

# THE *December 15, 2003* STANDARD BEARER

A REFORMED SEMI-MONTHLY MAGAZINE

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Volume 80 ♦ Number 6



# Laid in a Manger

*And she brought forth her firstborn son, and wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger; because there was no room for them in the inn.*

Luke 2:7

**T**he angels came from heaven with its brilliant glory to speak to shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flocks by night. They spoke of this child, Mary's firstborn son. His very star appeared in the east, guiding the wise men from afar to behold this child. Of this one Moses and the prophets gave witness. The prophets of the old dispensation searched out the time of His appearing with great wonder and awe. For this child many godly hoped and prayed and longed. He is the Messiah. Not merely the firstborn of Mary, but the firstborn of all creation. Not merely the firstborn of Mary, but the only-begotten Son of God!

This one was laid in a manger.  
How can that be? We are

stunned when we hear it! What ill treatment was accorded this one, to whom belongs heaven and earth and all things in them! To be laid in a manger, this abode not of newborn infants, but of grain and hay for the beasts of the field.

Ought we not shudder at such a sight recorded in this verse? This one so great and glorious: Should He not receive far different accommodations for His grand entrance into the world?

We might think of far better!

Let Him be received into the temple! Here is a fit entrance for the all-glorious God come into human flesh. Let the glory of that place crown Him with its splendor. Let the gold and silver adorning the temple point to His value. Let the holiness of that place show the consecration of that holy Child. As He Himself is God, so let the Son of God, clothed with human flesh, be born and laid in that holiest of places on the face of the earth.

No temple. He is laid in a manger.

Let Him be received into a palace. Not the shabby surroundings of the palace of the governor of Judea. Nor even the gilded halls of Herod's palace. Let Him be re-

ceived into the palace of Caesar himself. Let His birth be after the manner of the next and final emperor. After all, He is King of kings and Lord of lords. These great nations and their mighty armies are under His dominion.

Let all these attend to His birth. Let Him be surrounded by the best of care, the great physicians of healing. Let them consult together for the best treatment of the least ailment that might beset Him. Let Him be surrounded by the great and mighty soldiers of the Roman empire, lest He be attacked and destroyed. Let Him be surrounded by the wisest counselors and teachers. Hear their advice on raising this special Child. Let the glory of the earth be given to Him.

No imperial palace. He is laid in a manger.

Let us bring our protest where it belongs. Let us bring our arguments against this shameful treatment before the Most High God. Let us speak of the glory of this Child. Let us take note what we might bring, to give Him a proper welcome into this world. Let us even admit that what we have is very little to give to the Son of God. Nevertheless, we do have some-

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thing, however small. Should that not be meet?

Hear the answer. Hear even the wisdom of God: In a manger!

This is the glad tidings of the gospel. Not by might, nor by power. Not by human wisdom. Not by signs and wonders. But by a manger!

Yes, a manger. A feedbox for animals, even the common beast of the field. A feedbox in a dark, dirty, dank, smelly stable. Surrounded by creatures of the earth also seeking shelter there.

Yes, there in the manger is the gospel.

How can that be?

Should God hear and answer our protest, the gospel would surely be lost to us.

Who would dare to enter into the temple of God, into that most holy place? There the high priest might enter once a year, and that not without blood. Perhaps other priests, especially upon this glad occasion. But not the common man. Not you and I. We would not dare, lest we be consumed by the glory of the Lord.

Who would dare enter into Caesar's palace? Who would dare attempt breaching the ranks of these heavily armed, well-trained

soldiers? Who would not be so intimidated by the gathering of these learned doctors, counselors, and teachers, as to cower in some hidden corner? Who would dare to approach this great Child, so clothed in the finest of garments, and wrapped in such finery?

Not you and I. We could not enter into a temple, or into such an imperial palace.

Some would dare approach. These would be the great ones. They would be the powerful among men, great kings, nobles, emperors, even from far away regions. They would be the wealthy among men, at home and comfortable with gold, silver, and fine tapestries. They would be the learned doctors of wisdom and law.

Would we dare approach? Not at all. Of such a sort we are not. We are far too common. Were we to enter into such dwellings, we would be filled with unease. Too much power, too much riches and splendor surrounding us.

But He was laid in a manger. Blessed glad tidings of the gospel!

For He was born for the humble, the meek and the lowly. He was born for us, who have nothing to offer: no silver or gold, no might and power, no great wisdom and learning. He was born


for us who have nothing but sin and misery to give, that He might take it away.

You see, He was not born to receive the glory, the power, the riches of men. He was not born to be served. He has no need of such things. A temple or palace must needs compromise His glory!

Instead, He was born to serve. He was born to give. He was born even to give His life as a ransom for many. He came to exalt the humble, the meek, and the lowly. He came to make the poor rich. He came to make the lame to walk, the deaf to hear, the blind to see, the dead to live.

Therefore, say: Let His entrance into this world be not marked by a palace or temple. Let Him be laid in a manger. And let us come before Him, casting everything away of worth or value. By faith let us bow humbly before this Lord of glory, now laid in a manger. That is the way of our salvation: not to give, but only to receive.

Let this be a sign to us: "Ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger." This is our Savior and our Lord.

Laid in a manger! 

## Editorial

# Wesley and Murray, Who Follows

**A** recent book by Iain H. Murray on John Wesley, famed father of the Methodist Church and grandfather of the charismatic movement, is of extraordinary significance for Calvinistic Christians and churches today, especially in Great Britain. The book is *Wesley and Men Who Followed* (Edinburgh: The Banner of Truth, 2003).

Although two of the four sections of *Wesley and Men Who Followed* are devoted to Wesley's successors and to the further fortunes of Methodism, the book is a new study of the life, theology, and labors of John Wesley, on the 300<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Wesley's birth.

### Foe of Grace

In spite of its intentions, the

work makes plain that Wesley, eighteenth century English preacher, revivalist, and founder of the Methodist Church, was a gross heretic. Within a year of his supposed conversion in 1738, Wesley publicly blasphemed the biblical doctrine of predestination both in a sermon and in a pamphlet, "Free Grace." Iain H. Murray must, of course, refer to this notorious as-

sault on the biblical gospel of grace. But, shrewdly, in keeping with his purpose of rendering Wesley and his theology acceptable to professing Calvinists, Murray neither quotes from the sermon and pamphlet, nor describes Wesley's diatribe as an attack on God's predestination. Rather, Murray informs us that Wesley merely preached "against the Calvinistic understanding of predestination" (p. 38). Note the description of the object of Wesley's hatred: not predestination, but merely "the Calvinistic understanding of predestination."

Another recent work on Wesley, Stephen Tomkins' *John Wesley: A Biography* (Eerdmans, 2003), is honest in its evaluation of the sermon and pamphlet of Wesley assailing predestination. Tomkins includes quotations from the pamphlet that show the ferocity of Wesley's attack on predestination.

It [Wesley's pamphlet] was an extremely powerful piece of writing, a violent exhortation of "the blasphemy clearly contained in the horrible decree of predestination." It destroys our comfort, holiness and zeal for preaching, he insisted, or if it does not, it logically should do. "It represents the most holy God as worse than the Devil, as both more false, more cruel, and more unjust." ...It is a monstrous doctrine (Tomkins, *Wesley*, p. 78).

For exactly such blasphemous slander of God's predestination, the Synod of Dordt warned such "calumniators" as John Wesley "to consider the terrible judgment of God which awaits them for bearing false witness against the confessions of so many churches, for distressing the consciences of the weak, and for laboring to render suspected the society of the truly faithful" (Canons of Dordt, Conclusion).

Throughout his long life and ministry, Wesley remained an inveterate foe of sovereign grace and an ardent lover of the free will of the natural man and its decisiveness in salvation.

Wesley denied justification by faith alone, and opposed it vigorously. His doctrine of justification was Rome's: the infusing of grace so that the sinner performs good works, which are then part of his righteousness with God. "The righteousness which is of God by faith is both imputed and inherent," Wesley taught, so that the justification of the sinner is a continual process. Wesley rejected justification as God's imputation of the righteousness of Christ to the sinner: "We do not find it affirmed expressly in Scripture that God imputes the righteousness of Christ to any" (Murray, *Wesley*, pp. 222, 219).

Wesley's attack on the doctrine of justification by faith alone was the same as Rome's: The doctrine hinders the Christian life of sanctification and good works, that is, the grace of justification by faith alone makes men careless and profane. Wrote Wesley against justification by faith alone, "For if the very personal obedience of Christ ... be mine the moment I believe, can anything be added thereto? Does my obeying add any value to the perfect obedience of Christ?" (Murray, *Wesley*, p. 220) The answer of the gospel, and of every Christian man, to these ungodly questions is an emphatic "no." Our obedience adds absolutely nothing to the perfect obedience of Christ for our righteousness with God. But for Wesley, this negative answer doomed the doctrine of justification by faith alone. The sinner's works must add something for righteousness to the obedience of Christ.

Necessarily implied in Wesley's denial of the biblical and Reformation truth of justification was a heretical doctrine of Christ's death. John Fletcher, Wesley's colleague and best disciple, "could see that the question of general over against particular redemption was closely tied to the nature of justification.... [R]ather than believe in particular redemption, Fletcher held a 'general justification' of all men, which was not, of itself, a sav-

ing justification at all" (Murray, *Wesley*, p. 224).

## A Second Blessing

As if all this corruption of the gospel of grace were not enough, Wesley taught perfectionism. Christians—all Christians—can and should be sinless in this life. This "entire sanctification" happens in a momentary experience. According to Wesley, all Christians should desire and expect this second blessing after conversion (Murray, *Wesley*, pp. 232-246). The doctrine of perfectionism, of course, either drives men to despair, or makes hypocrites of them.

Basic to Wesley's perfectionist teaching was his radical weakening of the biblical doctrine of sin. Sin for Wesley, as for Rome, was merely "voluntary transgression of a known law." It was not corruption of nature. It was not the thought, desire, and passion. Such a doctrine of sin as that of Wesley and Rome makes men Pelagians and Pharisees, who assert their own goodness and have no need of the grace of God. Lacking the knowledge of the greatness of his sin and misery, which the Heidelberg Catechism says is necessary for the enjoyment of the comfort of the gospel, it is no wonder that Wesley despised justification by faith alone. The man who is ignorant of the publican's "God be merciful to me the sinner" must be a stranger to justification as the imputation of Christ's righteousness.

Adding to the enormity of this grievous heresy was Wesley's toleration, if not encouragement, of bizarre physical acts accompanying the supposed second blessing of perfection and, indeed, Wesley's revivalistic preaching generally. Under the ministry of Wesley and his cohorts, Wesley's converts laughed insanely, roared, jerked, and fell down as slain. Murray only hints at these charismatic phenomena. Tomkins is frank: "The image of Wesley wading through the fallen as in a battlefield, pray-

ing over the shaking, hyper-ventilating bodies, will sound oddly familiar to any who witnessed the 'Toronto blessing' in 1994" (Tomkins, *Wesley*, pp. 71-74).

In his revivalism, his teaching of the experience of an instantaneous perfection as a second blessing, his acceptance, if not encouragement, of bizarre bodily expressions of salvation, and especially his free-will gospel, Wesley was the grandfather of the charismatic movement of today.

