# Editor's Notes

You hold in your hand the April 2016 issue of the *Protestant Reformed Theological Journal*. Included in this issue are three articles and a number of book reviews, some of them rather extensive. We are confident that you will find the contents of this issue worth the time you spend in reading—well worth the time.

Few doctrines of the faith are more precious to the Reformed believer than the doctrine of God's everlasting covenant of grace. Few books of the Bible are dearer to the saints than the book of Psalms. Prof. Dykstra puts those two together in the first of two articles on "God's Covenant of Grace in the Psalms." You will find his article both instructive and edifying.

The Reverend Joshua Engelsma, pastor of the Protestant Reformed Church in Doon, Iowa contributes a very worthwhile article on Johannes Bogerman. Bogerman was the man chosen to be president of the great Synod of Dordt, 1618-'19. The article not only traces the life and public ministry of Bogerman, but demonstrates clearly the direct influence that he had on the formulation of the articles in the First Head of doctrine in the Canons of Dordt. This is an especially appropriate article as the Reformed churches around the world prepare to celebrate the 400th anniversary of the Synod of Dordt in 2018-'19. The Protestant Reformed Seminary is planning to hold a conference to commemorate this very significant anniversary. We will keep our readers informed of the specifics of the conference as they are arranged.

Included in the articles in this issue are also the next sections of the "John Calvin Research Bibliography." Those sections are "#4: Calvin's Doctrine of the One, True, and Triune God;" "#5: Calvin's Doctrine of Predestination;" and "#6: Calvin's Doctrine of Creation and Providence." These are published in the hope that anyone engaged in Calvin research in any of these areas will find a wealth of available resources of which they can make use.

As always, this issue of PRTJ includes a number of book reviews on recently published books, many of them authored by Reformed and Presbyterian theologians. Some of the reviews are fairly extensive. Some of the reviews end with high recommendation of the book re-

viewed. Others conclude with qualified recommendation. And still other reviews are severely critical. Whatever the case, it is our hope that our readers continue to find this section of our journal of value. Whether they actually purchase any of the books for their own library or not, we trust our readers find the reviews to be of value as books are judged against the standard of Scripture and the Reformed faith.

Our journal continues to be published free of charge to our subscribers. We hope to be able to continue this policy in the future. We are grateful for the gifts contributed by our readers. With rising printing costs and mailing fees, the support of our readership is greatly appreciated.

Now read and enjoy.

*Soli Deo Gloria!*

—RLC

# God's Covenant of Grace in the Psalms (1)

## A Relationship of Friendship

**Russell Dykstra**

> **Psalm 25:14** The secret of the LORD is with them that fear him; and he will shew them his covenant.
> **Psalm 55:14** We took sweet counsel together, and walked unto the house of God in company.

The Reformed church can be characterized in many ways. A Reformed church is confessional, that is, she holds to the Reformed confessions as her standard. A Reformed church maintains the doctrines of sovereign, particular grace. She also stands consciously on the foundation of Scripture, defending it as the infallible and inerrant Word of God, authoritative for doctrine and life. The Reformed church is dedicated to the proper worship of God, determined to follow the principle that God may be worshiped only as He commands in His Word. These characteristics set apart a Reformed church and her theology from the mass of churches that identify themselves as Christian churches.

It must also be universally acknowledged that the Reformed church is marked by two additional characteristics, namely, a devotion to the Psalms, and a commitment to the doctrine of God's everlasting covenant of grace.

This admiration for the Psalms did not begin with the Reformation. The Psalms are God's gift to His church. The Psalms give God's people the words that they may bring to Him in prayer and song. From the time these inspired songs were penned, Israel sang them, and the early New Testament church followed this practice. The ancient church fathers recognized the benefit of the Psalms for the individual believer and for the church as a whole. Sad to say, over the centuries, the church in the middle ages took the singing away from the people in worship, giving it to choirs. Consequently, the

inspired songs and prayers ceased to live in the consciousness of the saints. The Reformation restored the singing of Psalms to the people in the pew in worship. The Reformed church had rediscovered the unspeakable value of the Psalms.

Martin Luther's enthusiasm for the Psalms shines forth in his introduction to this songbook of the Bible. He began by noting that "[m]any of the holy fathers prized and praised the Psalter above all the other books of Scripture." Nevertheless, he added, "we must give evidence of our own praise and thanks."[1] Luther lectured through the Psalms twice, and was therefore well acquainted with them, and he loved them.

