronger than the Westminster Confessions. While limiting the extent of the atonement to the elect, Westminster, in full awareness of what Dordt had decided, deliberately dropped the exclusionary phrase, "and for them only." At least in part this was done because of serious objections to it by the Amyraldians who were present on the Assembly.

All these characteristics of the Canons make them an insurmountable barrier against Arminianism. The Canons served that purpose in the seventeenth century; they continue to serve that purpose today. The only way to introduce Arminianism into the church is to bypass the Canons. And so it happens.


The significance of the Canons lies further in the fact that the Canons are explanations of some points of doctrine found in the Confession of Faith and the Heidelberg Catechism. The Arminians wanted the confessions to be revised so as to make them more congenial to their heresies. The Reformed churches at Dordt insisted that these confessions were the truth of the Scriptures and that the Canons only made explicit what was implicit in them.

Yet, the Canons appeal as proof of their statements to Scripture alone. The synod was forced to do this. The Arminians insisted on it and the government laid this down as the one restriction that the synod was to observe. And so the Canons prove their teachings from Scripture alone. But this does not mean that they wanted to separate the Canons from the other two

creeds. Nor did it mean that the fathers at Dordt conceded the point that doctrine had to be proved from Scripture alone. They specifically, in the Formula of Subscription, which Dordt drew up, stated that all officebearers must agree with the Confession of Faith and the Heidelberg Catechism "*together with the explanation of some points of the aforesaid doctrine made by the National Synod of Dordrecht, 1618-'19.*"

Finally, the Canons are eminently pastoral. Much has been written about this, and we need not develop this idea beyond stating it. But in this respect too the Canons are more appealing than the Westminster Confession of Faith. The latter is objective in its doctrinal statements; the Canons are intended for pastoral use in the churches and for demonstrating to the faithful the remarkable comfort that is to be derived from a firm commitment to the truths of God's sovereign grace as they apply to all areas of our life. So pastoral are they that I have frequently used them myself in pastoral work, and I am sure other pastors have done the same. Although all the Canons speak to the heart of the believer as well as to his mind, the last chapter on the perseverance of the saints is so alive with the warmth of God's great faithfulness to us in all our unworthiness that I find it strengthening and encouraging to read for personal devotions at times of great temptation. They have brought solace to the hearts of many troubled, doubting, anxious souls.

God used the great errors of Arminius to give to the church this remarkable document.

I began these articles by saying that though Dordt was a mighty victory in the battle for the truths of God's sovereign and particular grace, Arminius won the war. So it would seem. Nevertheless, there is now and there always will be, until the Lord returns, faithful people of God who love and cherish the Canons. 

Humanism vs. Protestant Reformed Teachers: No R&R (3)

The Christian school teacher is engaged in an unceasing battle with humanism. The battles are fierce and the foe relentless because the stakes are high. All of secular education has been won over to the philosophy that man is the measure of all things. The one true God has been banned from the classroom, and many false gods have been set up in His place. Even in the realm of Christian education, humanism has made powerful inroads into the curriculum and instruction. Only in the faithful Christian school is God honored in all the Christ-centered instruction. The Christian school teacher is duty bound to reject humanism in all its forms and set forth God and His law, not man, as the standard. Hence, Satan uses every means to wear down these teachers in order to influence their thinking and their instruction.

In the face of the unrelenting attacks that come from every side and the powerful tools used to promote humanism, teachers might well wonder what weapons are available for the battle. They are not to wonder — God has provided a powerful arsenal for both the Christian school teacher and the students.

First, God gives the subjective weapon of faith. Faith in Christ is the subjective principle that distin-

guished the Reformation from the Renaissance. The Renaissance placed its hope in Man. The Reformation, on the other hand, hoped in God alone.

Faith is not a blind belief in that which cannot be proved. It is rather a firm belief in the God who has clearly revealed Himself in Christ. And Jehovah God is so obviously real as to be beyond proof. Must Christians prove to the ungodly humanist that God exists? The believer replies — “Look about you, man. The creation testifies in innumerable ways that God is, and must be served. It is His handiwork. He governs the creation and history.”

The point is that God’s existence is so obvious that it is beyond proof. One might just as well ask a man to prove to his companion that it is raining, as they run into a building dripping wet from a torrential downpour. The evidence is all there. What could be added to prove it?

Faith is also the victory that overcomes the world. That, because faith is in Christ. In and through the cross, He has overcome Satan, the world of the ungodly, death, and hell. The gates of hell cannot prevail against the church. The victory is Christ’s, and therefore it is ours. Christian school teachers, know this: You fight not *for* the victory, but *in* victory. So, likewise, do your students.

Faith is the subjective weapon or armor of the believer. And because it is God’s work in us, it cannot be destroyed.

God gives more for the battle. The primary objective weapon is Scripture. The Bible is the believer’s “source material” and standard of truth. Humanism draws from a different fountain. Humanism looks to the Greeks, to Darwin, to science falsely so called as perverted by unbelief, and to various philosophers.

Believers go back to the source, the infallibly inspired Word of God. With Jesus we confess: Thy word is truth. And with Him we add: Sanctify us, and our students, by thy truth.

A significant goal of all covenant instruction is to teach the students to think biblically! Every trend, every attitude, every advertisement, every outstanding man or woman set up by the world as admirable, must be evaluated in the light of the Bible. You as teachers must not in any way neglect your study of the Bible for your own personal spiritual growth. *You must think biblically!*

We do well to remember that the Bible is a spiritual weapon. It is not a mere book of rules. Scripture is the revelation of God and His will. And God uses the Bible to impress upon teachers and students alike His will and way.

Of course, teachers must use logic to show how the Word of God applies, that is, how Scripture exposes and condemns all humanism! However, good logic is not ultimately what will equip the students to condemn the evil and forsake it. Rather, the Holy Spirit applies the Word to the hearts of be-

lieving students, opens their understanding, and gives them a love for God and His truth and a corresponding loathing of humanism. That fact gives teachers every reason to hope!

Teachers do not face the battle defenseless, nor in the hope of their own strength. They are equipped.

And yet, they must know more. God has given to Christian school teachers the perfect gift to enable them to be proactive, not merely defensive in the battle. It is what might be called the biblical alternative, or even, the antidote to humanism. That antidote is the covenant of grace that God establishes with His people in Christ.

That the covenant can play this role is easily apparent. Humanism is a way of life. So also is the covenant. Humanism and the covenant are at antipodes in every area of life.

The covenant is religion, that is, it is the living out of our beliefs. Consider that the covenant determines our lives as friend/servants of God. It defines our relationship to God, as well as our relationship to Christ. The covenant teaches us what is our relationship to our fellow saints. And the covenant demands that our relationship to the world of unbelief be antithetical.