With good reason, Augustus M. Toplady, Wesley's great, orthodox, and honorable antagonist, said of Wesley, "I believe him to be the most rancorous hater of the gospel system that ever appeared in England" (cited in Tomkins, *Wesley*, p. 173).

#### "Dead to the Feelings of Shame"

Wesley was as wicked in his behavior as he was in his doctrine. He behaved abominably toward his nearest neighbor, his wife, virtually abandoning her. Murray very briefly notes the fact of Wesley's disobedience, all his married life, to the command of the apostle, that the husband love his wife and dwell with her as a man of understanding, although Murray is careful not to describe Wesley's behavior as sin. "With some justification Molly Wesley came to think that her husband did not need a wife. They were too often apart and were finally to be so alienated and separated that it was to be days after her funeral that he even heard of her death" (Murray, *Wesley*, p. 46).

What Murray neglects to mention is that in the meantime Wesley formed and enjoyed close relationships with other women, which, even if they were not adulterous, were illegitimate for a married man and devastating to Mrs. Wesley. On the basis of her husband's letters to these women, and his warm, close fellowship with them, Molly Wesley charged John Wesley with adultery. Tomkins concludes that, although he was "surely not—with

all due respect to Molly Wesley—an adulterer," Wesley's "personal relationships with women were, even according to admirers, an 'inexcusable weakness'" (Tomkins, *Wesley*, p. 197). A married man need not commit adultery to sin grievously against his wife, marriage, and marriage's God, by his relations with other women, or another woman.

It was Wesley's habitual practice in carrying on his war against Calvinism to change and elide passages in the writings of others that supported Calvinism and opposed his own gospel of free will. "[Wesley] usually 'corrected' and edited out of the Puritan reprints that he supervised those passages which conflicted with his position" (Murray, *Wesley*, p. 68). This was habitual transgression of the ninth commandment in the course of breaking the first, second, and third commandments.

In controversy, Wesley studied ambiguity, and lied, in order to defend himself and in order to promote his false teachings. "At times," Murray allows, "it is hard to avoid the impression that he was being devious" (Murray, *Wesley*, p. 224). His contemporaries recognized his deceit. One said, "I know him of old. He is an eel; take him where you will, he will slip through your fingers" (cited in Murray, *Wesley*, pp. 224, 225).

The godly Toplady was not too strong when he warned the deceitful heretic that he stood in mortal danger of damnation:

Whom do I condemn? Whom do I impiously consign to future punishment? I condemn no man. I dare not pronounce concerning any man's eternal state. Herein I judge not even Mr. Wesley himself: though I must tell him that if it be (as I most sincerely wish it may) the divine will to save him, he has an exceeding strait gate to pass through before he gets to heaven (Augustus M. Toplady, "More Work for Mr. John Wesley," in *The Works of Augustus*

*Toplady*, London: J. Cornish, 1853, p. 732).

The reason for the warning was that Wesley "is still as dead to the feelings of shame as he is blind to the doctrines of God" (Toplady, *Works*, p. 732).

#### Murray and the Murraymen

What makes Wesley's sins appear brightest crimson in *Wesley and Men Who Followed* is that they are acknowledged by an author who tries desperately to whitewash them all. Iain Murray wrote the book as glowing praise of the Methodist preacher and his revival. Every one of Wesley's iniquities, doctrinal as well as practical, is minimized, excused, or explained away. If we are to believe Murray, Wesley opposed Calvinism because he feared the danger of "Hyper-Calvinism," a far worse evil than the free-will heresy of Arminianism, if free-will Arminianism is a heresy for Murray at all. "There is however something to be said in defence of Wesley's misconception [of Calvinism]. The Reformers and Puritans had never had to deal with Hyper-Calvinism" (Murray, *Wesley*, p. 61).

In addition, according to Murray, Wesley misunderstood Calvinism. He supposed that Calvinism's doctrine of predestination teaches that God, in love, has elected only some persons, whereas He has reprobated the others in hatred. In fact, according to Murray, Calvinism teaches no such thing. Calvinism teaches the love of God for all men without exception. Calvinism teaches the love of God in *Jesus Christ* for all men without exception. "The issue between Calvinism and Arminianism is not whether God loves all men, it is whether God loves all men equally" (Murray, *Wesley*, pp. 60-63). Had Wesley understood that Calvinism teaches universal (ineffectual) grace, rather than particular, sovereign grace, he would not have opposed Calvinism as he did.



Similarly, Wesley denied justification by faith alone because of his aversion to the antinomianism rampant in the church at that time: "Part of Wesley's problem was his obsessive concern with Antinomianism" (Murray, *Wesley*, p. 227).

As for Wesley's moral iniquities, Murray assures us that Wesley gutted the old Puritan writings of their Calvinistic statements (presumably, since the Puritans had not learned their Calvinism from Iain Murray, statements of particular, sovereign grace), misquoted his opponents, revised the confessions, and lied when he felt the heat in controversy, because he was a busy man, who wrote much and had no time for accuracy. "A part of the explanation is that he [Wesley] worked too fast and with too much indifference to strict consistency" (Murray, *Wesley*, pp. 225, 226).

*Wesley and His Followers* is as important for its exposure of a modern follower of Wesley as it is for its unintended exposure of John Wesley. The modern follower of Wesley is the author of the book.

Iain Murray claims to be a Calvinist. He is a Presbyterian minister in Scotland. Heading the influential Banner of Truth Trust, he has the name of a leading champion of Calvinism, not only in Great Britain, but also throughout the world.

Of Wesley's gospel, or theology, which consisted of universal grace conditioned by the sinner's supposed free-will, justification by faith and works, universal atonement, the falling away of saints, a second blessing of instantaneous sinlessness, and a blasphemous attack on predestination, Murray judges that "the foundation of Wesley's theology was sound" (Murray, *Wesley*, p. 77). Wesley's theology was merely "confused" (Murray, *Wesley*, p. 79). Murray praises Wesley for his "commitment to the Bible" (Murray, *Wesley*, p. 80). It is the thrust of Murray's book that Wesley preached the gospel and that his revival was a glorious work of the Spirit of Christ by the gospel.

It is now evident what Iain Murray and the Banner of Truth under his command are doing to the Reformed faith in Great Britain and, as they have opportunity, across the world. They are destroying Calvinism *from within*.

The foes without openly assail Calvinism for teaching sovereign, particular grace grounded in eternal election, which election is one decree with the eternal reprobation of the others.

Murray and the Murraymen insidiously corrupt Calvinism from within. They portray Calvinism as a doctrine of God's universal love for sinners. They are perfectly silent as regards reprobation, except that the doctrine of a universal love for sinners necessarily implies the rejection of reprobation. They carry on a noisy, relentless warfare against the doctrine that God's grace in the gospel is particular—for the elect only—condemning it as the worst enemy Calvinism ever had—"Hyper-Calvinism." And they praise to the skies the "gospel" of a John Wesley, which the world knows was the message of universal grace suspended on the free will of the sinner—the "gospel" that the Synod of Dordt judged to be a form of Pelagianism.

Lo, according to Murray and the Murraymen, universal (ineffectual) grace, rooted in a loving will of God devoid of reprobation, is ... *Calvinism*!

And the message of sovereign grace for the elect alone, accomplishing the salvation of every one to whom God gives it in the preaching of the gospel, is ... *Hyper-Calvinism*.

It comes as no surprise then that at the end of the book, Murray, having defended Wesley's teaching as the gospel and having recast Calvinism as universal (ineffectual) grace, proposes that we henceforth regard Arminianism and Calvinism as two, friendly, cooperating forms of the gospel. Something "good" came out of the controversy between Wesley and the Calvinists.

"Men on both sides of the divide re-assessed how much they had in common.... This led to a determination that henceforth Calvinist and Arminian evangelicals, without minimizing their differences, should respect and aid one another wherever possible" (Murray, *Wesley*, p. 230).

*"Calvinist and Arminian evangelicals"!*

Two forms of one and the same gospel!

So that the Reformed faith should respect, and do all in its power to aid the spreading of, the message that salvation depends on the free will of the sinner, that Christ died for multitudes who nevertheless perish in hell, that the grace of God is resistible, that one can lose his salvation, and that the glory of salvation is the sinner's own. For this message, according to Murray, is a form of God's own gospel.

Murray quotes an old preacher approvingly: "Arminius, Calvin, Baxter, all excellent men in their own way, yet how divided in their notions! But Jesus, that eternal source of love, will, I would charitably hope, bless all who sincerely desire to magnify his holy name, notwithstanding their different apprehensions on these points" (Murray, *Wesley*, p. 231).

## Two Witnesses

Much of nominal Calvinist Christianity, especially in Great Britain, nods its approval. Read the favorable reviews of Murray's book on Wesley in the Reformed press. Note the popularity of Murray and the Banner with professing Calvinists.

But there remain at least two witnesses, that Murray and the Murraymen are corrupting the Reformed faith at its very heart and that the grace of God is sovereign (irresistible).

The Protestant Reformed Churches.

And Dordt.

— DJE 

## ■ Remember the Sabbath Day to Keep It Holy

One has become accustomed to businesses being open on Sunday. There was a time when this was not so. Only about 40 years ago most businesses were closed on the Sabbath. Even those who were not members of a church or professing Christians seemed to agree that it was best so. Almost inevitably this was true in small-town rural communities.

All that has changed. Today it is a rare instance when a business is closed on Sunday. Many "Christians" have accommodated themselves to this. It is not unusual to find them working or shopping on Sunday. For those who would still "remember the Sabbath Day," life has become increasingly difficult. It is not just that they abstain from shopping on Sunday, but it has become a matter of retaining a job as well. Workers are often required to work on Sunday in order to keep their jobs—and jobs have not been easy to come by in recent years. Though businesses are required by the laws of our land to honor the religious convictions of their employees (they may not fire a person for refusal to work on Sunday on the basis of religious convictions), other reasons are found to release such workers. Nor, usually, is one hired when he refuses to work on Sunday.

Normally one is no longer surprised to hear of another business deciding to open on Sunday. Still, it came somewhat as a shock to read in the *Grand Rapids Press* that the "Family Christian Stores" are

now open on Sunday. "Christian" stores open on Sunday? What's going on today?

In *The Outlook*, November 2003, Rev. Wybren Oord (pastor of Covenant United Reformed Church of Kalamazoo, MI) writes of this:

They told her she was fired. She had faithfully worked for them for some time, putting in overtime, always going the extra mile to help customers, but today she was fired. Why? There were all kinds of reasons, they said. All kinds of reasons, except one. They made very clear that the reason she was fired was not because she had refused to work on Sunday. Yes, they knew that she had never worked on Sunday before; they knew that she did not want to work on Sundays but they scheduled her anyway. And so, for reasons other than that, they claimed, the same week she refused to work on the Lord's Day, she was fired.

Sound familiar? We've heard it all before, you say? Maybe. The difference here is that the place that she worked was never open on Sundays before. Part of the reason why she applied for the job in the first place was because they were closed on Sunday. Another reason was the Christian atmosphere. After all, Family Christian Stores seemed like a safe haven from the worldly-minded places she had worked before.