John Calvin likewise lectured on the Psalms and, at the urging of others, had his comments published as a commentary. In his preface of the commentary Calvin openly confesses his admiration of the Psalms. He writes, "The varied and resplendent riches which are contained in this treasury it is no easy matter to express in words?"[2] He maintains "that in proportion to the proficiency which a man shall have attained in understanding them, will be his knowledge of the most important part of celestial doctrine."[3]

The Psalms remain the songbook of the Reformed churches. The Psalms give expression to all aspects of the Christian's life. Calvin said it was not inappropriate to call the Psalms "An Anatomy of all the Parts of the Soul." For, Calvin explained, "there is not an emotion of which any one can be conscious that is not here represented as in a mirror. Or rather, the Holy Spirit has here drawn to the life all the griefs, sorrows, fears, doubts, hopes, cares, perplexities, in short, all the distracting emotions with which the minds of men are wont to be agitated."[4] The Psalms do indeed give expression to the emotions, the joys and the sorrows that believers experience. These poems are beautiful, moving, and altogether proper prayers to God. Calvin noted that God "permits us…to speak to him in prayer, as familiarly

1 Martin Luther, "Prefaces to the Old Testament" in *Luther's Works*, vol. 35, *Word and Sacrament* I (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1960), 253.

2 John Calvin, "Preface to the Psalms" in *Commentary on the Book of Psalms,* vol. 1 (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1949), xxxvi.

3 *Psalms,* xxxvii.

4 *Psalms,* xxxvii.

as a son speaks to an earthly father."[5] If the Psalms did nothing more than to teach the believer to pray, they would be of inestimable value.

In fact, the Psalms do more. They exhort fellow believers to faithfulness, lift up praises to God, confess sin, and provide songs of thankfulness for the wonder of salvation. In addition, the Psalms are rich with doctrine, such as the theology of God's sovereignty, His creation of the universe, and His providential care. The Psalms vividly describe the depravity of man. They also contain manifold prophecies concerning Jesus—His birth, life, suffering, glorification, and coming again to judge. What a treasure are the Psalms, well beloved by the church through the ages! The Reformed church loves and esteems the Psalms.

At the same time, the Reformed church also delights in the doctrine of God's everlasting covenant of grace. Rightly can it be called the crown jewel of Reformed theology. God revealed Himself through the Bible so that the whole of His truth is there. Nothing may be added to that revelation. However, God in His wisdom led the church to develop the doctrines gradually in time and history. One of the first was the doctrine of the Trinity and deity of Christ. Next the church faced the doctrine of the incarnate Christ and drew from the Bible that Christ is two natures in one Person. After that Augustine rejected the Pelagian error and set forth the doctrines of grace. God sovereignly controlled even heretics and by raising them up in His good time, forcing the church to battle a specific error in a God's ordained time. In that way, the church developed each doctrine carefully.

This same process can be observed in the development of the doctrine of the covenant. God's people knew about the covenant from the beginning. God's covenant is a foundational truth revealed to the patriarchs in the Old Testament. The Bible itself consists of two parts—the old covenant, or testament, and the new covenant or testament. Although the theologians of the ancient church spoke of the covenant as they encountered it in Scripture, the development of this doctrine waited until the Reformation had established well the truths of sovereign grace. The covenant of grace is particularly a Reformed truth. In the providence of God, the Swiss Reformers were

5 *Psalms,* Comments on Psalm 10:13, 1:150.

the first to develop this doctrine, starting with Heinrich Bullinger.[6] John Calvin and especially his spiritual descendants in Germany and the Netherlands continued the development, the writers of the Heidelberg Catechism leading the way.[7] The doctrine of the covenant is a foundational doctrine in all Reformed churches today. The covenant unites and governs all the doctrines of the Reformed faith, and provides inestimable comfort to Reformed believers.

Most Reformed theologians have used the language of "agreement" in explaining the covenant relationship between God and His people, even though most also historically maintained that God established His covenant with the elect.[8] The covenant as agreement is inconsistent with the doctrines of sovereign grace—that salvation is all God's work. God used the first three ministers in the Protestant Reformed Churches, Henry Danhof, Herman Hoeksema, and George M. Ophoff, to set forth the biblical doctrine of the covenant that is consistent with the Reformed doctrine of salvation. The Reformation insisted that salvation is all of God, and thus, by grace alone, through faith alone, and in Christ alone.[9] The Canons of Dordrecht established

6 Bullinger's treatise, *A Brief Exposition of the One and Eternal Testament or Covenant of God* was published in 1534.

7 Caspar Olevianus wrote a significant treatise on "The substance of the covenant of grace between God and the elect" *(De substantia foederis gratuiti inter Deum et electos)* Geneva, 1585. Zacharius Ursinus likewise developed the doctrine of the covenant extensively in his Larger Catechism (1562).

8 For an excellent overview, see Geerhardus Vos, "The Doctrine of the Covenant in Reformed Theology" in *Redemptive History and Biblical Interpretation: Writings of Geerhardus Vos* (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1980), 234-267.