Our Relationship to God

The right understanding of the covenant puts man in proper perspective. In this relationship, the covenant God is all. God is infinitely glorious. He is omnipotent. He has all wisdom and knowledge. He sovereignly establishes His covenant of grace for His own glory, and that one goal must be realized in the covenant.

Man, on the other hand, is creature. Far from being the independent master of his fate, man is dependent upon God for his life, health, strength, and well-being. Life and joy are not possible apart from God.

Contrary to the humanists, the covenant indicates that man is not *free*. Fallen in Adam, and apart

from grace, man is bound fast in chains of sin and death. Although God delivers His covenant people from that dreadful bondage, yet the old man of sin is powerful, and can be overcome only by the power of sovereign grace.

Man is not free to determine his own world and place. God is sovereign over all of life, over history, and over the destiny of every living thing. No, God does not treat man as a block of wood, nor does He force man's will. The choices made by every man are his own choices. And yet, each choice has been determined eternally in God's counsel, and nothing thwarts the plan of God.

The covenant changes the minds and attitudes of believers. Believers are drawn out of the darkness of death. They no longer serve self. They are turned from their selfish desires, goals, and interests. Not death, but life they have — life with God. Seeking God means seeking the highest good that can be sought. The covenant creature lives unto God, not self.

Such a covenant believer rejects his former paths and the standards of men he previously esteemed, and adopts instead the standards of God. He recognizes that the law of God is the revelation of the righteous will of God, and he sings of his love for that law.

Students must come to see that the glitter of our culture is a false gold that soon loses its vaunted value. They must come to know that the world's laughter is vile and pretended, and that its pleasures are fleeting and deadly. But *God* is in every way the highest good, and His eternal treasures are greatly to be desired. They will do that as they consciously live in the covenant, for they live with God.

Our Relationship to Christ Determined by the Covenant

Within the glorious covenant of grace, Christ is our head, and we are members of His body. United to Him by faith, we live out of Him

— His life is ours; His Spirit is in us.

The covenant members confess that Christ is everything. He is the Mediator of the covenant. He is the center of the counsel of God. He is the Elect, in whom we are chosen. In Christ we know God and experience His love for us. The bride of the King in the Song of Solomon expressed perfectly the feeling of believers for Jesus Christ — *He is altogether lovely* (5:16).

Teachers who live consciously as covenant members will be Christ-centered in their work, because Christ is the center of their lives.

Students must detect that God is everything to teachers. There is, of course, a false piety, a mysticism that is ever talking about God — “The Lord led me to do this or that.” Not that.

Rather, as preaching is the Word of God brought through a particular preacher with all his gifts, background, and experiences, so teaching is Christ-centered instruction through a particular, individual teacher. Each teacher has his own gifts, background, and experiences. Yet, the teacher's religious life, his life with God, will drastically affect his teaching — either for good or for evil.

The people of God must see Christ in the minister (His love, compassion, detesting of sin, love for truth, wisdom, goodness, etc.). Likewise, students must see Christ in their teachers. They must witness that their teachers are excited about Christ. They must see the Christ-like qualities shining forth. Both by example and instruction, teachers must set forth Christ, the altogether-lovely One, so that students by God's grace seek Christ and desire to imitate Him. When they delight in the true beauty of Christ, they will not be swept away to pursue the ugliness of humanism.

The Covenant Determines Our Relationship to Others

We ought to notice that life in

the covenant is the exact opposite of the dream of the humanists. It is never self-serving. Nor is it isolating. Nor does it cause the individual to be lost in the mass of the elect.

That covenant life does not result in self-absorbed isolation is evident from the fact that the members are knit together into one spiritual body of Christ. An inseparable bond forms a living union with Christ, and thus also to all other members of the church and covenant of God.

At the same time, he is not lost in the mass of the elect. Each child is unique, yet he is far from following the ideals of humanism, which teaches: Do your own thing; develop yourself and your world. Rather, I Corinthians 12 instructs: You are unique because God has given you natural abilities, and the Spirit has bestowed spiritual gifts for the purpose that you serve the other members of the body. This is antithetical to humanism. A conscious member of the covenant serves the good of the body, not himself.

Teachers, therefore, seek the development of all their students. But it is that they may serve each other, and the church, and thus Christ Himself. Once again, Christ must be set up as the model — the

One who came not to be served, but to minister to others, and to give Himself a ransom for others (Matt. 20:28).

The Covenant Defines the Believers' Relation to the World of Unbelief

Covenant people are friends of God, and consequently friends of God's people. They are not friends of the world. Friendship with the world is enmity with God. The believer does not find his companions or his goals in the world.


This is the doctrine of the antithesis, always concomitant with the covenant, rightly understood. The covenant thus demands that instruction given in the Christian school be antithetical. Teachers set forth the truth of God in Christ over against the lie of man and the devil. Obviously, each lesson must be developed in harmony with the age and ability of the students — high school students will be provided more detailed treatment of the rejection of the errors than grade school students. Nevertheless, all instruction in the Christian school must be antithetical.

The covenant is an essential element in the battle against humanism. The covenant sets man in the proper perspective. It lifts up

man's eyes to God and His glory. It causes the believer to live, not to self, but to God. It requires man to imitate Christ rather than the world about him. Living in the covenant, students are not isolated, nor self-seeking, nor lost in the crowd. This is the covenantal manner in which Christian teachers deal with their students and by which they seek to develop their talents.

Humanism's influence is great, and it can only grow, for the kingdom of Antichrist is the kingdom of man. That kingdom is developing. And the Beast means to press his man-centered message upon the souls of teacher and student alike. His means are powerful, his work highly effective.

But your weapons, teachers, are mighty. Subjectively, you and your covenant students have an indestructible faith in Christ. You cannot be moved. You have the objective testimony of the infallible Scriptures for your source material and standard of truth. And you have the God-given antidote to the poison of humanism — the covenant! Live the covenant. Teach the covenant.

May God bless your work and give you strength for the battles that lie ahead. 

Ministering to the Saints

Rev. Doug Kuiper

The Election and Installation of Deacons (7) Resignation and Removal From Office

Under what circumstances might a deacon resign from office, or be removed from office, before his term is finished?

The difference between resignation from office and removal from office should be clear to us all. In the instance of resignation,

the deacon himself takes the initiative to be released from the honor and work of the office, and seeks the approval of the council. In the instance of removal from office, on the other hand, the consistory takes this initiative, having judged the deacon to be unworthy of the office.