This past September, Family Christian Stores opened for business on Sunday. Although they promised not to fire those who had serious reservations about working on the Lord's Day, those who refused were terminated "for other reasons." In our local Family Christian Stores, it was reported that sixty percent of the employees were suddenly and unexpectedly unemployed.

One really has to wonder why a Christian Bookstore has to be open on the Lord's Day. An e-

mail to the headquarters yielded the following response:

*Family Christian Stores has decided to open on Sundays after prayerful consideration and seeking counsel from other Christian leaders. We believe that opening on the primary ministry day of the week is what the Lord would have us do. While we are aware that our decision to open on Sundays invites some criticism, we must follow the ministry mission of Family Christian Stores and provide people with Christian resources that meet their needs—whenever the needs arise, especially on the day they are thinking about spiritual needs.*

*We understand some may question this move. However, I have been personally convicted by several verses that clearly call us to make disciples and reach people regardless of the day of the week.*

● *Matthew 12:1-14, but in particular Matthew 12:12 (NIV) "...for it is lawful to do good on the Sabbath."*

● *John 5:15-17, which speaks about Jesus healing on the Sabbath and His persecution by the Jews.*

● *Colossians 2:16-17 (NIV) "Therefore, let no one pass judgment on you in questions of food and drink or with regard to a festival or a new moon or a Sabbath. These are a shadow of the things to come, but the substance belongs to Christ."*

*Studying this subject also reinforced that we need to support regular times of worship, which is why we will not be open Sunday mornings. We also must support and encourage regular times of rest for our staff, and our approach to scheduling will support this.*

*We look forward to the opportunity to minister to more guests on this day and would ask for your prayers and encouragement as we make this change.*

In Christ,  
Dave Browne  
President and CEO

The Rev. Wybren Oord then tellingly points out the gross inconsistencies of this argumentation.

It does make one sick to his stomach. If it were an "enemy" who made these claims, one could understand. But this is one who comes in the name of "Christ" and asks for prayers and encouragements in this change!! Then, too, the store will not be open on Sunday mornings so that God's people can worship in church! (We've heard that argument too before—by grocery chains who subsequently opened Sunday mornings as well.) With Scripture one must remark, "How is the gold become dim!"

### ■ And then—There's the Seventh Commandment

As far as society in general is concerned, the seventh commandment is essentially no longer applicable. Divorce and remarriage have become acceptable even within the churches. Living together without the benefit of marriage is commonplace. The sin of homosexuality is rather labeled an "alternate life style."

The seriousness of the situation was called to my attention when I received an article from the *Loveland Reporter-Herald* of November 7, 2003. The article, taken from the Associated Press, was titled: "Homophobia banned from child's education."

DENVER — A woman who has joint custody of her adopted 8-year-old daughter has been ordered by a judge to shield the child from any religious teachings that could be interpreted as homophobic.

Cheryl Clark, a Denver physician, has appealed the order from state District Judge John Coughlin. The order governs a joint custody agreement between Clark and Elsey McLeod, who was once her lesbian partner, court documents show.

Clark ended the relationship after converting to Christianity, the documents said.

Coughlin's April 28 order gave Clark responsibility for the child's religious education but

said she must ensure "there is nothing in the religious upbringing or teaching that the minor child is exposed to that can be considered homophobic."

Clark filed an appeal last week.

She believes Christianity condemns homosexuality and fears the order will limit her ability to teach her child the faith, said Matthew Staver, president of the Florida-based Liberty Counsel, which takes up conservative Christian legal causes.

"We think this is the first case of its kind in the country that has gone that far," Staver said.

"We believe it sets a dangerous trend to undermine the rights of parents and religious freedom," he said.

The ruling does give one pause for thought and concern. Granted, the situation mentioned in the article is strange. Two lesbians have an 8-year-old daughter. After one repents of her sin, she is now forbidden to teach her daughter that homosexuality is sin—and even forbidden to place her in a situation where anyone else may teach her that. Presumably, it might be dangerous to take her to church where the court's order might be violated.

Will such an order eventually encompass all homes and churches someday soon? To condemn homosexuality whether at home, in school, or in the church could easily be interpreted as "homophobic." Will parents be forbidden to warn their children against such sins? Or, perhaps, will one be forbidden to speak of anything as "sin"? One, then, can decide for himself what is right or wrong. Each can be "as God" to know for himself the good and the evil.

### ■ What About the Sixth Commandment?

Most have read of or heard about the case in Florida of Terri Schiavo, who suffered from a stroke some 13 years ago. There has been a legal struggle between

her husband (who insists that his wife would never want to remain in this "vegetative" state) and her parents who insist that she remains aware and conscious of things about her. Should a feeding tube continue to sustain her—or should it be withdrawn and she be allowed to starve to death?

Editorials have been written, people have weighed in on both sides, and courts have decided in favor of the husband's position. The legislature and the governor of Florida, however, have taken action to sustain this lady's life. Questions are raised about one's "right to die."

Andree Seu, *World* magazine, November 15, 2003, has contributed her interesting comments on the case:

The Apostle Peter gave two reasons why a moral issue may be a bugbear: first, the issue is intrinsically "hard to understand"; second, men are "ignorant and unstable," and wont to "twist" things to their own designs (2 Peter 3:16). We have both in the Terri Schindler Schiavo case.

What makes the story of the 13-year bedridden woman intractable? The answer is that it is not one story at all but a Gordian knot whose strands include motives (the husband's, the ACLU's, etc.), medical definitions ("irreversibility"), slippery semantics ("vegetative state"), modern technology (artificial versus nonartificial life-extending measures), rights of guardianship, living wills, law on the books, law of God, "separation of powers," and how to think and judge as a Christian in a non-Christian country.

There have evolved in our institutions of higher learning a breed of experts who call themselves "end-of-life specialists." These are people who do nothing all day but consider a constellation of concerns revolving around the "terminal" patient: palliative care, pain management, quality of life, end-of-life options, alleviation of financial concerns, use of narcotics, organ donation, "extraor-



dinary medical intervention," "artificial nutrition," "regulated assisted dying," and "rights of the dying." And at the center of the constellation—a void.

For all depends on what you see when you're looking at Terri Schiavo on her bed. And what you see keeps shifting on us, as old verities are less certain in these last days, and the room fogs around us, and human rights blur with animal rights, and...well, they shoot horses, don't they?


The writer continues to analyze the situation and considers the various alternatives proposed by man. Her final paragraph sums up:

There is variety among men—black, white, and yellow, man and woman—because there is variety within God. (Indeed,

there is variety *within* man—body, soul, and spirit—for the same reason.) There is interdependency among men because the Father loves the Son and the Spirit. And reality is so configured that we may not experience the fullness of being human, nor may we understand anything at all, including ourselves, apart from relationship with others. What irony to want to snuff the life that was meant to draw one deeper into the mystery. What miscalculation to treat as disposable a creature who, if she were weighed in the scales against the seven wonders of the world, we would have to prefer to all their glory.

It is a sad, yea, a tragic story. This does indicate further the direction in which our society is going. It is supposed to be a "woman's right" to destroy the

fruit of her womb before there occurs a birth. Increasingly, the position is taken that it is one's "right" to determine the time and method of his death. In the particular case above, no extraordinary means are being used to keep the individual alive—except to feed her with a tube into her stomach. Who is to decide if, when, why, and how that tube is to be removed?

The unchangeable truths of the Ten Commandments are being eroded—one after another. Someone has said, only two of the ten commands are currently incorporated into the laws of our land: thou shalt not kill and thou shalt not steal. And even those two are now defined by man to suit his own liking while ignoring the teaching of Scripture. 

## Feature Article

Herman Hoeksema

# The Covenant Concept (2)\*

**W**e must still answer the question: With whom is the covenant established? Is it established with Christ, or only with us? In close connection with this question, we ought to ask: Is the Christ the Head or only the Mediator and Surety of the covenant? The answers to this latter question vary as the conceptions of the covenant differ. Usually, if the covenant is considered as a way or a means to an end, i.e., to our salvation, the answer is: "God establishes His covenant with us," and even then the answers are more or less spe-

cific, some being satisfied with the statement that God establishes His covenant with men, or with sinners; others insisting that it is established with elect sinners. But it is not established with Christ. He has no need of salvation, and therefore He is the Mediator of the covenant in behalf of the covenant and the Surety that God's demands shall be fulfilled.

Others, however, even in this class, though somewhat inconsistently, insist that Christ is also the Head of the covenant, in the sense that He represents His people. In this group it is customary to speak of a separate covenant of redemption, or counsel of peace. By this is understood a pact or agreement within the Trinity, either between the three persons of the Trinity or

between the Father and the Son, and briefly consisting in this, that the Father appoints the Son Mediator in behalf of the elect, requiring of Him to become servant in the flesh and the complete satisfaction for sin. And the Son agrees to this on condition that the Father will give to Him His Mediator's glory and the promised seed. This conception, although the name of this covenant is derived erroneously from Zechariah 6:13, is based on such passages as Psalm 2, Psalm 89, etc. And this covenant of redemption is supposed to be the eternal basis for the covenant of grace.

As to our view of this matter we may note the following:

First of all, we must proceed from the fundamental truth that

\* The first installment of this article is found in the December 1 issue of the *Standard Bearer*.



God is a covenant God in Himself, and that the deepest ground of His covenant with us is His own covenant life as the triune God. This must be so because all the works of God *ad extra* are self-revelation. God is one in being and three in persons. In the Trinity we have, therefore, the most absolute sameness and essential identity, together with personal distinction. And the three persons of the holy Trinity, being one in essence, possessing the same essential attributes, living the same infinitely perfect life in the inaccessible light, dwell together in the fellowship of perfect friendship. The Father knows and loves and lives through the Son and in the Spirit of Himself. The Son knows and loves and lives of the Father, through Himself, in the Spirit. The Spirit knows and loves and lives of the Father, through the Son in Himself.

In the second place, what is known as the counsel of peace or the covenant of redemption, if we must speak of it at all, is the eternal decree, counsel, or living will of the triune God to reveal this covenant life, and realize a creaturely reflection of the covenant in the highest possible degree with man in the way of sin and grace.

Thirdly, the realization of this decree, counsel, living will of God is the covenant of grace with Christ, and with His people in Him. Christ, therefore, is *the* friend-servant of God in the highest sense of the word. He is this as the Incarnate Word, the most intimate possible union between God and man. As the chief friend-servant of God, in whom the covenant life of God's friendship is centrally revealed and realized, He receives a people who through Him will be received into that same living relationship of friendship, and in whom His own glory will be reflected in a manifold way. As this covenant relation is to be raised to its highest possible level, this Christ and His church must pass through the way of sin and death into the glory of

God's heavenly tabernacle. It stands to reason therefore that this chief covenant friend of God in relation to His people is their Surety; that the basis of righteousness shall be established and that they shall be justified and glorified through Him; that He is the Mediator in their behalf, through whom God establishes the covenant relation; and that in the covenant relation He stands as their Head representing them. In relation to God, Christ in His covenant relation always stands as the Servant-Friend, whose delight it is to do the will of God, even to the very depth of His suffering and death. All the work of Christ must be considered in this light and from this viewpoint. He acts as servant of Jehovah in the threefold capacity as the prophetic, sacerdotal, and royal Official. As such He accomplishes everything necessary for the perfection of the covenant of God with us. He reveals the Father, He obeys, suffers, dies, atones, satisfies. He enters into the depth of the suffering of hell. In that capacity He is exalted, raised from the dead, taken into the highest heaven, seated at the right hand of God, and becomes the quickening Spirit. He also becomes the Mediator of the realization of the covenant of friendship in the hearts and lives of all whom the Father gave Him. In answer, then, to the question *with whom* the covenant is established, we say: first and centrally with Christ, and through Him with His people.