9 While yet ministers in the Christian Reformed Church, Revs. Danhof and Hoeksema were developing the doctrine of the covenant as a relationship of friendship between God and His chosen people in Christ. Cf. H. Danhof's "The Idea of the Covenant of Grace" in *PRT Journal,* vol. xxx, No. 2; vol. xxxi, No. 1 and ; H. Hoeksema's series uf articles in "Our Doctrine" (1918-1922). Hoeksema more clearly set forth the doctrine in *De Geloovingen en Hun Zaad* (Grand Rapids: Doorn, 1927). *Believers and Their Seed,* translated by Homer C. Hoeksema (Grand Rapids: Reformed Free Publishing Association, 1971; revised 1997). Rev. Ophoff was one of the main defenders of the unconditional covenant in the controversy between

that Reformed truth creedally. The only covenant theology that is consistent with sovereign, particular grace is the doctrine of the unconditional covenant of grace governed by election. This doctrine is particularly precious in the Protestant Reformed Churches in America and her sister churches.

The intent of this article is to bring together the Psalms and the covenant by exploring what the Psalms teach about this glorious doctrine. The intent is, in a series of articles, to expound from the Psalms four aspects of the truth of the covenant. This first article will demonstrate that the covenant of grace is a relationship of friendship. The second part will demonstrate that the Psalms display God's purpose for the covenant, namely, that it is not a means to an end, but rather that the covenant is the goal of God. God wills that His people live with Him in that blessed friendship. The third part will examine how this covenant of grace affects the individual believer. With His covenant, God forms with the believer a living, personal relationship. And the final article will take a step back and examine the reality that the covenant is not merely with individual believers. The covenant is a communal relationship. All these aspects will be demonstrated from the Psalms.

What then is God's covenant of grace? The definition we offer, and intend to demonstrate from the Psalms, is this: God's covenant of grace is a relationship of friendship that God sovereignly establishes

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the Protestant Reformed Churches and the Liberated in the early 1950s. Later development can be found in Herman Hanko, *God's Everlasting Covenant of Grace* (Grand Rapids: Reformed Free Publishing Association, 1988) and *For Thy Truth's Sake* (Grand Rapids: Reformed Free Publishing Association, 2000). David J. Engelsma has likewise sharpened this doctrine in such works as *Covenant and Election in the Reformed Tradition* (Jenison: Reformed Free Publishing Association, 2011); *The Covenant of God and the Children of Believers: Sovereign Grace in the Covenant* (Jenison: Reformed Free Publishing Association, 2005); *Battle for Sovereign Grace in the Covenant: The Declaration of Principles* (Jenison: Reformed Free Publishing Association, 2013); *Trinity and Covenant: God as Holy Family* (Jenison: Reformed Free Publishing Association, 2006). Most recently, Ronald Cammenga completed a major dissertation on the theology of Herman Hoeksema, *God of Friendship: Herman Hoeksema's Unconditional Covenant Conception* (Grand Rapids: Calvin Theological Seminary, 2014).

with His people in Jesus Christ. Additionally, the Bible teaches that Christ is the Mediator and Head of the covenant. God establishes His covenant with believers and their seed in their generations. This covenant relationship is eternal, that is, it begins in eternity in the counsel and purpose of God, is realized in time, and continues eternally in the new heavens and earth. And, above all, this covenant of grace is all of God. Jehovah planned it and chose those with whom He establishes it. He realizes it in the cross of Christ, establishes it with each and every believer, and maintains it in time and eternity. It is God's covenant.

This discussion of the glorious truth of God's covenant of grace begins by examining one of the most beautiful aspects of the covenant, namely, that it is fellowship with the living God. Consider what this means. Fellowship is talking and having communion with another. In this relationship to God this means, on the one hand, that the covenant people listen as God speaks to them. On the other hand, the covenant people may approach Jehovah God and pour out their hearts to Him.

This is illustrated beautifully in Psalm 25. This Psalm is a concrete example of the intimacy found in God's covenant life with His people. The psalmist begins with the confidence of a child who know he has the right to approach God—"Unto thee, O LORD, do I lift up my soul" (1). And he adds, "O my God, I trust in thee" (2). With the trust of faith, he requests, "Lead me in thy truth, and teach me: for thou art the God of my salvation; on thee do I wait all the day" (5). When he speaks of God's tender mercies and lovingkindnesses, the psalmist speaks of his experience of God's mercy and love (6). Much of the remainder of the Psalm is praise to God. The psalmist extols the goodness of God and His faithfulness. In effect, he is expressing reasons why covenant fellowship can exist between God and His people. It is due to who God is, and what sort of God He is. And, this fellowship is based on the foundation that God forgives sins in mercy, and teaches sinners in the way they should go.

In the midst of that expression of covenant fellowship is this amazing statement: "The secret of the LORD is with them that fear him; and he will shew them his covenant" (14). This verse paints a picture of God's covenant of intimate love and friendship. A more detailed exegesis of this verse will reveal the true nature of the covenant of grace. To this we now turn.

**The Nature of the Covenant**

The general features of Psalm 25:14 are worth noting. The form of this verse is a Hebrew parallelism—a common form of Hebrew poetry found in the Psalms. Therefore the two parts of the verse complement each other. That is to say, "showing his covenant" corresponds to "giving secrets." And it leads to the connection that to everyone with whom God establishes His covenant, He tells His secrets.