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No deacon may lightly consider resigning from office. At his installation, the deacon testified that he believed God had called him to this work. Also at that time the minister, on behalf of God and the church, charged the deacons to be diligent and faithful in their offices. To resign is to put down that work to which one was called. Therefore, to resign without proper reasons is really a refusal to do the work, and is disobedience to God's command, which is implied in His call to office. A deacon who considers resigning must have weighty reasons for doing so.

What reasons might be so weighty that in using them the deacon would not be refusing to do the work to which God called him?

In an earlier article we gave three reasons why a person might decline nomination to the office of deacon. One was that he be able to demonstrate that in some way his election would violate biblical principles. Another was that he was already too busy in other kingdom work, and the work to which he was committed would be jeopardized by the work of the diaconate. A third was that the prospective nominee was contemplating leaving that congregation.

The first two reasons for declining nomination are *not* proper reasons for resigning from office once elected and installed. If before his installation he could not or would not demonstrate that his election was contrary to biblical principles, he must not attempt to do so after his election. Furthermore, if before his election he did not successfully argue to the council that his election would put other legitimate kingdom work and callings in jeopardy, then he must not use this argument as a reason to resign. In other words, the deacon who finds that he is too busy to do justice to all his work must do his best to fulfill all the obligations which God has placed on him. He will need

to pray all the more; he will need wisdom and patience all the more; he will need an understanding and caring wife all the more; but he may not resign for that reason.

Now one might argue: but does not one's family come first? It is, after all, not possible to resign being a father and husband. If the officebearer is so busy that he neglects his family, he should resign his office, for God considers the right regulation of one's family so important that He made it a qualification for the office (I Tim. 3: 12).

The answer to this argument is simple: the work of the office of deacon is also a *calling* from God! You may not neglect that calling either, for that would be disobedience to God.

For what reasons, then, might a man resign his office? Fundamentally, the answer is when, after his election, God in His providence made it clear that the man was no longer able *physically* to do the work.

This would mean that if a person becomes unable for health reasons to continue serving in office, he may seek approval to resign from office. If for some reason a man in office must immediately move, and therefore must immediately transfer his membership to another congregation, he may seek approval to resign from office. If the church in which an officebearer serves forms a new daughter congregation, and the officebearer has compelling reasons to join that congregation soon, he may seek approval to resign from office.

In using these reasons, however, no officebearer may have as his *motive* a desire to escape the duties of the office. That is, resignation must be a necessity because God, in His providence, made clear that the officebearer cannot continue doing his work. But if the officebearer is unhappy in his work, and is looking for a way out, and thinks to use these reasons, then before God he must still answer for refusing to do the work to which God called him.



When seeking to resign, what procedure should one follow?

The deacon who has weighty reasons to resign from office may not simply stop doing the work of his office at some point, and then inform the council that he has resigned. Rather, he must inform the council in person or in writing of his intent to resign and his reasons for desiring to resign, and then wait for the council to give its approval. This procedure is proper because the *church* has called him to office, and the *church* must release him from office. The church releases the officebearer from office through the council's approving of his resignation, and through the silent approval on the part of the whole congregation.

The council should not approve a resignation request lightly. It ought to consider the request carefully, judge the reasons given, and be ready to disapprove the request if it judges the reasons to be insufficient. In such instances the officebearer has the right of appeal to the classis and synod. He should remember that it is still his duty before God to continue doing the work of his office until the broader assembly hears and supports his appeal, *and* until the council is properly notified and releases him from office. Furthermore, if the broader assemblies do not support his appeal but side with his council, the officebearer must realize that God in His providence, using the agency of the church, has not released him from office, and the officebearer must submit to that decision.

Is this procedure spelled out clearly in the Church Order? Although no article of the Church Order specifically addresses the issue of an elder or deacon resigning, at least three articles contain *principles* on which this procedure is based. Among the sins that make an officebearer worthy of suspension or deposition is, ac-

cording to Article 80, “faithless desertion of office.” That one who faithlessly deserts his office should still be deposed indicates that his desertion, or his thinking that he has resigned without seeking proper approval, is not adequate. He holds the office until the church releases him from it. Then Article 11 deals with the release of a minister from office in a particular congregation, and Article 12 with his release from office completely. Both articles forbid such a release apart from the approval of classis and the synodical delegates (technically, Article 12 omits this latter point, but it is implied and necessary). Now if release from office in the case of a minister requires the church’s approval, then the same approval must be required in the case of a deacon or elder — for the offices are on a par with each other. The only difference is that in the case of the minister, the classis and synod must express its approval of resignation, for the minister serves the denomination as a whole. In the case of an elder or a deacon, not the classis, but only the congregation that he serves, must approve of the resignation.



While our Church Order does not specifically address the matter of resignation from office, it does specifically address the matter of removal (suspension or deposition) from office in Articles 79 and 80.

The ground for removing an officebearer from office is fundamentally that the officebearer has shown by his conduct or speech that he is no longer qualified for office. Article 79 requires a minister, elder, or deacon to be suspended or deposed from office when he has “committed any public, gross sin which is a disgrace to the church or worthy of punishment by the authorities.” Article 80 lists those sins that make one worthy of suspension or deposition: “false doctrine or heresy,

public schism, public blasphemy, simony, faithless desertion of office or intrusion upon that of another, perjury, adultery, fornication, theft, acts of violence, habitual drunkenness, brawling, filthy lucre; in short, all sins and gross offenses as render the perpetrators infamous before the world, and which in any private member of the church would be considered worthy of excommunication.”

A few remarks about this list are in order.

First, notice that it includes not only sins that are public and gross transgressions of God’s law, but also sins of violating one’s vows of office (it mentions “false doctrine or heresy” and “public schism”). At his installation, the officebearer signed the Formula of Subscription, by which he promised to teach and defend the truth of God’s Word as embodied in the Reformed creeds; to bring any ideas contrary to these documents to the consistory, classis, and synod for their judgment; and to be ready to give answer to any church body that requires a more complete explanation of one’s views or teachings. The penalty for violating this vow, to which penalty the officebearer agrees when signing the Formula, is that of suspension from office. The ground for such suspension would be either that of believing false doctrine, which surely disqualifies a man for holding office in the church of Christ, or that of teaching false doctrine, which is public schism.

Second, it refers to “faithless desertion of office.” We have already applied these words in the instance of a man who refuses to do the work of his office, before his resignation is approved. Now consider the instance of a man whose request for resignation was not approved, but he refuses to do the work of his office. His argument is, “I have resigned.” But, because that resignation was not accepted, he still holds office, and is guilty of deserting office. Such

a man must be suspended, and perhaps deposed. In the secular business world it is conceivable that a man claim he has resigned his position, while his employer claims he was fired. But that officebearer in the church who claims to have resigned, but has not received approval to resign, cannot claim that he no longer holds office.