That this is indeed the teaching of Scripture is not difficult to show. All the scriptural passages that are usually quoted in support of the so-called counsel of peace or covenant of redemption between the Father and the Son must undoubtedly be interpreted as having reference to the relation between the triune God and Christ in His human nature. In the counsel of

peace, as we have defined it, the Son appears and acts in the divine nature, and as such He is coordinate with the Father and the Son and Holy Spirit. He decrees together with the Father and the Holy Spirit in this counsel of peace. But in all the scriptural passages referred to above, He appears in a subordinate position, and not on the basis of equality with the Father and the Holy Ghost, but as the Servant of Jehovah, and, therefore, as in His human nature. This is true of all the passages in Isaiah that concern the Servant of Jehovah (Isaiah 42:1-4, for instance). Centrally, the Servant here is Christ, though we must always remember that the term "Servant of Jehovah" has a broader connotation. As servant-friend He stands in the covenant relation to the triune God who here speaks.

The same is true of Psalm 89:1-4. (This text is almost always quoted in support of the notion of the counsel of peace.) Again here we have a relationship between the triune God and Christ in His human nature (Ps. 89:1-4, 28, 29; 2:7-9). The utterance "I will declare the decree: the Lord hath said unto me, Thou art my Son: this day have I begotten thee" in this passage is not spoken by the Father to the Son, but again by the triune God to the Man Jesus. This passage also refers to Christ as Mediator in the covenant relation to the triune God, as God will exalt Him through the resurrection to His right hand and make Him King forever.

This is also true from the passages in which Christ appears as the one sent by the Father (John 6:38, 39; 10:18; etc.).

In this connection we may also refer to Philippians 2:9-11, speaking of the exaltation of the Servant of God in human nature, an exaltation that is based upon His having humbled Himself in perfect

*The covenant is not a "way" or "means," but the end itself, and it is conceived as such in the eternal good pleasure of God.*



obedience. Here, too, belong those texts that speak of God as Christ's God (Ps. 22:1; 40:7, 8); and the well-known phrase in the New Testament "the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ," which can only be applied to Christ in His human nature. And, finally, we may mention here the well-known passage of Romans 5:12-21, where a clear parallel is drawn between Christ and Adam, both in their capacity as covenant Head, representing their people in the covenant.

In close connection with the above discussion stands the close relation of the doctrine of the *covenant and election*, and the question as to *who are in the covenant*? It will be evident that those who speak of a covenant of redemption or counsel of peace as an agreement between the Father and the Son unto the salvation of the elect conceive of election as being prior to this covenant of redemption or counsel of peace. For the latter has its purpose in the salvation of the elect. Even from this it is evident that the covenant must of necessity be conceived of as "a way to an end" from this viewpoint. According to the conception we have presented of the counsel of peace, it is evident that the relation between it and election is such that the latter serves the former, and therefore follows it. The covenant is not a "way" or "means," but the end itself, and it is conceived as such in the eternal good pleasure of God. It follows, then, that the decree of the covenant is first, and that the decree of election is subservient to the decree of the counsel of peace. God first decrees in the counsel of peace to reveal the glory of His own covenant life in a covenant established with the creature, and then He ordains and chooses the elect in Christ for the realization of that covenant.

This also answers, in part at least, the question: *with whom* is the covenant established? Or, who are in the covenant of God? Also in regard to this question there is

much confusion among Reformed theologians. Some simply answer that the covenant is established with the elect, others prefer to say that the elect sinner in Christ is in the covenant, while still others look at the historical realization of the covenant in the world and then insist that believers and their seed are those with whom God establishes His covenant, and by the "seed of believers" they then mean all that are born of believing parents. It should be clear, however, that if the covenant is established in and with Christ, those that are in the covenant of God according to God's elective decree are none other than the elect. In God's counsel, the covenant is strictly limited to those who are chosen in Christ (Eph. 1:4), so that in actual fact the covenant people are those who receive the gifts of grace according to election, such as regeneration, being grafted into Christ by faith, and receiving all the benefits of grace and salvation in Christ so that they may live the life of God's eternal friendship even in this world.

This does not change the fact that the covenant is established with believers and their seed, and that in the line of their continued generations. This does indeed follow from the covenant as it was established with Abraham and his seed, according to Genesis 17:7. But one does not have to appeal to this particular text, and thus probably expose himself to the necessity of answering those who always insist that the Jews are Israel. We may turn to the establishment of the covenant with Noah and his seed (Gen. 9:8-17) to show that it is established in the line of generations. Surely no one dare argue that we are not of Noah's seed. Or we may even go back farther and appeal for scriptural basis for this same truth in Genesis 3:15, and show that from the beginning God established His covenant in the line

*In God's counsel,  
the covenant  
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(Eph. 1:4).*

of the seed of the woman that culminates in the Christ. Surely no one dare argue that we belong to the seed of another than the woman. Nor can it be argued that these scriptural passages do not refer to the same thing, for the covenant is surely *one*, as it is established in the seed of the woman in the line of Seth, with the seed of Noah in the line of Shem, with the seed of Abraham in the line of Israel, "and with you and your children and all that are afar off"

in the New Testament (Acts 2:39). So that there can be no question about the fact that the covenant is established between believers and their seed in the line of their generations.

From this it may not be deduced, however, either that the covenant includes *all* the seed according to the flesh, or that the covenant promise *objectively is meant* for all of them. Thus it is frequently presented. Also with respect to the covenant the theory is applied that we have nothing to do with God's election, that the secret things are for the Lord our God, that according to the revealed will of God He has established His covenant with believers and their seed, and that therefore all the seed of believers must be considered covenant-seed. Others, acknowledging the impossibility of taking the stand that all children of believers belong to the seed of the covenant, have tried to make a distinction in order to meet what they conceived to be a difficulty. Some spoke of an external and internal covenant — the former referring to the historical establishment of the covenant with the seed of believers indiscriminately, the latter to the real covenant established with the elect in Christ. Others prefer to speak of a conditional and absolute covenant. Evidently they are thus trying to make room for a conditional form of preaching and a "well-



meaning offer of salvation" to all that are born in the church, while still others spoke of the covenant and its administration. However, it is quite certain:


1. That the stream of God's election follows the riverbed of continued generations, and that in such a way that the riverbed is dug out for the stream. The organic development of the generations is adapted to the realization of the seed of the covenant.

2. That it is the will of God

that all who fall within the covenant generations shall be treated according to the standard that must be applied to God's real covenant people. They are called by God's name, they receive the signs of the covenant by which they are separated from the world, and they wear the uniform of Christ's army. They hear the Word of God and the promise and the calling of God unto their part of the covenant.

3. That the disobedient are fornicators, and expressed as such by the Scriptures as violators of the

covenant of God, and that they shall in consequence be beaten with double stripes.

4. That nevertheless only the "children of the promise" are counted for the true seed of the covenant (cf. Rom. 9:6-9), so that with them and only them, even in the line of the generations of believers, God established His covenant. They alone believe the promises of God and walk in a "new and holy life," as of the party of the living Jehovah. 

Marking the Bulwarks of Zion

Prof. Herman Hanko

## Moïse Amyraut and Amyraldianism (2)

### Introduction

**M**oïse Amyraut held to a position in France that was a serious and significant modification of Calvin's teachings and a rejection of the strong pronouncements of the Synod of Dordt. His views were never consistently condemned by the French Reformed Churches, and Amyraut himself was never censured. The result was the demise of the Reformed Church in France as a truly Calvinistic church.

Amyraut's teachings had wide influence. We briefly turn to this matter in this article.

### John Cameron and Developments in Scotland

John Cameron was Amyraut's

teacher and mentor. Although born in Glasgow, Scotland in 1579, Cameron spent the years 1600-1621 in France. Because of his vast knowledge, he was appointed professor of theology at Saumur, the school where Amyraut obtained his degree. It was at the feet of Cameron that Amyraut became acquainted with the universalism that he later popularized.

In 1621 the school of Saumur ceased to exist because of the civil wars in France, and Cameron returned to Glasgow. He remained in his hometown for only three years before returning to France, where he was killed in 1625 during political rioting.

John Cameron is important because he carried Amyraldianism to Scotland, although similar teachings may very well have come earlier and from a different source. Some claim that Bishop Ussher, from Armagh in Ireland, the author of a widely accepted chronology of the Bible, may have held similar views. John Davenant was already infected with errors simi-

lar to Amyraldianism prior to the Synod of Dordt. Four delegates to Dordt were sent by the English king: Davenant, Balcanqual, Carleton, and Goad. The latter three were sound men; Davenant was not. His ideas were so inimical to his colleagues at Dordt that there was constant debate within the English delegation. Davenant frequently agreed with the Dordt delegates from Bremen, who openly sided with the Arminians during the deliberations of that synod. Amyraldianism, or an earlier form of it, was represented at Dordt — although it could hardly be called by that name and could better be known as Cameroonianism, after its founder.

However that may be, the views of Cameron came to England, and the influence of his views was widespread. At the Westminster Assembly, Amyraldianism was represented by a party consisting of nine men, among whom was especially Seamen, Arrowsmith, and Sprigge. The particularism of Calvinism was also defended on the floor of the

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Assembly, especially by the Scottish theologians Rutherford and Gillespie. The debates were long, but never anything else but amiable. (See *Universalism and the Reformed Churches*, Evangelical Presbyterian Church of Australia, 5).

Although Amyraldianism was defended on the floor of the Assembly, the Confession itself does not include Amyraldian statements. Nevertheless, there is some reason to believe that the Confession is not as strong as it could have been on this point.

In *Universalism and the Reformed Churches* the statement is made that the "attitude of the Assembly to the Davenant School (an amiable attitude is referred to here, HH) was confirmed later in the same year on 4<sup>th</sup> December, when the Assembly defended the reputation of Moses Amyraut against the complaints of one Andrew Rivett." However, an examination of the minutes does not seem to support this contention. The pertinent part of the minute of December 4, 1645 reads: "Upon a motion made by Mr. Dury, according to the desire of Mr. Rivett, that the Assembly would purge him from a charge of complaining against Amyrauldus to this Assembly. *Ordered*—The Prolocutor and scribes do sign a certificate that neither in his name nor in any other man's name any such complaint hath been brought into this Assembly."