Second, take notice of the *words* used in Psalm 25:14. The name that God uses is important, namely, Jehovah. This is God's covenant name—the Hebrew *Yahweh* (יְהוָה]. God is the I AM, the unchanging God as He testifies in Malachi 3:6—For I am the LORD, I change not. Jehovah is God's covenant name because the unchanging Jehovah is ever faithful to the promises He makes to His covenant people. Significantly, that is the name that the inspired writer uses in Psalm 25:14, pointing us immediately to the covenant.

In addition, the verse states explicitly that the covenant is God's—"he will show them his covenant." As noted earlier, the covenant is not God's and ours; it is not ours. It is God's covenant because He planned, realizes, establishes, and maintains the covenant of grace. The covenant is all of God, and nothing of man.

Finally, with regard to the words, notice that the verse uses picture language. The word *secret* is the Hebrew is *soth* (סוֹד) which literally is *pillow* or *cushion*. This word expresses the activity of two sitting close together, and talking. It pictures friends conversing together of things they have in common. Perhaps it even pictures the intimate conversation of a husband and wife, sharing one pillow.

This is a rich and beautiful figure that the Spirit gives the psalmist. It pictures God and His people together in this kind of familiar conversation. God is talking to His people as a Friend. Jehovah is confiding in them, telling them the things of His heart—His secrets!

Clearly the nature of the covenant of grace set forth here is a relation of friendship, as opposed to an agreement between God and His people.

Certainly the Bible does use the term covenant [Hebrew: *berith,* בְּרִית] to describe an agreement when two *men* make a covenant. Abraham and Abimelech (king of Gerar) made a covenant concerning a well of water (cf. Gen. 27:27-32). Again, Laban and Jacob made

a covenant not to harm each other (cf. Gen. 31:44). Such covenants between men are two-sided agreements, requiring compliance with the terms by both men in order to maintain the covenant.

Even these man-made agreements can be quite one-sided as when Abraham made his servant Eliezar swear that he would obtain a wife for Jacob from Abraham's family and not from the Canaanites (Gen. 24:1-9). Abraham dictated, and the servant obeyed—a one-sided agreement.

Quite different must be a covenant, if one could conceive of it, between a miracle worker (who could raise the dead to life) on the one hand, and a dead man, on the other. One cannot even conceive of a discussion of terms, responsibilities, conditions, and promises between the two. It is preposterous. The life-giving miracle worker would not say to the dead body, "I promise you life if you will first believe in me, and then obey me."

So it is with Jehovah God, who *is* the one able to give life to the spiritually dead man. God does not make an agreement with man. The Psalms emphatically teach the total depravity of man. One outstanding illustration is Psalm 14:1-3.

> The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God. They are corrupt, they have done abominable works, there is none that doeth good. The LORD looked down from heaven upon the children of men, to see if there were any that did understand, and seek God. They are all gone aside, they are all together become filthy: there is none that doeth good, no, not one.

Or consider Psalm 5:9: "For there is no faithfulness in their mouth; their inward part is very wickedness; their throat is an open sepulchre; they flatter with their tongue." And again, Psalm 51:5 "Behold, I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me."

The total depravity of man rules out the possibility of an agreement between God and man. Man is born dead in sin. He hates God. It would be pointless for God to come to man setting forth conditions that the man must fulfill in order to establish or maintain the covenant relationship. The covenant of grace is not bi-lateral, nor is it an agreement. It cannot be.

Rather, the essence of the covenant is a relationship of friendship.

Psalm 95:7 contains the covenant formula: "For he is our God; and we are the people of his pasture, and the sheep of his hand." And in this covenant relationship, God sits with His people in intimate conversation, and He tells them His secrets.

That the covenant of grace is a relationship of friendship is not based on a single statement in the Bible. Rather, as is true of all the significant doctrines of the Christian faith, this truth is drawn from the whole of Scripture. The covenant began when God created Adam and Eve in a covenant relationship with Him. For this to happen, God created them unique among all the creatures He made. God made them in His own image, His own sons and daughters. Psalm 8 reflects on this unique position of man. The psalmist sings:

> When I consider thy heavens, the work of thy fingers, the moon and the stars, which thou hast ordained; What is man, that thou art mindful of him? and the son of man, that thou visitest him? For thou hast made him a little lower than the angels, and hast crowned him with glory and honour. Thou madest him to have dominion over the works of thy hands; thou hast put all things under his feet: All sheep and oxen, yea, and the beasts of the field; The fowl of the air, and the fish of the sea, and whatsoever passeth through the paths of the seas (Ps. 8:3-8).

Adam and Eve were created able to know God—indeed God gave them the true knowledge of God. God walked with them and talked with them in the garden (Gen. 3:8).