Thirdly, the article does not mean to say that one is suspended or deposed from office only when one is *impenitent* regarding these sins. Some might argue this, because the article makes reference to excommunication. Excommunication, we know, is a last remedy applied to the impenitent. However, removal from office does not imply impenitence; rather, it indicates that one’s sinful actions have made one unfit to continue in office. God requires those who hold office to be blameless. For one who has committed public, gross sin to continue in office would not promote unity and edification in the church, and would give occasion for the enemies of the church to blaspheme.

To this point we have been using the term “removal from office,” while the Church Order speaks of suspension and deposition. Strictly speaking, removal from office is deposition. Suspension is a temporary measure, whereby one continues to hold office and receive any honor and benefits of that office (such as salary, in the case of a minister), but is not permitted to do the work of the office. It is temporary in that it must lead either to deposition, or to a lifting of the suspension, permitting the person to do the work of the office again. Deposition, however, is removal from office. One who is deposed may not claim any longer to hold the office, nor continue to do the work of the office, nor receive any of the benefits or honor of the office. Deposition does not necessarily preclude a person from serving in office again in the future, but for the time one is removed from office.



The procedure for suspension and deposition is set forth in Church Order Article 79. Very briefly, the procedure with regard to elders and deacons is as follows: the consistory (body of elders) decides either to suspend or to depose the officebearer, and asks the approval of the consistory of the nearest church. This approval of the nearest consistory may not be given as a mere formality; it is necessary as a check and balance against any unjust suspension or deposition. Therefore, the consistory of the nearest church may give its approval only after hearing the facts of the case. Whether one would be suspended or deposed is left to the judgment of the consistory, which arrives at its decision by considering the nature of the sin, the effect that the sin has had or could have on the congregation and community, and other issues pertaining to the individual case.


While most issues relating to the officebearers are decided by the council (elders and deacons), mat-

ters of suspension and deposition are decided by the consistory (elders) alone. Article 79 is clear on this, for it speaks of "the consistory thereof (i.e., of the congregation in which the officebearer is a member, DJK) and of the nearest church." Suspension or deposition from office is a matter of church discipline, and therefore is the prerogative of the consistory alone.

Because suspension and deposition are matters of discipline, no man may resign office to avoid deposition. It may happen that a man knows that he has committed sin worthy of deposition, and considers resigning to avoid deposition. He might even argue that his resignation is preferable to his being deposed, not only to save himself and the church the anguish of deposition, but also as a way of acknowledging his sin and its consequences.

However, resignation may not replace or preempt deposition. The council should never accept the resignation of one about to be deposed; and the officebearer facing deposition should never consider resigning.

The reason for this is that deposition is a form of church censure. By deposition the church expresses its judgment regarding both the seriousness of the sin committed and the unfitness of the officebearer who sinned to continue serving in office. The church must express this judgment for the sake of her members, who ought to consider this judgment a warning against sin to which we all are prone, and ought to seek God's sanctifying grace more often and with more earnestness. The church must express this judgment also for the sake of the world, who will see that the church — at least, the *true* church of Jesus Christ, in distinction from the false — does not in any way condone or cover up the sins of her officebearers.

May God so impress upon us the weight of the responsibility of His call to office, and the seriousness of sin, that all officebearers — deacons, elders, and pastors — give themselves with diligence to the work, seeking His grace and help to do the work well, and avoiding sin, that His name be glorified. 

All Around Us

Rev. Gise VanBaren

A Time for Self-examination (2)

Last time I quoted from articles from the secular press which, I thought, spoke eloquently of the dangers of smoking, of its addictive nature, and of its great cost.

None, I dare say, can refute what the articles stated. Some might point out, however, "That's not the Bible you quoted!"

Others might claim, perhaps even correctly, that there are other and more serious problems in our "life style." There are the evils of drunkenness and of worldly

amusements and of materialism. Why "pick on" smoking?

The claim could even be made that the Christian need not follow after every trend within the liberal society of our day. Society today continues to expand the "no smoking" areas. Why should we simply imitate them? We ought rather to follow the requirements of Scripture—not necessarily the practices of a secular society. We have rebuked others who refuse to follow clear mandates of Scripture. We ought diligently to follow the testimony of God's Word—not just the latest trends of society.

Well, let's consider some of the spiritual and biblical implications of this "habit."

(1) There is the matter of the waste of the resources that God has provided for us. While it is true that we waste money in our affluent age on many other things than cigarettes, smoking has somehow assumed an importance to many above all other usages of our wealth. A pack and a half a day smoker spends a minimum of \$2,750 a year on cigarettes. If two in the family smoke, that figure doubles. That's considerably more than the church budget, which, we sometimes complain, is too high. One must also consider the many other related costs involved. Some have had to seek diaconal aid for their living expenses, but could not quit smoking. One man was ques-

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tioned about his inability to pay the church budget. He and his wife were chain smokers. His response? "I'm entitled to one sin, aren't I?" Some cannot pay all of their school tuition—but can't quit smoking. Children's health and nourishment have been sacrificed on that altar of "Christian liberty." Does this sort of activity harmonize with Matthew 6:33?

(2) There is the matter of harm to one's own self and to one's family. If the bread-winner of the family contracts lung-cancer or other smoking related disease, and dies—what a devastating effect this has on the family! But, some might respond, there is the matter of "Christian liberty." Parents who would doubtless give their lives to protect their children forget the effects of this habit upon those same children. The unborn child is affected in the womb. Smokers' children are affected often with asthma or other health problems—though they themselves do not smoke. And smokers' children are most likely to continue this practice when they come of age (or before). Ought these be proud of the example they set for their children?

We would *die* for our children—but to quit smoking for their sakes (and ours), well, that's just too much to ask.

There is the question of the sixth commandment, "Thou shalt not kill." Among other things, the Heidelberg Catechism (L.D. 40) states, "...also that I hurt not myself, nor willfully expose myself to any danger...." Never mind the conclusions of unbelievers. Let's ask ourselves, "Does the instruction of the Heidelberg Catechism on the sixth command apply to smoking too?"

(3) There is the matter of the "habit" of smoking. We freely speak of it as such. Now, a "habit" may be good, or bad, or adiaphora. But that sort of language is a cover-up. Smoking is far, far more than a "habit." It's an *addiction*. An ad-

diction is today considered to be a "habit" that is inherently bad and almost unbreakable. There is the addiction to gambling. There is the addiction to illicit drugs such as heroin. So there is the addiction of smoking. The addiction, we are told, is to the nicotine in the cigarette. The cigarette is simply the delivery system. This addiction is stronger, it is claimed, than the addiction of the heroin addict. Most smokers, it is claimed, want to quit—but *can't*. Consider the woman mentioned in the article quoted last time. She saw her husband suffer the consequences of his smoking—lung cancer that led to his death within seven months. The horror of it caused her to resolve to quit smoking—but she *couldn't*. She could not—though her two little girls begged her to do so.