This minute is not entirely clear. Apparently the Assembly had received a charge against Amyraut in the name of Andrew Rivett, whether he brought the charge himself or whether it was brought by someone else in his name. This charge was, at the request of Rivett himself, withdrawn from the Assembly and the record of it was expunged. How all that happened is not clear from the minutes. It is true, however, that the Assembly had an opportunity to condemn the views of Moïse Amyraut and did not do it. The Assembly did not approve of

Amyraldianism by incorporating Amyraldian phrases in its final adopted confession. But it did not condemn or exclude the Amyraldian heresy either. This is evident from the article concerning the atonement. Chapter 8, 5 reads: "The Lord Jesus, by his perfect obedience, and sacrifice of himself, which he, through the eternal Spirit, once offered up unto God, hath fully satisfied the justice of his Father, and purchased, not only reconciliation, but an everlasting inheritance in the kingdom of heaven, for all those whom the Father hath given unto him."

That is, of course, a good article. But it did not exclude or condemn the universalism of the Amyraldian conception of the atonement of Christ. Compare this, for example, with the statement of the Synod of Dordt: "...it was the will of God that Christ by the blood of the cross, whereby He confirmed the new covenant, should effectually redeem out of every people, tribe, nation, and language all those, and those only (emphasis mine, HH), who were from eternity chosen to salvation and given Him by the Father ..." (2, 8). Westminster does have an exclusionary expression in it in 3, 6, an article dealing with election: "As God hath appointed the elect unto glory, so hath he, by the eternal and most free purpose of his will, fore-ordained all the means thereunto. Wherefore they who are elected, being fallen in Adam, are redeemed by Christ, are effectually called unto faith in Christ, by his Spirit working in due season, are justified, adopted, sanctified, and kept by his power through faith unto salvation. *Neither are any other redeemed by Christ, effectually called, justified, adopted, sanctified and saved, but the elect only*" (italics ours). But this article speaks primarily of election. The exclusionary statement of Dordt was omitted by Westminster even though the divines at Westminster were well aware of Dordt's statement.

Room was thus left for the Amyraldian position, which taught a universal atonement in some sense. Indeed, the Amyraldians interpreted the article as leaving room for their position. Richard Baxter, author of *The Reformed Pastor*, was an Amyraldian who refused to sign the Westminster Confession unless room was left for his view of universal atonement. He did eventually sign the creed. (Information on this point can be gained from Robert Shaw, *An Exposition of the Confession of Faith* [Philadelphia, 1847] 71, 143ff.; Benjamin Warfield, *The Westminster Assembly and Its Work* [Cherry Hill, Mack Publishing Co., 1971] 141; Philip Schaff also discusses this problem in his *Creeeds of Christendom*, vol. 1.)

In connection with this latter point, Philip Schaff takes the position that the Westminster Assembly was equivocal on the point. He writes: "Nevertheless, behind the logical question is the far more important theological and practical question concerning the extent of the divine *intention or purpose*, viz., whether this is to be measured by God's love and the intrinsic value of Christ's merits, or by the actual result. On this question there was a difference of opinion among the divines, as the 'Minutes' will show, and the difference seems to have been left open by the framers of the Confession."

After pointing out the statements in the Confession that point to the fact that the divines at Westminster incorporated strong statements defending particular redemption, Schaff goes on to say, "On the other hand, Ch. VII.3 teaches that under the covenant of grace the Lord 'freely offereth unto sinners life and salvation by Jesus Christ, requiring of them faith in him, that they may be saved; and promising to give unto all those that are *ordained unto life* his Holy Spirit, to make them willing and able to believe.' This looks like a compromise between conditional universal-

ism taught in the first clause, and particular election taught in the second. This is in substance the theory of the school of Saumur, which was first broached by a Scotch divine, Cameron (d. 1625), and more fully developed by his pupil Amyraut, between A.D. 1630 and 1650, and which was afterwards condemned in the Helvetic Consensus Formula (1675)."

Schaff's argument here is not strong. He in effect claims that the Assembly left the door open to Amyraldianism by the use of the word "offer" — "the Lord 'freely offereth unto sinners life and salvation.'" But what was in the mind of the Assembly when it approved this article is another question. The Assembly might very well have meant (and it is clear from the minutes that many did mean) "offer" in the sense of "present" or "set forth." It may also have meant "offer" in the sense of graciously offer as an expression of God's intent and desire to save all who hear. Subsequent events revealed that it was eventually taken both ways.

Amyraldianism took deeper root in England than Calvinism.

### The Marrow Controversy

One more interesting aspect of the influence of Amyraldianism is to be found in the Marrow Controversy, which troubled the churches in Scotland in the early part of the eighteenth century.

In 1645 a rather obscure writer by the name of Edward Fisher wrote a book called *The Marrow of Modern Divinity*. It attracted very little notice at the time, but it had in it a strong bias towards Amyraldianism. A few quotes from the book will demonstrate this. "Christ hath taken upon him the sins of all men." "The Father hath made a deed of gift and grant unto all mankind." "Whatsoever Christ did for the redemption of mankind, He did it for you." "Go and tell every man without exception, that here is good news for him, Christ

is dead for him."

These views were later picked up by men who were influenced by Edward Fisher's book and who began to promote these views in the churches. While the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church of Scotland condemned the views of the Marrow men, it did not exercise discipline. Eventually, these men and others separated from the Presbyterian Church of Scotland to form their own denomination, in which Amyraldianism continued to be taught.

### Reactions to Amyraldianism in Switzerland

Theologians in Switzerland were not as charitable to Amyraut as England's theologians were. There these views were rejected out of hand, and whatever students in Switzerland who were studying under Amyraut were withdrawn. In addition to this withdrawal, the *Formula Consensus Helvetica* was drawn up. It was

composed at Zurich, A. D. 1675, by John Henry Heidegger, of Zurich, assisted by Francis Turretine, of Geneva, and Luke Gernlet, of Basle, and designed to condemn and exclude that modified form of Calvinism, which, in the seventeenth century, emanated from the theological school at Saumur, represented by Amyraut, Placaeus, and Daillé; entitled "Form of Agreement of the Helvetic Reformed Churches Respecting the Doctrine of Universal Grace, the Doctrines Connected Therewith, and Some Other Points."

There are various pertinent articles dealing with the error of Amyraldianism, but we quote here a few of the more pertinent ones.

As Christ was from eternity elected the Head, Prince, and Lord of all who, in time, are saved by His grace, so also, in time, He was made Surety of the New Covenant only for those who, by the eternal Election, were given to Him as His

own people, His seed and inheritance. For according to the determinate counsel of the Father *and His own intention* (italics ours), He encountered dreadful death instead of the elect alone, *restored only these* (italic ours) into the bosom of the Father's grace, and *these only he reconciled to God* (italics ours), the offended Father, and delivered from the curse of the law. For our Jesus saves *His people* (italics in the original) from their sins (Matt. I. 21), who gave His life a ransom for *many sheep* (italics in the original) (Matt. Xx. 28; John x. 15), His own, who hear His voice (John 10. 27, 28), and *for these only* (italics ours) He also intercedes, as a divinely appointed Priest, and not for the world (John xvii. 9). Accordingly in the death of Christ, only the elect, who in time are made new creatures (2 Cor. V. 17), and for whom Christ in His death was substituted as an expiatory sacrifice, are regarded as having died with Him and as being justified from sin; and thus, with the counsel of the Father who gave to Christ none but the elect to be redeemed, and also with the working of the Holy Spirit, who sanctifies and seals unto a living hope of eternal life none but the elect, the will of Christ who died so agrees and amicably conspires in perfect harmony, that the sphere of the Father's election, the Son's redemption and the Spirit's sanctification is one and the same.

In Article XVI we have a sharp condemnation of the views of Amyraut. We quote the article in full.

Since all these things are entirely so, surely we can not approve the contrary doctrine of those who affirm that of His own intention, by His own counsel and that of the Father who sent Him, Christ died for all and each upon the impossible condition, provided they believe; that He obtained for all a salvation, which, nevertheless, is not applied to all, and by His death merited salvation and faith for no one individually and certainly, but only removed the obstacle of Divine jus-



tice, and acquired for the Father the liberty of entering into a new covenant of grace with all men; and finally, they so separate the active and passive righteousness of Christ, as to assert that He claims His *active* righteousness for himself as His own, but gives and imputes only His *passive* righteousness to the elect. All these opinions, and all that are like these, are contrary to the plain Scriptures and the glory of Christ, who is *Author and Finisher* of our faith and salvation; they make His cross of none effect, and under the appearance of augmenting His merit, they really diminish it.

These are only two articles in a confession that repudiates in unambiguous language the whole of the Amyraldian system, even condemning the view that

the call unto salvation is so indefinite and universal that there is no mortal who is not, at least objectively, as they say, sufficiently called..., and finally denying that the external call can be said to be serious and true, or the candor and sincerity of God be defended, without asserting the absolute universality of grace.

This latter statement is especially important in our day. The PRC and others repudiate the gra-


cious well-meant gospel offer, but insist, in keeping with our Canons, that the external call is serious and true on God's part. Those who take this position are accused of denying the sincerity of the external call, which is heard by all, and are scornfully called Hyper-Calvinists. The same charge was made by Amyraldians against the Reformed, although the pejorative term "hyper-Calvinist" was not yet invented. This confession throws that charge far away from the Reformed position.

### Conclusion

Most scholars insist that Amyraldianism is not Arminianism and that the two are so different that they must be sharply distinguished. One wonders sometimes whether such a distinction is insisted upon by those who wish to be Amyraldian in their theology, but cringe at the charge of being Arminian. The Canons condemn Arminianism so sharply as to call it Pelagianism resurrected out of hell. One can, I suppose, attempt to dodge such sharp condemnation by repudiating Arminianism and adopting Amyraldianism.

But it won't work. There are differences in details, obviously.

But on the essentials both are in fundamental agreement. Both hold to a universal grace shown by God to all men. Both hold to a well-meant gospel offer as a manifestation of that grace. Both speak of a universal atonement of our Lord that makes salvation possible for all. Both insert conditions into the work of salvation, conditions that must be fulfilled for a salvation merited for all to be given to those who fulfill the conditions. Both take the work of salvation out of the hands of a sovereign God and put the work into the hands of man. And both are, therefore, compelled to introduce conflict and contradiction into God's eternal will and purpose, which He determined from all eternity. This is a deadly error in whatever form it appears and has been the death of true gospel preaching throughout the following centuries.

It is good to know that those who repudiate such error are in good company throughout the ages. They and they alone are in the company of Augustine, the opponents of Rome, the reformers, the fathers of Dordt, and the Swiss theologians. These are the faithful who hold uncompromisingly to the sovereign and particular grace of almighty God. 

*Taking Heed to the Doctrine*

*Rev. James Laning*

# The Reward of Grace

**T**he truth that God rewards us according to our works does not contradict the truth that salvation is entirely of God's grace. We must not be afraid

to confess that God does indeed reward us for the good works that we perform. We simply must go on and state, as we do in Lord's Day 24 of the Heidelberg Catechism, that "This reward is not of merit, but of grace." God does reward us, but this reward is entirely of His sovereign and particular grace.

Although this subject is closely related to the subjects of both justification and sanctification, it is treated under sanctification in Article 24 of the Belgic Confession. In this article Reformed believers confess from the heart that,

In the meantime, we do not deny that God rewards our good works,

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but it is through His grace that He crowns His gifts.