Although Adam and Eve rebelled against God and forfeited the right to fellowship with Him, God maintained His covenant in and through Jesus Christ, as God Himself prophesied the coming of the Seed of the woman (Gen. 3:15). God promised to put enmity between the seed of the woman and the seed of the serpent—implying that God would make the seed of the woman to be His friends, thus creating the enmity between the two seeds.

After the fall, God continued to walk with His people. Thus it is recorded with Enoch (Gen. 5:22, 24) and Noah (Gen. 6:9). Walking together implies friendship and unity, as Psalm 55:14 indicates—"We took sweet counsel together, and walked unto the house of God in company."

In the life of Abraham, God revealed much more about His cov-

enant of grace, as God established His covenant with Abraham and taught him what that included. The nature of that covenant relationship (i.e., friendship) is plain from the fact that three times the Bible calls Abraham the friend of God (II Chron. 20:7; Is. 41:8; James 2:23).

In that covenant with His people, God dwelt among them. God promised Israel, "I will...establish my covenant with you.... And I will set my tabernacle among you: and my soul shall not abhor you. And I will walk among you, and will be your God, and ye shall be my people" (Lev. 26:9, 11, 12).

This place and function of the temple is reflected in the Psalms often. The psalmist called the tabernacle, and later the temple, God's house, which calls to mind a family living in fellowship. Consider Psalm 65:4: "Blessed is the man whom thou choosest, and causest to approach unto thee, that he may dwell in thy courts: we shall be satisfied with the goodness of thy house, even of thy holy temple." Again, Psalm 27:4: "One thing have I desired of the LORD, that will I seek after; that I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the LORD, and to enquire in his temple."

All this agrees with the figure of Psalm 25:14—the pillow of Jehovah—portraying God and His people talking together, and God sharing His secrets. This is the essence of friendship. One does not tell his secrets to an enemy. One shares secrets with a friend, a close friend who can be trusted.

All this is realized in "Jehovah salvation," the Mediator of the covenant. Jesus is Immanuel—God with us. The psalmist experiences that already in the old dispensation in the prefiguration of the Christ—the Angel of Jehovah. Thus, Psalm 34:7 "The angel of the LORD encampeth round about them that fear him, and delivereth them." God came to dwell with His people in Jesus Christ. But the Israelites experienced this already in the old dispensation, as they sang, "He that dwelleth in the secret place of the most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty" (Ps. 91:1).

The final realization of the covenant is in the new creation. Revelation 21:3 describes it thus: "And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God." God will dwell with His people forever.

This is the goal of the covenant, to be discussed in a later article.

From all of Scripture, and confirmed in the Psalms, it becomes plain also what kind of friendship God established with His covenant people. It is close, intimate, and unbreakable! To demonstrate concretely, God gave His people three earthly pictures of His covenant life. The first is simply friendship. David understood the beauty of friendship. Psalm 55:12-14 speaks of a friendship that went bad.

> For it was not an enemy that reproached me; then I could have borne it: neither was it he that hated me that did magnify himself against me; then I would have hid myself from him: But it was thou, a man mine equal, my guide, and mine acquaintance. We took sweet counsel together, and walked unto the house of God in company.

David wrote there of Ahithophel, once a close friend of David, who turned against him and plotted with Absalom to overthrow David. Notice, that in their friendship they took sweet counsel together. That speaks of a close friendship. David speaks of the same in Psalm 41: "Yea, mine own familiar friend, in whom I trusted, which did eat of my bread…" (v. 9). Friendship includes trust, as well as fellowship enjoyed over shared meals. God holds before His people that kind of close friendship as an essential element of His covenant.

The second picture of the covenant is the family. The closeness and intimacy of the covenant is experienced in the life of a family. Psalm 128 expresses that well.

> Blessed is every one that feareth the LORD; that walketh in his ways. For thou shalt eat the labour of thine hands: happy shalt thou be, and it shall be well with thee. Thy wife shall be as a fruitful vine by the sides of thine house: thy children like olive plants round about thy table. Behold, that thus shall the man be blessed that feareth the LORD. The LORD shall bless thee out of Zion: and thou shalt see the good of Jerusalem all the days of thy life. Yea, thou shalt see thy children's children, and peace upon Israel.

Note that the Psalm describes the blessedness, that is, the happiness of the man who fears God—the covenant father—who walks in God's ways. His wife and children are a blessing (joy) to him. He

experiences the overwhelming joy of the covenant being continued in his children's children (v. 6).

In His covenant, God adopts the elect as His own children. God, in Christ becomes our father in heaven. The psalmist sings of that. "Like as a father pitieth his children, so the LORD pitieth them that fear him" (Ps. 103:13). The psalmist exhorts his fellow believers to "call upon his name" and to "seek the LORD, and his strength: seek his face evermore" (Ps. 105:1, 4). These are activities in the covenant. Calvin points out that the psalmist here

> celebrates the sovereign grace of God, by which he chose for himself from amongst the lost race of Adam a small portion to whom he might show himself to be a father. Accordingly, he enjoins them *to rejoice in the name of God*, and *to call upon him*; a privilege by which the Church alone is distinguished. Whence it follows, that this language is addressed to none but true believers, whom God would have to glory in his name, since he has taken them under his special protection.[10]

The chosen people of the covenant can cry out to God as their father because Christ sends His Spirit into believers' hearts crying, "Abba, Father" (Gal. 4:4-6). They are recreated in the image of Christ. Spiritually, they look like Christ, for they are sons of God (I John 3:1).