An addiction? Or, Christian liberty? Romans 9:26, 27 states, "I therefore so run, not as uncertainly; so fight I, not as one that beateth the air: But I *keep under my body*, and bring it into subjection: lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway." An addict has not brought his body "under subjection" in regard to smoking. He seldom *admits* that he cannot bring his body "under subjection," but he knows that it is true nevertheless.

(4) There is also the question of creating offence to others within the church and to those who come to visit a congregation. Those within the church who have at one point quit smoking themselves can easily take somewhat of a sanctimonious attitude toward the smoker. "If I can quit, why can't he?" But every former smoker knows what a difficult thing it was for him to quit. Still, is there not good reason for offence? It is obvious, so very obvious, for all to see, that the smoker usually takes his last puff on a cigarette just before he enters the church, and then, after the service, he quickly heads for the area immediately outside

the entrance of the church for his "smoke." One wonders with how much difficulty these sit through a lengthy service until they can exit and take that next puff.

Those who would look askance at one who tossed a banana peel to the ground in front of the church think nothing of tossing cigarette butts to the ground. It's litter that offends many also. But that is a relatively minor thing. After all, we hire janitors to clean up such litter.

There are those who have attended our churches, who seem attracted by the doctrines taught within the church, who are nevertheless offended by the Christian's smoking. Perhaps that's "their problem." Yet to compel such visitors to walk past smokers in order to enter the sanctuary or to exit it is to show no concern about the sensibilities of others. If others love the doctrine, ought they not to love us "as we are"? But is this what "Christian liberty" is all about?

(5) Within the church there are those who have real allergies that are aggravated by the smell that smokers exude. It is not just the breath. That smell can be covered up quite nicely by mints or sprays. The effects of smoking stay in one's clothing. Within the church there are those who must make sure they sit far enough away from known smokers so that they can breathe more easily. But: that's their problem, is it not?

Or will the time come when church also has its "smoking" and "non-smoking" sections?

(6) Excuses, excuses, excuses. You have doubtless heard many of them. The individual does indeed have "will power," which he uses in deciding to *continue* to smoke. One claimed that if he died the sooner (humanly speaking) because of his "habit," he would the sooner be with his Lord! Perhaps that one could rather walk the center lane of some busy Interstate. Such "pious" declarations refuse to take

into account the suffering that might have to be endured before he is taken to "be with his Lord." There is no consideration either of the suffering and pain his agony and death brings upon the family. He does not reckon the financial drain involved in all of this. One might (I say, "tongue-in-cheek") better play Russian roulette.

(7) Possibly the saddest thing is that one will not acknowledge the harm of smoking though he sees dear ones slowly die at least in part because of this addiction. He cannot stop smoking—until the doctors say, "You have lung cancer. Treatment may possibly help, provided you quit smoking." Sometimes that will convince one to quit—but often it is too late.

Christian liberty? A "liberty" to harm one's body? A "liberty" to affect the health of those dear to him? A "liberty" to influence one's children to do what the parents have been doing for many years? A "liberty" to continue doing what offends others?

This "habit"—no, *addiction*—is so great that many admit that they *cannot* quit. It matters not that oth-

ers suffer. It matters not that sometimes other bills are neglected. One *cannot* quit. Many are ashamed of the addiction that keeps them so bound. Many would be ready to admit, if they are honest, "I *have* to quit—but I don't know how."

Perhaps some suggestions are in order. Obviously, first of all, there is the matter of earnest and sincere prayer to God for His guidance and grace to do what is so necessary. But prayer without faithful effort by one's own labor would be vain. Pray first; pray often. Then, get off your knees and face the problem head-on.


One can make use of available medical assistance. Many have done this successfully. Others try this—but fail. There is also another way—similar to that followed by A.A. A number of addicts can decide to meet together once a week (or month) and discuss their problem. After devotions, these can discuss if, and how often, they have failed in their attempt to quit. They can discuss when and why they are most likely to smoke. They might point out to each other ways in

which they substituted something else for smoking. They can encourage each other in the almost-impossible task of breaking the addiction.

I fear that we take the approach of (former) Vice-president Al Gore (quoted last time):

...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.

We can perhaps agree that addiction is involved. We can perhaps agree that it can be harmful as well as offensive. But we could never outlaw cigarettes for church members—just too many of our people, men and women, do this.

So why bother writing these articles? If but one young person reads these articles and refrains from beginning this "habit," or if it causes one "addict" to quit, it would have been worth the effort taken to write about this unpopular subject. 

Taking Heed to the Doctrine

Rev. James Laning

God's Glorious Work of Sanctification

There is an inseparable connection between desiring to be with Christ in heaven after death and desiring to be more like Christ in this life. Scripture tells us that all those who truly have the hope of becoming perfectly like Christ in body and soul when Christ appears show that they have this hope by striving, already in this life, to begin to pu-

rify themselves even as Christ is pure (I John 3:3). This means that all those who have the Christian hope long to experience more and more God's gracious work of sanctification.

Sanctification is the saving work of God in which He delivers His people from the corruption and dominion of sin, and conforms them to the image of Christ. It is the process by which God causes us to become more like Christ, so that we think, speak, and act like Him.

How It Differs from Justification

Sanctification is to be distinguished from justification. When God justifies us He delivers us from the guilt of our sin, and declares us to be perfectly righteous in Christ and to have a right to all the blessings that Christ has earned for us by His suffering and death. When God sanctifies us, He delivers us from the corrupting power of our sin, causing us to receive and experience Christ's heavenly life, so that we more and more turn from our sin and will-

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ingly walk in obedience to God, while enjoying intimate communion with Him.

The difference between justification and sanctification can be illustrated by a man who goes from being locked in a debtor's prison to living with the king in his house, daily eating at his table and communing with him. The first thing that happens to this man is that he hears the joyful news that his debt has been forgiven, that he no longer has any debt, and that he actually has been granted the right to dwell with the king in his glorious palace. The second thing that happens to him is that someone comes to his cell, unlocks the door, and brings him out of the cell and into the presence of the king, where he continues to dwell.

As impossible as it would seem that such a thing could happen to a human being, something far more amazing actually happens to us who are in Christ Jesus. That we are justified means that we are declared to be free from debt, and that we consciously hear this declaration. We hear that Christ has paid the debt we owed, and that we now have the right to be set free from the prison house of sin, and to enter into the house of our heavenly Father. This is justification. But then we also experience that Christ, by His Spirit, sets us free from the dominion of sin, so that we are no longer in bondage to our sinful thoughts and desires, but are able to break from these sins and to submit to God, so that we walk and commune with Him in His heavenly house. This is sanctification.