Let us consider what this means.

### **A Reward for Our Good Works**

There are many passages in Scripture that speak of the fact that God rewards our good works. God says that if we give our offerings as the Lord has blessed us, and do it by faith, without desiring the praise of men, then our heavenly Father "will reward us openly" (Matt. 6:4). In Colossians 3:23, 24, we find the exhortation: "And whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men; Knowing that of the Lord ye shall receive the reward of the inheritance: for ye serve the Lord Christ." The more we renounce our own will, and submit to God's will, performing the works that are good and pleasing in His sight, the greater our reward will be.

We are commanded to believe this. In fact, we are told that God will not hear our prayers unless we believe that God rewards our good works. Scripture says that "he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him" (Heb. 11:6).

But what is this reward? The reward that God gives to us is the gift of heavenly life. Jesus tells us that to know God and Jesus Christ, whom He has sent, is to have this everlasting, heavenly life (John 17:3). This glorious life is something we begin to enjoy even now, in this life. The more we perform good works, the more God causes us to enjoy close communion with Him. He draws us nearer to Him, and gives us the grace to become more like Him, so that we reflect His glory in what we think, say, and do.

When God sanctifies us, He delivers us from the dominion of sin and causes us willingly to perform good works. Then He rewards us for those good works with the grace we need to perform even

more good works. Just as God punishes sin with sin, He rewards good works with more good works. He punishes a person for his sin by giving him more over to that sin, and he rewards a believer for his good works by giving him the grace to perform even more good works.

Thus we see how the reward of grace is related to sanctification. The more we receive of this gracious reward, the more we are experiencing the blessing of sanctification.

### **A Reward Not of Merit, But of Grace**

This reward that we receive is not a reward of merit, but a reward of grace. What does this mean? It means that even though God gives to us a reward, it is not a reward that we personally have earned. It is a reward that Christ has earned for us, and that we receive as a gift of grace.

Our good works are entirely a gift of God from beginning to end. In eternity, God determined all the good works that we would perform throughout our life (Eph. 2:10). He not only determined that we would perform good works, but also before ordained the very works that we would perform. In time, God sent His only begotten Son to save us by His perfect obedience even unto the accursed death. By His obedience He not only paid for our sins, but also earned for us the right to receive the grace to perform these good works. He earned for us faith, as well as the grace we need to perform good works that proceed from this faith. All these blessings Christ merited for us by His atoning suffering and death.

But the gift does not stop there. Christ is also the one performing the good works that we do. We confess in Article 14 of the Third and Fourth Heads of the Canons of Dordt, that God not only gives to us the will to believe, but also produces in us the act of believing.

Similarly, when we perform good works, it is God who not only gives us the will to do them and the power to do them, but also produces within us the very act of performing them. This is clearly taught in Philippians 2:13, which says that it is "God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure."

We can and do say that the good works we perform are *our* good works. Yet we say this while being conscious of the fact that it is Christ who is performing these works in and through us. We do not do them like a lifeless marionette. Rather, Christ causes us to do them in such a way that we willingly and cheerfully perform what is pleasing to Him. In the first answer of the Heidelberg Catechism, the believer says that the Spirit of God "makes me sincerely willing and ready henceforth to live unto Him."

This gift is referred to as a reward, even though *we* did not earn it. Someone did earn it. It was our Lord Jesus Christ who earned this reward for us. The Scriptures refer to this reward as Christ's reward. Christ declares to us that He is coming for us, and that His reward is with Him, to give unto every man according as his work shall be (Rev. 22:12). Christ refers to the reward that we will one day receive, and the reward that we right now are already beginning to receive, as *His* reward. Jesus Christ earned it, and as a man He has received it from the triune God. This reward He then gives to all those, and only those, who are members of His body. As those chosen to be in Christ, we receive Christ's reward. He merited it for us as our Head, and He has risen from the dead, so that He is able to give this reward to us by the work of His Holy Spirit within us.

### **What Happens When This Truth Is Proclaimed**

There are many who say that



if you teach people that the reward they receive from God is entirely a reward of grace, that they will then proceed to walk in sin. In other words, if a pastor preaches to his congregation and tells the people that both justification and sanctification are entirely God's work from beginning to end, and that it is God that works in us not only to will but also to do of His good pleasure, that the people will then decide that they really do not need to strive against sin, and that they can go ahead and give in to the lusts of their flesh.

Our Heidelberg Catechism deals with this important question. In Lord's Day 24, after explaining that the reward we receive is not of merit, but of grace, it then goes on to ask the question, "But doth not this doctrine (i.e., the doctrine of the reward of grace, JAL) make men careless and profane?" The answer that is given is, "By no means; for it is impossible that those who are implanted into Christ by a true faith should not bring forth fruits of thankfulness."


This is an answer that we must remember and truly confess from the heart. The proclamation of this glorious truth does not make men careless and profane. Rather, it works in them *more faith*, and causes them to bring forth more fruits of thankfulness out of this faith. The more we hear this truth, the more we desire to perform the good works that are pleasing to our God.

We believers do not delight in sin. We delight to do what is pleasing to our Father in heaven. And the more we hear and understand that not only our justification but also our sanctification is entirely a work of grace from beginning to end, the more our hearts are filled with gratitude and we desire to show our gratitude in a life filled with good works that honor the name of our heavenly Father.

#### Seeking This Reward

Knowing and believing that the reward is entirely of grace, we diligently seek it. When we, for example, pray from the heart that

God's name may be hallowed, that His kingdom may come, and that His will may be done, we are truly seeking this reward. For when we bring to God these petitions, we are asking God to cause us to know Him rightly, to rule us by His Word and Spirit, to grant us the grace to renounce our own will and to submit to His will, so that we order and direct our whole lives, our thoughts, words, and actions, so that God's name is never blasphemed, but always honored and praised on our account (Lord's Days 47-49).

The more we seek this reward, the more He certainly grants it to us. This is our confession, and this is also our experience. Although in this life we will always have only a small beginning of this new obedience, we do make progress in our battle against sin, and we find that we are being more and more conformed to the image of God's dear Son. We see that God really is sanctifying us. And, seeing this, we desire even more so to live to the honor of His great and holy name. 

*When Thou Sittest in Thine House*

*Mrs. Connie Meyer*

## The Unity (1)

**T**here is a truth about which we as parents must teach our children. It is a truth that must be well understood and preserved among us, for it is a truth that is under relentless and increasing attack. The kingdom of Antichrist seeks to manipulate and twist it into its own service and evil

purposes. In these last days it is imperative that we see this truth clearly, increase in knowledge of it, and grow in love for it. It is crucial, as well, that we instill this into our children.

Jesus prayed for it. As we look with earthly eyes, we might think that His prayer in John 17 has gone unanswered. "Holy Father, keep through thine own name those whom thou hast given me, that they may be one, as we are" (v. 11). "That they all may be one"

(v. 21). "That they may be one" (v. 22). "That they may be made perfect in one" (v. 23).

One? There are countless different sects, churches, and denominations. Where is this unity He so desired? But the question begs a different viewpoint — a deeper, spiritual one. Many churches and denominations are indeed joining into one. Their oneness, however, is not the unity for which Jesus prayed. Their unity is based on ecclesiastical compromise and lies,

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all with the guise of ecumenicity. With a god of common grace, universal atonement, and salvation by at least partial works, they do indeed have a basis for communion. There is a basis for fellowship and cooperation with the secular world as well. There was this brand of unity already in the days of Babel. "Behold, the people is one," said the Lord in Genesis 11:6. We are beholding it again.

Where is the oneness that Jesus spoke of? Note again John 17:11, for it is "through thine one name." "Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth" (v. 17). To know His holy name is to know His truth. Indeed, there is unity. Real unity. True unity. Lasting unity. It is found in the sanctified holiness of His truth. It is found in the hearts of all His people — where the Spirit of truth abides. It is found in Him whose name is Holy One and True.

His people experience this unity as they together proclaim, hear, and love the truth. We confess in the Apostles' Creed that we believe "the communion of saints." What a wonderful, beautiful thing to partake of and behold! "Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!" (Ps. 133:1). To know that being members together in Christ we are "in common partakers of him, and of all his riches and gifts," and that it is not only our duty but also our joy to employ these gifts "for the advantage and salvation of other members" (L.D. 21). This is a very blessed thing. This communion is very precious and dear to us.

This is very practical. Our children need to see that as we confess the communion of saints, we also live it. It will be our joy and delight to find opportunity to commune with fellow believers, to weep with those who weep and rejoice with those who rejoice. Our fellowship will be with children of light, for "what communion hath light with darkness?" (II Cor. 6:14).

We will find that our fellowship is ever so sweet when it is based on the light of the truth, and the truth is, in fact, the topic of conversation. Indeed, in our homes we will commune with our children and spouse in such a way that is not possible outside of the body of Christ because we know we have the same mind and goals — the glory of God in His kingdom and truth.

But example is not enough. Our children will have fellowship outside of the home as well. The question is — with whom? This has always been a vitally important issue for covenant parents, but, generally speaking, the role of friends in the lives of young people (for both good or for bad) seems to be increasing. Perhaps it is the weight of work or pleasure in the lives of parents as a whole that lets the influence of peers become more important in children's lives. Perhaps it is the affluence of young people themselves that lets them live almost in a culture all their own. Perhaps it is simply Satan's subtle attempt to wean covenant children away from their rightful instructors before they have been taught all they need to know. Whatever the reason and case may be, the issue of friendship has become extremely significant. It is wise for parents, even parents of very young children, to consider these things and talk of them with their children in the light of Scripture. As our children grow older, the opportunity for them to err in this area greatly increases, and so do the consequences. It is a subject that well deserves our time and attention.

Solomon considered it so. Proverbs is full of instruction in these matters. "My son, if sinners entice thee, consent thou not. If they say, Come with us..., cast in thy lot among us; let us all have one purse: My son, walk not thou in the way with them; refrain thy foot from their path" (Prov. 1:10-15). "Enter not into the path of the

wicked, and go not in the way of evil men. Avoid it, pass not by it, turn from it, and pass away" (Prov. 4:14, 15). David, his father, was just as antithetical. "Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the way of the scornful" (Ps. 1:1). In his second letter to the Corinthians, Paul laid down the line unequivocally. "Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing" (II Cor. 6:17). The instruction is clear. There are those with whom you have fellowship, and those with whom you do not.

Though the same life in the blood with its platelets and plasma may be coursing through the veins of the whole human race, from the spiritual point of view the life that flows in the hearts and souls of some is very different. There are two races. There are two seeds. Adam is the father of all. By him we are all heirs of sin and death. Yes, there is a unity there — a sorry one. But there is a Second Adam! And it is life in Him that is our main concern, for flesh and blood cannot inherit eternal life. In Him we are a peculiar, holy people, spiritually set apart for His service. Our children need to be made consciously aware of this. They also need to know that there is real unity only within the bounds of this peculiarity. As Rev. Herman Hoeksema expounded on L.D. 21,

...one Lord has received the Spirit, and through that one Spirit He dwells in the whole Church, His body, and in all its members. And this indwelling Christ is the sole basis and fountain for the unity of the saints. Through that indwelling Lord there is in all believers ... a unity of nature, of life, of love, of faith, of hope and purpose....<sup>1</sup>

This is the ground of our communion. "The believer does not confess a 'brotherhood of men,'" <sup>2</sup> as



Rev. Hoeksema put it. How can we live being joined to those who have not this same faith, hope, love, and life, all of which is only in Christ?