As God's adopted children, the covenant people have the right enter into their Father's house, to sit at His table, and to enjoy fellowship. And they have the right to the inheritance (eternal life). Psalm 23:6 expresses the believer's conscious experience of that—"and I will dwell in the house of the LORD for ever."

Added to those earthly pictures is one more relationship that demonstrates the truth that the covenant is both intimate and unbreakable. That relationship is marriage. One man and one woman joined together in the unbreakable bond of marriage is the definitive picture of God covenant of grace.

Before turning to the Psalms, let it be demonstrated specifically from the rest of Scripture. In the Old Testament, God betrothed His people to Himself. Addressing Israel through Hosea, God testified, "And I will betroth thee unto me for ever; yea, I will betroth thee unto

10 John Calvin in *Commentary on the Book of Psalms,* Comments on Psalm 105:1. (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1949), 4:173.

me in righteousness, and in judgment, and in lovingkindness, and in mercies. I will even betroth thee unto me in faithfulness." And God added the promise that in that relationship, "thou shalt know the LORD" (Hos. 2:19, 20). Knowing God—that is the covenant!

In the New Testament, the relationship develops beyond betrothal. Christ comes into the world as the groom and the church is His bride. He comes to redeem His bride, and the cross is the official, legal marriage covenant, established and signed in His blood. He leaves His bride, promising not to forsake her, and promising to return personally on the clouds of glory to take her to Himself. Heaven is the consummation, and there will be enjoyed the everlasting marriage feast of Christ and His bride, the church.

That brings us back to Psalm 25:14—the pillow of the LORD is with His covenant people! The closest possible love and friendship experienced in an earthly marriage is but a reflection of God's everlasting covenant of grace.

God has, therefore, placed in man's earthly existence many pictures/experiences of God's covenant. If one receives a letter or an email, or a phone call or visit from a friend, where two sit and talk for hours—that points to God's covenant. A family sits at table, where each member of the family has a place, and they talk about their lives and their plans—that pictures the covenant. A husband and wife sit down at end of long day and share the thoughts of their hearts—another experience of covenant life. This is how God lives with His covenant people—the secret of the LORD is with them. All this points to the truth that the nature of the covenant is a relationship of friendship.

**God's Secrets**

To His covenant people, God tells His secrets. What does God tell them? God tells His people about Himself. That is what one would expect, because the purpose of God establishing a covenant was the magnifying of His glory. God has no need of anyone outside of Himself. Eternally He has lived the most perfect life of friendship in Himself. He determined to create a people to whom He would reveal His perfections for the praise of His glory. And He would do that not merely by telling His people about His perfections. Rather He would cause His people to experience His perfections by taking them

into His own covenant life of love and friendship. In that covenant, therefore, God wants His people to love Him. To love Him they must know Him.

Accordingly, God tells His people about Himself. He tells them His Names. He reveals to His people that He is the eternally living God because He is the triune God, one God, but three in Person. The psalmist confesses that "by the word of the LORD were the heavens made; and all the host of them by the breath of his mouth" (Ps. 33:6). There is the Trinity revealed—the Father (Jehovah), the Word, and the Spirit (breath of his mouth). And the life that God enjoys is one of perfect love and agreement, for God is one.

God reveals to His covenant people His very being. He is spirit, personal, transcendent, and yet very near. The psalmist sings of God's care over him, because God is all that—"Thou knowest my downsitting and mine uprising, thou understandest my thought afar off. Thou compassest my path and my lying down, and art acquainted with all my ways" (Ps. 139:2-3). He asks (rhetorically), "Whither shall I go from thy spirit? or whither shall I flee from thy presence?" (v. 7).

God reveals Himself in His attributes, so that the Psalmist can sing, "O continue thy *lovingkindness* unto them that know thee; and thy *righteousness* to the upright in heart" (Ps. 36:10; emphasis added). The Psalms declares, "great is our Lord, and of great *power*: his *understanding* is infinite" (Ps. 147:5; emphasis added). In fact, all the attributes of God are set forth in the Psalms.

Included in His secrets are His mighty works, including the creation (noted above, Psalms 8 and 33). God reveals His sustaining and governing providence—over creation ["Thou rulest the raging of the sea" (Ps. 89:9)] and over men ["He ruleth by his power for ever; his eyes behold the nations" (Ps. 66:7)]. And God reveals that He cares for the entire creation ["He causeth the grass to grow for the cattle, and herb for the service of man" (Ps. 104:14) and so many other Psalms.]