God's Work from Beginning to End

Although this is a glorious work of God in which we consciously become active, it is still God's work from beginning to end. It is true that when God is sanctifying us we are actively and willingly turning away from sin and towards God. But God is the one who gives to us not only the gift of

faith, but also the gift of repentance (Acts 11:18). He produces in us both the will to believe and the act of believing also (Canons III & IV, 14), and He causes us willingly to walk in His statutes by means of the faith that He Himself has given to us (Ezek. 36:27).

This is not the way sanctification is often presented. It is often presented as though God has a wonderful plan for the life of every believer, but that that plan is often not realized because the believer does not do his part. God gives the believer sufficient grace to grow into a mature believer, who bears much fruit in all areas of his life. But often this plan of God is not realized, and the believer experiences very little if any spiritual growth, because he fails to cooperate with God. Such a view teaches that sanctification is partly the work of God and partly the work of man.

The truth is that sanctification, just like justification, is God's work from beginning to end. God has before ordained every good work that we will perform (Eph. 2:10), and causes us by His grace to perform precisely those works that He has before determined that we would do. He gives to us not only the desire to do these works, but also produces within in us the activity itself. "For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of His good pleasure" (Phil. 2:13). Such is the way Scripture sets forth God's sanctifying work in the life of a believer.

It is true that we will experience this work only in the way of our submitting to it. We confess this in Lord's Day 38, where our fathers taught that the fourth commandment requires of me that "all the days of my life I cease from my evil works, and yield myself to the Lord, to work by His Holy Spirit in me." If the believer refuses to repent of any sin, God will withdraw His Holy Spirit from him, although not entirely, so that He will not consciously experience

this sanctifying work. But when we do submit to this work, and experience the blessings thereof, we do so because God has graciously caused us to do this.

If we have failed to yield ourselves to the Lord for a time, and if during that time we did not experience making progress in our battle with sin, but rather found that we were more and more being given over to it, this also must have taken place according to God's decree. God's counsel stands, He always does all His pleasure (Is. 46:10). God uses even such times as this for our profit. But it is our calling, and our desire, willingly to yield ourselves to this gracious work of God. And, insofar as we do this, it is Christ performing this work in and through us.

An Act of Glorification

When God graciously sanctifies His people, He is beginning in them the work of glorification. Some may have the tendency to think of glorification as something that does not begin until after a believer dies and goes to heaven. But, actually, we already now begin to experience the act of glorification, when we are delivered from the corruption of sin and conformed to the glorious image of Jesus Christ.

That sanctification is an act of glorification is taught in a number of places in Holy Scripture. First of all, we take a look at Romans 8:30, which speaks of the order of salvation.

Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified.

When reading this verse, one may be inclined to ask, "Why did the inspired apostle leave out sanctification?" The answer is that the work of sanctification that we experience in this life belongs to God's saving work of glorification.

This same truth is taught in II Corinthians 3:18,

But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord.


As we begin in this life to behold in God's Word the glory of the Lord, we begin to be changed into this glorious image. The more God causes us to think, speak, and act like Christ, the more we radiate the glorious image of our Savior. This is the work of sanctification performed by the Holy Spirit, the

Spirit of Christ, who dwells in our heart.

The obedient believer experiences this deliverance from sin gradually throughout his life upon this earth. Although it is true that our sinful nature does not improve as we get older, it is also true that God causes us more to experience the victory over our sin.

Let us take, for example, the sin of complaining and of not being content in the Lord's way. This is a sin that we all see within ourselves. As we see this sin, we ask God to forgive us. But we also ask Him to deliver us more from this sin, so that we make progress in

being content. Then, when we have truly requested this from the heart by faith, we experience that God grants our request, so that over time we can see the spiritual progress we are making in our battle against this sin.

The more we experience the victory over this sin, and over all sin, the more we reflect the glorious perfections of God, and show to those around us that we really are children of our Father which is in heaven. In this way we glorify our Father, and show forth the praises of Him who has called us out of darkness into His marvelous light. 

Report of Classis West

Rev. Daniel Kleyn

September 4, 2003
The September meeting of Classis West was held in South Holland Protestant Reformed Church in South Holland, IL on Wednesday, September 3. Rev. Douglas Kuiper chaired the meeting.

An officebearers' conference was held on Tuesday, the day before classis. In addition to the delegates to classis, many visitors also came to hear the speeches and to participate in the discussion. Also attending part of the conference were the 8th grade children of the Protestant Reformed Christian School and all the students and staff of Heritage Christian High School.

The theme of the conference was "Remembering the Schism of 1953." Prof. R. Dykstra gave the keynote address on "The History and Significance of 1953." Sectionals followed on related subjects, led by Rev. C. Terpstra, Rev.

M. VanderWal, Prof. H. Hanko, Rev. W. Bruinsma, Rev. R. Van Overloop, and Mr. H. Ophoff.

Many comments were made on how enjoyable and profitable the conference was. The theme provided opportunity, on the 50th anniversary of this event, humbly and thankfully to reflect upon the goodness of God in preserving us in the truth through the split of 1953. The speeches were recorded and are available from South Holland PRC.

In business on Wednesday, classis dealt first of all with a letter from our denomination's Committee for Contact with Other Churches. The committee requested that Classis West help in providing pulpit supply for the congregation in Wingham, Ontario, if such help should be needed. The committee informed classis that this congregation in Canada is seeking affiliation with the Protestant Reformed


Churches. Classis approved the request and authorized its classical committee to arrange this pulpit supply, if the Contact Committee should ask for it.

Classis also dealt with one appeal. This appeal concerned some members' discipline and was treated in closed session. Much time was taken up with this appeal. In the end classis decided to deny the appeal. Classis also gave advice to both the appellants and the consistory concerning this matter.

The expenses for classis totaled \$6,028.76.

The Lord willing, classis will hold its next meeting on March 3, 2004 in Redlands, CA.

May the Lord be pleased to bless our churches and His people through the actions and decisions of classis.

Rev. Daniel Kleyn
Stated Clerk, Classis West 

Book Reviews



God's Renaissance Man: The Life and Work of Abraham Kuyper, by James Edward McGoldrick. Darlington, England: Evangelical Press, 2000. Pp. 320. \$18.99 (paper). [Reviewed by the editor.]