But note again this ground. It is one faith. It is one knowledge and one confession. "All the people answered with one voice, and said, All the words which the Lord hath said will we do" (Ex. 24:3). They answered with one voice. So do we. The Holy Spirit has guided the church into objective, knowable truths of Scripture, truths that unite her. They are the Reformed creeds, including the Three Forms of Unity. Note that — of unity. They unite us! What a glorious heritage He has given all believers in all lands! It matters not from which hemisphere we hail or which province, state, or nation is ours; when we together subscribe to these creeds, we know we are

(organically speaking) brothers in Christ. This is cause for great joy and is striking to such "strangers" who meet. As the world clamors for the unification of all nations, we rejoice in the unity of truth and creed that transcends all national boundaries.

Again, this is very practical. It means we will have a great appreciation for our creeds and a great concern for knowing them and understanding them. It means we will teach our children to know and appreciate them as well. The centuries-old documents will not remain on the shelf. Especially is this important because many who say they hold to these confessions, upon closer examination, in reality do not. It has been demonstrated elsewhere<sup>3</sup> that the theory of common grace flatly contradicts the Canons, yet those who defend this theory use the very Canons of

Dordt to support their position. This is only one example. A keen knowledge of our creeds is essential. Our children need to know this. The confessions are a very real part of our study, our devotions, and our lives.

But there is more to consider as we peer into the depths of this principle of unity, and to that, we will look next time (D.V.).

1. Herman Hoeksema, *The Triple Knowledge*, vol. 2, (Reformed Free Publishing Association, Grandville, Michigan), p. 239.

2. Hoeksema.

3. This has been well documented. For just one example, see "Total Depravity and 'Common Grace' — in the Light of the Confessions," by Prof. H. Hanko, in the March 1, 1983 issue of the *Standard Bearer*, vol. 59, p. 257.

Go Ye Into All the World

Rev. Daniel Kleyn

## Our Mission Work in the Philippines

**R**ev. Audred Spriensma, his wife Alva, and their daughter Jessica have lived in the Philippines now for close to a year and a half. As a missionary of the Protestant Reformed Churches, Rev. Spriensma does his work under the supervision of Doon Protestant Reformed Church, the calling church for the mission field in the Philippines.

As part of Doon's and the Foreign Mission Committee's supervision of the missionary and the field, a delegation visits the field



Sunday worship at the  
Berean Church of God Reformed  
in Manila

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at least once a year. Such a delegation visited recently, from October 20 through November 3, 2003. The delegation consisted of Elder Jim Regnerus (representing Doon PRC's council), and myself, Rev. Daniel Kleyn (representing the FMC). My wife, Sharon, also accompanied us, which gave her the opportunity to visit with Mrs. Spriensma as well as to get to know many of the ladies of the various groups among whom we labor in the Philippines.

This was Elder Regnerus' first visit to the Philippines, as well as his first trip overseas. As a result, he was in for some interesting experiences. This began with the plane ride (twelve and a half hours non stop) from Minneapolis to Tokyo. Then followed jet lag, Manila traffic (quite different from that of NW Iowa and SW Minnesota), and some of the local foods (e.g., fish eyes, snails, etc.). But quite a few of these things were new experiences for Sharon and me, too.

Since I had been to the Philippines before, it was enjoyable to meet again many I had gotten to know on previous visits. But what made this visit especially enjoyable was to see the field with a missionary now in place. We give thanks to God for this, and also for His blessings upon our missionary and his work.

Rev. Spriensma and his family live in the city of Manila. The focus of Rev. Spriensma's work is with the members and families of the Berean Church of God, Reformed (BCGR). For that reason, the delegation spent most of its time in Manila. The exception was a two-day visit to Bacolod City. We lived with the Spriensmas during our time in the Philippines and enjoyed very much their hospitality and good company. They made us feel welcome and very much at home.

In Manila we met a number of times with the Board of Trustees of the BCGR. These meetings gave us opportunity to find out how

things were going in the BCGR, as well as to answer various questions the men had about their work as a Board and about the PRC's missionary labors among them. The Board expressed great appreciation for Rev. Spriensma and his work. They are thankful for the Lord's provision of a missionary in their midst and expressed their desire to continue to be instructed in the truths of the Reformed faith, as well as in matters of Reformed church government. They stated that their goal and desire is to become a fully instituted church that is affiliated with the Protestant Reformed Churches in America.

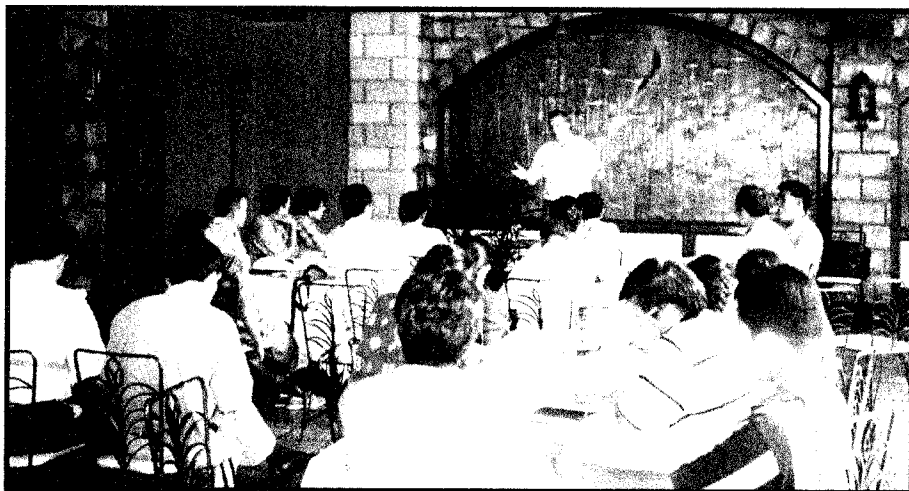
The delegation also visited in the homes of some of the families of the BCGR. This gave us the opportunity to discuss also with the members of the BCGR our mission work among them. In a few instances, Rev. Spriensma conducted a Bible study during these visits. The families were very hospitable in opening up their homes to us and serving us various delicious foods. During such visits we were again reminded of how cultural and national boundaries are crossed by the Gospel as we enjoyed Christian fellowship with like-minded believers in Christ.

We worshiped both Sundays with the BCGR in Manila. The

group rents a room for this and meets from about 1:00 until 5:00. During this time Rev. Spriensma conducts the two worship services as well as a class in the "Essentials of Reformed Doctrine." Some of the families take turns bringing along a snack for between the services. The delegation enjoyed very much our Sundays with them and was encouraged to see their commitment to being Reformed in worship. It was a joy to sing the Psalter numbers together and to sit together under the preaching of the gospel.

We also visited the campus of Faith Academy, where Jessica goes to school. The school is located just a few miles from the Spriensmas' home. We looked over the campus, stopped and talked with some of the teachers, and had lunch with Jessica at the school's cafeteria. Jessica enjoys her classes and seems to fit in very well at the school.

An interesting experience during our time in the Philippines was the traffic. This included riding in some of the public transportation, such as jeepneys and tricycles. However, it also involved being in a minor traffic accident. This happened when we were hit from behind and pushed into the vehicle in front of us. Thankfully no one was hurt — not even Sharon, who



*Rev. Kleyn lecturing at the conference in Bacolod City*





*Rev. Spriensma lecturing at the conference  
in Laguna*

was hit in the back of the head by a pineapple! And we were still able to drive our vehicle (the Spriensmas' van) home.

Prior to the delegation's arrival Rev. Spriensma arranged two conferences. One was held in Laguna, about two and a half hours south of Manila. The other was in Bacolod City, which is located on the island of Negros and a one-hour plane flight from Manila. Rev. Spriensma and I each gave two lectures at these conferences. We spoke on Reformed church history, the Reformation, common grace, and Reformed worship. The conference in Laguna was attended by around fifty people, including about thirty students from a Christian Reformed Bible College. Approximately twenty-five attended the conference in Bacolod.


These conferences gave us opportunity to meet contacts from other areas of the Philippines who are interested in our working with

them. Two of the pastors from the Laguna area meet regularly with Rev. Spriensma for instruction in the Reformed faith. And Rev. Spriensma makes periodic visits to Bacolod city to preach and teach among the contacts there. The Reformed Witness Hour is also broadcast every week in Bacolod City, as well as in Manila.

Another benefit of these conferences was that we were able to observe how the Lord has already blessed the faithful preaching and teaching of Rev. Spriensma. An example of this was the fact that the men of the BCGR also contributed to the defense of the Reformed faith during the question and discussion periods at the conference in Laguna. Various questions were asked concerning common grace, the well-meant offer of the gospel, women in church office, etc., and a number of the men spoke up and gave very good answers to these questions. We were impressed.

We thank God for this evidence of His blessing on our missionary's labors.

Through this visit, the delegation saw firsthand that there is definitely plenty to keep our missionary busy. It is encouraging to see the interest shown in the truths God has given us as Protestant Reformed Churches. It was obvious that those we are working with have read and studied much of our literature and are eager to continue learning the truths of the Reformed faith from us.

The Lord has given us an exciting work to do in the Philippines. What a privilege to be able to bring the gospel to God's people there in obedience to the great commission given by our Lord Jesus Christ (Matt. 28:19). May all of us always remember to pray for the Spriensmas, as well as Doon PRC, as they are busy in this work on behalf of our churches. 



*Rey and Linda Decierdo  
and family in Bacolod City*

## Book Reviews

*Christianity at the Religious Roundtable: Evangelicals in Conversation with Hinduism, Buddhism, and Islam*, by Timothy C. Tennent. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2002. Pp. 270. No price

given. (paper). [Reviewed by Prof. Robert Decker.]

**T**o his credit Dr. Tennent rejects the notion that, "The Christian gospel is ... one among many dif-

ferent paths to God. Christianity is ranked side by side with religions such as Islam, Hinduism, and Buddhism..." (p. 9). The author believes that Christianity is the

only true religion. He is an "Exclusivist."

Tennent does, however, believe that there must be honest, open dialogue with the adherents of the world's religions. This honest, open dialogue is characterized as follows: 1) It must be done without compromising the Christian faith in any way. 2) In this dialogue, we must listen and respond to the objections to the Christian faith brought by Muslims, *et. al.* 3) The aim or purpose of inter-religious dialogue must be to bend every effort too convince the adherents of the world's religions of the truth of Christianity. In other words, our aim is that God will use the dialogue to convert them to faith in Jesus Christ.

Included in this opening section is a summary of the views regarding the relationship of Christianity to the non-Christian religions. Summed and evaluated are the views of: Exclusivism, Inclusivism, and Pluralism. In his evaluation of Inclusivism and Pluralism, the author is sharply critical of the views of John Hick, and rightly so.