Especially, God never tires of telling His people of His saving work in Jesus Christ. In the Old Testament it was often described in typical language, as in Psalm 106:8, "Nevertheless he saved them for his name's sake, that he might make his mighty power to be known." But God tells even the Old Testament saints of the suffering that His servant would endure for their salvation, in such prophetic songs

as Psalm 22 and 69. And after hearing of this great salvation, the psalmist can sing of the blessedness of "the man unto whom the LORD imputeth not iniquity" (Ps. 32:2). He declares with confidence, "God will redeem my soul from the power of the grave" (Ps. 49:15).

God's secrets therefore emphasize His great love for His covenant people. This is an eternal love. God testifies that He knew His people eternally, before He created them. Over and again He reminds His people that before He created the earth He chose His own in Christ, in order that they should be His peculiar people. And in love, He gave own Son not only into the hands of wicked men, but also to the accursed death of the cross. You are redeemed, He assures them, in that precious blood.

But His secrets include more. God reveals His will, namely, that His people live with Him forever. God tells of the great blessings in store for His people—heaven, eternal covenant fellowship face to face with God. In short, the whole of the Bible is the secret Jehovah speaks to His own.

How does God communicate His secrets? Through intimate discussions where God speaks to each covenant member personally. In the Old Testament God spoke to the patriarchs directly. Other times God used types, visions, and prophets. Today, it is through preaching that God conveys His secrets. God speaks through His own appointed ambassador. Through him the voice of Jesus is heard. His sheep hear His voice and recognize it! Jesus calls His own by name, and they come to Him. They listen intently as God, though Christ, gives His secrets.

This is true also of children in the covenant—God tells them His secrets. God speaks through the instruction given in catechism. There God draws the elect child to Himself, and talks about Himself, His love, and His saving work. God whispers to the children through the instruction of godly father and mother, as well as through the diligent labors of god-fearing teachers.

God tells more of His secrets through the study of the Scriptures, whether it be in family devotions or personal.

And the believer responds, speaking to God through prayer. Prayer gives opportunity for intimate fellowship with their heavenly Father.

Psalm 25:14 describes this amazing beauty of God's covenant

life in that God "*shows* them His covenant." What does that mean? Literally it teaches that God "causes them to know His covenant." God does that by making His people to *experience* His covenant life. He does not merely *tell* them about His covenant; rather He causes them to know, that is, experience it. Their fellowship with God is real. As believers sit under the preaching of the gospel, it is truly as though God is speaking directly to each believer in the congregation. And the Holy Spirit applies the content of the preaching to every believer. The believer does not merely hear about Christ death for sinners; rather the Spirit makes him to know that Christ died for *him*. He does not merely hear about forgiveness of sin; rather the Spirit makes him to know that God has forgiven *him*. As the preaching sets forth the riches of God mercy and His great love, the Spirit causes the believer's heart to overflow with that love.

God gives the elect the blessings of salvation—they have the heavenly blessings now in principle. Their sins are forgiven. They have righteousness, holiness, and eternal life. Proof that believers do know the covenant and its blessing seen in this: They sing the Psalms, joining with the saints of all ages to testify of God's goodness and saving work.

**The People of the Covenant Manifested**

Psalm 25:14 teaches one more important truth, namely, those with whom God establishes this covenant can be identified in this world. That is to say, that they are covenant people becomes evident in their lives. This should be obvious, for God formed His people by His Spirit and grace. He gives to each one the life of Christ through regeneration. Besides, the Holy Spirit sanctifies each one, and recreates each in the image of Christ. That work of God in them must make an observable difference in their lives, as compared to those who are dead in sin.

But there is more to their changed lifestyle. Constant covenant fellowship with God affects His people. In earthly life, parents can see changes in their children due to changes in their friends. Their friends influence their children for good or for bad. Earthly friendships have an effect on a child's attitude, opinions, and his talk. It changes what a child thinks is important; what he likes to do or not.

If that is true of earthly relationships and friendships, can it be

that experiencing friendship with God will have no effect on a person? On the contrary, those who experience God's covenant life and listen as God tells secrets in the preaching will be affected by it! As they study Scripture, and hear God talking, it affects their thinking, speaking, and living! And they seek His face—their lives are filled with earnest prayer! The secrets of God and the enjoyment of God covenant life do affect them significantly. How will be seen?

They fear God! This fear is not terror. God does not desire that His children be afraid of Him. Rather this fear is reverence and love. The result of God work in them is that they love God with all their heart. They want to keep His commandments. They are angry when He is reproached or blasphemed. Jehovah is their dearest Friend!

They seek to keep selves holy, unspotted from the world. Covenant people shun friendship with the world, knowing that friendship with the world is enmity with God.

One can identify those who are intimate with God, those who have His secrets. They fear Him.