Professor McGoldrick's recent biography of Abraham Kuyper is a welcome addition to the body of such works in English. There are only two other major studies of Kuyper's life and work in English,

Frank Vanden Berg's *Abraham Kuyper* and Louis Praamsma's *Let Christ be King: Reflections on the Life and Times of Abraham Kuyper*. McGoldrick's book builds on these two works, although it is a fresh

study of Kuyper from the sources. Both of the other works on Kuyper are out-of-print.

McGoldrick is thorough. He traces Kuyper's interesting life. He follows the Dutchman's career, in the ministry, as a journalist, and in government. He surveys the whole of Kuyper's theological and political thought.

The author has read widely both in Kuyper's own works and in the secondary literature. I was delighted to find several quotations of Frederick Nymeyer, an intriguing acquaintance during my South Holland, Illinois days. The numerous references to Kuyper's writings and to other sources appear as notes at the end of the book. This is helpful to the scholar.

The book, however, is a popular work. It is directed to the layman. The writing is clear. The critique particularly of Kuyper's theology is not deep. The chapters are short.

There are fascinating details, for example, that Kuyper kept a picture of Pietje Baltus on his desk. Baltus was the peasant woman in Kuyper's first congregation who was instrumental in his conversion. Baltus had told the learned Dr. Kuyper, "You do not give us the true bread of life."

There are also good, helpful quotations of Kuyper accompanied by solid analysis on the part of McGoldrick. McGoldrick calls attention to Kuyper's criticism of ceremonial worship with its stress on symbolism.

[Kuyper] complained that people who want symbolism for their religion desire short sermons and elaborate sensual ceremonies and music. They want to "enjoy fully the mystical titillations of a delightful religious feeling," but they do not aspire to know God as he has revealed himself in Scripture.... In Kuyper's view, the Protestant Reformation was a powerful protest against symbolic, ceremonial religion. The Reformed churches "stressed *understanding* of the revelation and its personal application to the soul.

They denied absolutely the necessity of connecting the Infinite with the finite by symbols." Protestant churches published the Bible in vernacular languages and distributed it widely, and they proclaimed their dogmas in clear statements of faith. "Standing before the dilemma of feeling or faith, they chose for *faith*," and for revelation over symbolism (pp. 98, 99; the citations of Kuyper are from his *The Antithesis between Symbolism and Revelation*).

Anyone who has read the magazine *Reformed Worship* knows how necessary Kuyper's warning is today in Reformed churches. Obsession with human symbolism is driving divine revelation out of public worship.

McGoldrick is right in his judgment that Kuyper rejected that defense of the faith known as evidentialism. Kuyper's criticism of every effort to prove divine truth by human reason is conclusive: "If human reason were ever able to demonstrate the divine [truth], then reason would stand superior to the divine [revelation], and thus, *eo ipso*, the divine character of the divine Word would be destroyed" (p. 102; the citation of Kuyper is from his *Principles of Sacred Theology*). One of the best parts, indeed one of the few good parts, in Kuyper's "Stone Lectures" at Princeton Seminary was his criticism of evidentialist apologetics. It is humorous that Kuyper delivered himself of this criticism in the face of B. B. Warfield, the outstanding advocate of evidentialist apologetics in his day or any other.

On the issue of supralapsarianism and infralapsarianism, however, McGoldrick is seriously confused. He supposes that infralapsarianism, in contrast to supralapsarianism, teaches a universal love and grace of God: "John Calvin taught infralapsarianism. He held that God loves the entire human race, and common grace is an expression of his love, even to the non-elect" (p. 231).

Infralapsarianism has as little to

do with a universal grace of God as does supralapsarianism. Infralapsarianism is a view of the place of predestination in the divine decrees. As much as does supralapsarianism, infralapsarianism teaches God's eternal election of some in love and God's eternal reprobation of others in hatred. As a sound doctrine of predestination, infralapsarianism, like supralapsarianism, *exactly denies a love of God for all and affirms divine hatred for some*. What infralapsarianism is can easily be learned by every Reformed Christian from a reading of the Canons of Dordt. One will scour the Canons in vain for the least hint of universal love and grace.

Critical of Kuyper in other respects, McGoldrick displays the same uncritical acceptance of Kuyper's doctrine of common grace that characterizes most Reformed theologians. The corruption that common grace has worked wherever it has been promoted, including Kuyper's own Free University of Amsterdam and the churches Kuyper founded, is conveniently attributed to the abuse of the doctrine.

McGoldrick's criticism of Kuyper's theory of presupposed regeneration is unfair and unconvincing. He does not do justice to Kuyper's own presentation of his views on infant baptism and presupposed regeneration. In the sections in which McGoldrick treats Kuyper's doctrine, there is no reference to Kuyper's careful, lengthy explanation of Question and Answer 74 of the Heidelberg Catechism in his commentary on the Catechism, *E Voto*. McGoldrick relies heavily on critics of Kuyper's doctrine of the Reformed view of covenant children who themselves espouse the miserable doctrine of presupposed *unregeneration*, a doctrine far worse than Kuyper's teaching of presupposed regeneration.

And is it really praise of a Reformed thinker, indeed a theologian, to call him, in the title of his biography no less, a "Renaissance man"?

Young People's Activities

No sooner has one convention come and gone than another one is being planned. The young people of the Southwest PRC in Grandville, MI will be sponsoring the 2004 PRYP Convention, the Lord willing. Next year's convention will be held July 12-16, at Covenant Hills Camp in Otisville, MI, just north of Flint. Attached to the camp is also a campground and RV park that can be used by parents and friends who would like to camp during the week of the convention and be able to attend the speeches. If you are interested in knowing more about Covenant Hills Camp, you can check it out on the web at www.CovenantHills.org.

With Young People's Society starting up again this fall, it is always interesting to note the different special activities and unusual outings some of our young people go to. We would challenge any group to do better than the young people of the Georgetown PRC in Hudsonville, MI, who back last May enjoyed a group outing to Yntema Funeral Home in Zeeland, MI. Certainly not your typical outing destination.

Congregation Activities

Sunday evening, August 24, the congregation of the Hudsonville, MI PRC gathered together after their second service to bid farewell to their pastor for the past nine years, Rev. B. Gritters, his wife, Lori, and their children. As many of you know, earlier this past summer Rev. Gritters accepted the call from our churches to serve as professor of New Testament and Practical Theology in our seminary,

eventually replacing the retiring Prof. R. Decker. This farewell-appreciation program featured numbers from Hudsonville Sunday School and Choir, the audience singing various Psalter numbers, and a piano solo. In addition to a monetary gift given to help with the purchase of major appliances in their new home, the Gritters also received a plaque with the words of III John 4 inscribed on it: "I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in truth" — the same text Rev. Gritters used as the theme for his farewell sermon on August 3.