In the main section of the book, Tennent presents "dialogues at the roundtable" with adherents of Hinduism, Buddhism, and Islam. These dialogues are all based on Tennent's missionary experiences and encounters with adherents to these religions. This is followed by a section on Case Studies and Tennent's conclusion.

There are four basic "ground rules" for these dialogues. 1) "All differences of opinion or perspective should be shared honestly without being pejorative." 2) "No one is permitted to exploit abuses present in a religion that are at odds with widely accepted beliefs and practices." 3) The questions, responses, clarifications, and rejoinders must all pertain to the central theme being discussed. 4) There must be no compulsion. For example, when the dialogue is complete, a Buddhist is free to re-

main a committed Buddhist.

It is precisely at this point that the author comes far short of where he and we should be. The trouble lies in the methodology and approach. The word "dialogue" denotes a conversation in which two or more persons reason together on a given subject, in this case the objections Christianity has towards the world religions and the latter's objections to Christianity.

The Bible dictates how we relate to the non-Christian religions and how we do mission work among them. We can do no better than to follow the model of the Apostle Paul, who was made all things to all men that he might by all means save some (I Cor. 9:19-22)! Neither Jesus nor Peter dialogued with the Jews at "the roundtable!" Paul did not dialogue at "the roundtable with the Gentiles" who worshiped a multitude of idols in the pagan world of the Roman Empire in the first century AD.

To illustrate our point we take just one example, viz., Paul's farewell meeting with the elders of Ephesus as recorded in Acts 20. In verse 18 Paul speaks of "...after what manner I have been with you at all times or seasons." How was Paul with these formerly unconverted Ephesians? He tells us how in the verses that follow.

In verse 20 Paul says, "I have shown you...." The verb translated "shown" means in the Greek, "to announce." It refers to a formal proclamation of the gospel! In that same verse Paul continues, "...and have taught you...." The verb "taught" means, in the Greek, "didactic (teaching) discourse." Paul did not dialogue, but he went preaching and teaching publicly and from house to house.

That this is true is plain from verse 21, where Paul says he went about "testifying both to the Jews and also to the Greeks, repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ." The verb "testifying" means, in the Greek, "ear-

nestly to charge, to witness." This, according to verse 24, is "the ministry" which Paul had "...received of the Lord Jesus, to testify (the same verb as used in verse 21) the gospel of the grace of God." It is interesting to note that our English word "martyr" is derived from this verb. Missionary preachers are often made to suffer persecution and martyrdom for their earnest testimony of the gospel of Jesus Christ!

The apostle goes on to say, "And now, behold, I know that ye all, among whom I have gone preaching the kingdom of God, shall see my face no more" (v. 25).

"Wherefore I take you to record this day, that I am pure from the blood of all men" (v. 26).

"For I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God" (v. 27).

The verb translated "preaching" (v. 25) means "to officiate as a herald." The herald was the official of the king who was charged with proclaiming the message of the king throughout the kingdom. The kingdom is God's kingdom. The citizens of the kingdom of God are the elect, redeemed in Christ's cross and resurrection. The Herald is Christ, whose voice is heard by those men lawfully called through the church to herald (preach) the Word of God. The essence of the message brought by the heralds is Jesus Christ and Him crucified.

The verb translated "declare" (v. 27) is the same as the verb translated "shown" (v. 20; cf. above).


Finally, the apostle told the Ephesian elders that he "...ceased not to warn everyone..." (v. 27). "To warn" means "to admonish, warn, exhort."

It ought to be obvious that the apostle did not sit down with the Ephesians and have friendly dialogue concerning their objections to the Christian faith! Publicly and privately he faithfully proclaimed the imperative of the gospel call, "repent of your sins and believe in the Lord Jesus Christ!" After this



manner he labored among them. After this manner must the church through her missionary preachers

labor among the adherents of the world's religions. No "roundtable

dialogue," just good, solid exposition of the Word of King Jesus is what is needed! 

## News From Our Churches

Mr. Benjamin Wigger

### School Activities

**T**he Student Council of Covenant Christian High School in Grand Rapids, MI sponsored a pop-can drive at their school from November 3 - 14. Students, parents, and supporters of Covenant were encouraged to bring empty pop cans or bottles to Covenant, so that the students could return them for a deposit refund. Money raised from the drive was going to help Covenant Christian School in Lynden, WA and Herrick Covenant School in Tasmania.

### Young People's Activities

**T**he young people of Bethel PRC in Roselle, IL invited their congregation to an Ethnic Supper the evening of October 24. The young people promoted this dinner by asking their fellow church members the questions, Do you enjoy tasting foreign cuisine? Exotic Asian dishes? Hearty European favorites? South African specials? If the answer was yes, then they were invited to an International Supper featuring the best from around the world and prepared by those at Bethel whose forefathers lived on and relished those exquisite dishes. Ethnic dress was also encouraged at the supper.

Plans for next summer's Young People's Convention are picking up speed at our host congregation, the Southwest PRC in Grandville, MI. If you need reminding, the dates for the 2004 convention are July 12-16. Rev. R. Cammenga, Rev. R. Kleyn, and Rev. W. Langerak will be speaking on "Drawing Near to

God," Psalm 73:28. The convention will be held at Covenant Hills Camp in Otisville, MI. The most current information can be found as it becomes available on Southwest's web site at: [www.prcconvention.com](http://www.prcconvention.com).

The Young People's Society of the Doon, Iowa PRC hosted this year's annual Reformation Singspiration at their church on Sunday evening, October 26.

Sunday afternoon, November 16, the young people from our churches in west Michigan were invited to their annual Young People's Thanksgiving Mass Meeting, held this year at the Grandville, MI PRC. Prof. D. Engelsma was this year's speaker.

### Congregation Activities

**M**embers of the Immanuel PRC in Lacombe, AB, Canada were invited to the annual Remembrance Day Car Rally and Soup Supper held at First PRC in Edmonton on Tuesday, November 11. The car rally began at 12:30 P.M., with supper following at 4:30.

The Council of Trinity PRC in Hudsonville, MI has decided to hold monthly song services the first Sunday of each month 15 minutes prior to their evening worship service. Their first song service was November 2.

Everyone at Trinity was also invited to a hayride on Saturday, November 1, at the farm of one of the families in their congregation. Activities began in the late afternoon with horse-drawn wagon rides, followed by a hayride for the young and young-at-heart. A supper of hot dogs, barbecue, cider, and hot chocolate followed. The evening came to a close with time spent around a bonfire.

The adult members of Grace PRC in Standale, MI were invited to experience a lazy cruise down the Grand River aboard the Grand Lady River Boat on the evening of October 14. Dessert and coffee were served afterward at Grace.

### Evangelism Activities

**T**he debate between Dr. R. Mouw and Prof. D. Engelsma on the subject "Is the Doctrine of Common Grace Reformed" can now be heard, and also read, on [www.prc.org](http://www.prc.org) under News and Views.

Rev. J. Mahtani, our churches' missionary to the Fellowship in Pittsburgh, PA, was an active participant in an Evangelism Conference at Covenant PRC in Wyckoff, NJ, November 7-9. On Friday evening Rev. Mahtani presented his speech on "Preaching and Witnessing in Our Pittsburgh Mission," material that he used in Bethel PRC, Roselle, IL this past spring, and again in the Covenant of Grace PR Fellowship in Spokane, WA this fall. On Saturday, Rev. Mahtani led a Forum on Evangelism, and he preached at both services for Covenant PRC on the Lord's Day.

### Minister Activities

**R**ev. R. Miersma, who recently accepted a call to serve our churches as our second missionary to Ghana, West Africa, is busy making plans for his and his wife's move in early 2004, the Lord willing. Rev. and Mrs. Miersma enjoyed a farewell supper and program on November 7, given in their honor by their congregation in Lacombe, AB, Canada. The following Lord's Day, November 9, Rev. Miersma preached his farewell ser-

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



# THE STANDARD BEARER

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mon on the theme, "Our Assurance of the Crown of Righteousness," based on II Timothy 4:7, 8.

The council of the Hull, IA PRC has scheduled a call to worship on December 11 for Rev. Miersma's installation as missionary. Rev.

Miersma will preach an inaugural sermon in Hull on Sunday, December 28. The Miersmas are scheduled to leave for Ghana on January 6, all the Lord willing.

The Hudsonville, MI PRC has

extended a call to Rev. C. Terpstra, pastor of First PRC in Holland, MI, to serve as their next pastor.

Rev. M. Dick has declined the call extended to him from the Byron Center, MI PRC to serve as their next pastor. 

## Announcements

### RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The council of Southeast PRC extends sincere Christian sympathy to fellow officebearers Duane Vanden Berg, Douglas Mingerink, and James Holstege and their families in the death of their father and grandfather,

**SIMON VANDEN BERG.**

Our prayer is that the truth of the gospel in Romans 14:8 will strengthen their faith and comfort their hearts. "For whether we live, we live unto the Lord; and whether we die, we die unto the Lord; whether we live therefore, or die, we are the Lord's."

Rev. William Langerak, President  
Harlow Kuiper, Vice President

### RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The Adult Bible Society of Southeast PRC expresses heartfelt Christian sympathy to Duke and Jan VandenBerg in the passing of Duke's father,

**SIMON VANDEN BERG.**

May God uphold them and their family with these words from II Corinthians 1:3, "Blessed be God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and the God of all comfort."

Ed Ophoff, Sr., President  
Judy Kuiper, Secretary

### WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

On November 29, 2003, our parents and grandparents,

**HENRY and JUDY BLEYENBURG,**  
celebrated 40 years of marriage.

We congratulate them and thank our heavenly Father for the years He has blessed them with. Their faithful example and instruction in God's truth has been a great blessing to us their children and grandchildren. Our prayer is that the Lord will continue to bless them and keep them in His sovereign care. "Except the Lord build the house, they labor in vain that build it" (Psalm 127:1a).

- \* Doug and Sue Bleyenbureg  
Katie, Cole, Kelli, Caleb
- \* Jim and Leah Lenting  
Lauren, Andrew, Jason,  
Grant, Cobie
- \* Ted and Audra Andringa  
Jacob, Joseph, Samantha,  
Benjamin, Noah, Vanessa
- \* Jeff and Stephanie Zylstra  
Zachary, Tyler, Jaedyn, Blake
- \* Joel and Amy Bousema  
Jocelyn, Kenzie, Erica, Emma
- \* Eric and Monica Lindsey  
Olivia
- \* Joel and Lanae Holstege  
Lindsey and Jori  
South Holland, Illinois

### NOTICE!!

Classis East will meet in regular session on Wednesday, January 4, 2004, at the Grandville Protestant Reformed Church, Grandville, MI.

Jon J. Huiskens  
Stated Clerk

### RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The Council of Hudsonville PRC expresses Christian sympathy to elder Don VanOverloop, in the recent passing of his father-in-law,

**MR. JOHN C. LUBBERS.**

We pray the Lord comfort and give assurance with the words of Psalm 71:17, "O God, thou hast taught me from my youth: and hitherto have I declared thy wondrous works."

Ralph VanderVeen, Clerk

### REMINDER:

Heritage Christian High School in South Holland, IL is now in its 3<sup>rd</sup> 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].