This past Sunday School season the children of the Byron Center, MI PRC took collections for equipment for a Christian doctor in Myanmar and needy children in an orphanage in Myanmar. In response to those gifts Mrs. Judie Feenstra visited their Sunday School the last week of their season to tell them about her missionary assistance work in Myanmar and about the people that the children have been giving money for. Anyone else interested was also welcome.

This fall Rev. R. Cammenga, pastor of the Southwest PRC in Grandville, MI, anticipated beginning to preach through the Lord's Days of the Heidelberg Catechism again. In light of this, he put together a twenty-eight page packet of "Material Relating to the Background and History of the Heidelberg Catechism." Included in this material was the history of the H.C. and various items of interest.

To bring their season to a close, the Sunday School children of the Hope PRC in Redlands, CA invited their congregation to a short program after their evening service on Sunday, August 24.

The evening of August 17 there was a presentation at Georgetown PRC in Hudsonville, MI given by members of a group that traveled to Romania this summer. They

spoke about their experience and showed photos as well.

Evangelism Activities

The Reformed Witness Committee of the Doon, Edgerton, and Hull PR Churches will again be sponsoring a Bible discussion on the campus of Dordt College. This year meetings will take place on a new night, Wednesday evenings at 7:00 P.M. Their first meeting was held already on September 3. They have begun a study of the book of Daniel. The RWC invites all who attend Dordt to consider this worthwhile study of God's Word.

Denomination Activities

Sunday evening, September 7, members of our congregations in west Michigan were invited to join the Hope Heralds as they concluded their summer season with a concert of sacred music at Grandville, MI PRC.

On September 4, Rev. B. Gritters was installed into the position of Professor of New Testament and Practical Theology in our seminary. This year the annual Seminary Convocation was combined with Rev. Gritters' installation and was held at the Hudsonville, MI PRC. Prof. R. Decker conducted the worship service and preached on II Timothy 2:1, 2 under the theme, "Committing the Truth to Faithful Men." This proved to be a very appropriate text for faculty and students alike since it pointed them all to the awesome responsibility they have as undershepherds and potential undershepherds of God's church. Rev. Dale Kuiper, president of the Theological School Committee, read the form for the installation of Rev. Gritters into the office of professor, and also introduced the five men presently studying in our seminary. They are Nathan Langerak, first-year stu-

Mr. Wigger is a member of the Protestant Reformed Church of Hudsonville, Michigan.


dent; Andrew Lanning and Clayton Spronk, second-year students; Dennis Lee and John Marcus, third-year students. There are no fourth-year students. We would also use this occasion to remind our readers to remember our seminary in your prayers.

Minister Activities

Rev. R. Cammenga declined the call he was considering to serve as missionary to Ghana. Rev.

R. Cammenga has received the call from Faith PRC to serve as their next pastor. Rev. C. Haak declined the call he received from the Hudsonville, MI PRC to serve as their next pastor. From a trio of the Revs. G. Eriks, D. Kleyn, and J. Slopsema, the Byron Center, MI PRC extended a call to Rev. Slopsema.

And one final thought taken from a recent Grace PRC bulletin. "All the 'calls' and now one minis-

ter to begin teaching at the Seminary means we have three vacancies in our PR congregations. Ministers are busy filling classical appointments. Churches must find pulpit supply. Elders may lead the worship services. And the congregations without pastors must wait on the Lord. Let us pray for one another as churches. Together let us thank Him for abundantly providing His truth and the ministry of it." 

Announcements

NOTICE!!

With gratitude to God for preserving us for the past fifty years, a number of our area churches are planning lectures for October 30 and 31: the first, by Prof. Russell Dykstra on "Tried by Fire: Why the Protestant Reformed Churches Had to Endure the Split of 1953"; the second, by Prof. Herman Hanko, on "Conditional Theology and the Road Back to Rome." These lectures will be at Faith Protestant Reformed Church at 7:30 P.M. Come, and bring a friend.

First PRC of Holland, MI is seeking individuals who would be able and willing to translate Protestant Reformed literature into the Spanish language. Those interested should contact Paul Starrett at 624 64th Ave. Zeeland, MI 49464 or by phone 616-688-7344.

REMINDER:

Heritage Christian High School in South Holland, IL is now in its 3rd year of operation, teaching a full course load as a four-year high school. As we plan for the 2004-2005 school year, we ask qualified Protestant Reformed teachers to consider our need of one additional staff member. Interested individuals, please contact our Administrator, Ralph Medema at (708) 339-1733 [Ralph.medema@heritagechs.org] or Education Committee Chairman Andy Birkett at (708) 895-8214 [andy@preferredwindowanddoor.com].

Reformation Lecture

Friday, October 24, 2003
7:30 P.M.

Rev. David Overway
will speak on

"What Churches Need Today"

liturgical renewal? theological pluralism? or knowledge of the truth taught by faithful preaching of the Word of God?

Join us at Covenant PRC

283 Squawbrook Road

Wyckoff, NJ

All are invited to attend.

For directions call: (201) 847-1754

RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The council and congregation of Grandville PRC express their Christian sympathy to John and Judy Bouma and family in the death of John's sister,

MRS. MARGE VAN BERKUM.

May they be comforted by God's Word, "My flesh and my heart faileth: but God is the strength of my heart, and my portion for ever" (Psalm 73:26).

Rev. Kenneth Koole, President
Dan Key, Assistant Clerk

WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

On September 28, 2003, our parents and grandparents,

KENNETH & MARILYN DE JONG,

celebrated their 30th wedding anniversary. We are thankful for the many years that God has blessed them in their marriage, and for the love, care, and covenant instruction they have provided. We pray that God will continue to bless them in the coming years and continue to keep their marriage grounded in God's Word. "But the mercy of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting upon them that fear him, and his righteousness unto children's children." (Psalm 103:17).

- ❖ Ed & Leah De Jong
- ❖ Jack Jr. & Sharon Bretall
Jack III, Luke
- ❖ Stephan & Jennifer De Jong
- ❖ Michael De Jong
- ❖ Steve & Elisa Melendez
Devon
- ❖ Kristin, Diana, Emily, Melissa,
Melinda & Kathleen De Jong
- ❖ Ruth De Jong (in glory)

Lansing, Illinois

Reformed Witness Hour

Topics for October

Date	Topic	Text
October 5	"Spiritual Lethargy"	Song of Solomon 5:1-8
October 12	"Not Weary in Well Doing"	Galatians 6:9
October 19	"Need for the Recovery of the Biblical Gospel"	Romans 1:16, 17
October 26	"Need for the Recovery of the Biblical Gospel"	Romans 1:16, 17