Only to those who fear Him will God make known His secrets. The man who walks in sin and rebellion against Jehovah will not experience blessed covenant fellowship with God. Just as in our earthly relationships, the child who rebels against his parents does not experience the joys of family life and fellowship with his parents. The father will not tell him to draw up a chair, talk quietly of his love, and remind the child all the good things he can expect. On the contrary, the father will reprimand the child. The child can expect to be disciplined. And if the child does not repent, but becomes hardened, he soon begins to loath the life of family.

So is it with the covenant people and God. If they walk in unrepentant sin, the preaching does not touch the heart. Their become prayers cold and empty. They become distant from God. They are not experiencing blessed friendship.

Jehovah tells His secrets only to those who fear Him.

This is not a condition for getting into the covenant of grace, as if a man must fear God before he is saved. None can fear God before being saved, and none do. Nor is this a condition to remaining in the covenant. God establishes and maintains His covenant with His chosen people. But the point of Psalm 25:14 is that none experienc-

es the bliss of covenant friendship—of sitting with God in intimate covenant fellowship, unless he is living as His friend. And the very fear is worked in the believer by the Spirit. He only lives out of what God works in him.

What a glorious blessing is God's everlasting covenant of grace! It is a powerful incentive to take heed to preaching, where God is sharing His secrets. It is a sweet encouragement to live upright lives, in the fear of the Lord. And what glory awaits God's covenant people—eternally they will live with God and God will continue to tell them His secrets. ●

# Johannes Bogerman: His Life and Influence on the First Head of the Canons of Dordt

**Joshua Engelsma**

The 400th anniversary of the venerable Synod of Dordt is fast approaching. That august assembly, meeting from the winter of 1618 through the spring of 1619, settled a raging conflict in the Reformed churches in the Netherlands over the doctrines of sovereign grace and produced a rich, beautiful statement of faith for the benefit of many generations. It was, without question, one of the greatest victories given by God to the New Testament church of Christ. With good reason one of the delegates could, whenever mention was made of the Synod afterwards, raise his hat and cry, "*Sacrosancta Synodus*! Most holy synod!"[1]

Because of the far-reaching significance of this assembly, much has been written about its history. A number of books and essays have chronicled the political and ecclesiastical backgrounds to the Arminian controversy, the deliberations of the Synod that dealt with this controversy, and the doctrinal contents of its Canons. In addition, the names of many of the leading theologians in the debate are well-known to students of church history, particularly the names Arminius and Gomarus.

But one key figure—Johannes Bogerman—has not received much recognition, despite the fact that he was one of the most highly respected theologians of the day and played a prominent role at Dordt. He fought Arminius and his disciples before the Synod; he was elected by his fellow delegates to preside at the Synod; with a firm and steady hand he guided the Synod through months of difficult and important deliberations; and he contributed directly to the composition of the Canons.

1 This anecdote is related in Philip Schaff, *The Creeds of Christendom* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1919), 1:514-515. The delegate was Wolfgang Meyer, a minister and doctor of theology from Basel.

The slighting of this important churchman and theologian is regrettable. What follows is an attempt to correct this deficiency by bringing the man and his work out of the shadows and into the light. In particular, I hope to show the important place he has in the history of the Reformed church by demonstrating that Bogerman is largely responsible for the all-important First Head of the Canons and its defense of the truth of unconditional election. To show this I provide a translation of Bogerman's early draft of this Head and compare it to the final edition.[2]

But, first, we shall see how God prepared him for this work.

**Part 1: The Life of Johannes Bogerman: Youth**

The Protestant Reformation swept over the Lowlands in four basic stages.[3] First on the scene was Lutheranism. As early as 1518 the teachings of Luther were disseminated among the people of the Lowlands. In fact, the first martyrs of the Reformation were two Dutchman burned at the stake in 1523 for advocating the teachings of the great German Reformer. Lutheranism, however, never

2 For more on the formation of the Canons, cf. Aza Goudriaan and Fred van Lieburg, eds., *Revisiting the Synod of Dordt (1618-1619)*, Brill's Series in Church History 49 (Leiden: Brill, 2011). Especially helpful are the following two chapters: W. Robert Godfrey, "Popular and Catholic: The *Modus Docendi* of the Canons of Dordt," 243-260; and Donald Sinnema, "The Drafting of the Canons of Dordt: A Preliminary Survey of Early Drafts and Related Documents," 291-312. At present Sinnema is spearheading a massive effort to publish in nine volumes all the known documents related to the Synod of Dordt. The first volume has already appeared: Donald Sinnema, Christian Moser, Herman J. Selderhuis, eds., *Acta et Documenta Synodi Nationalis Dordrechtanae (1618-1619)* (Gottingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2015).

3 For this and what follows, cf. W. Robert Godfrey, "Calvin and Calvinism in the Netherlands," in *John Calvin: His Influence in the Western World*, ed. W. Stanford Reid (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1982), 95-122; Peter Y. De Jong, "The Rise of the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands," in *Crisis in the Reformed Churches: Essays in Commemoration of the Great Synod of Dort, 1618-1619*, ed. Peter Y. De Jong (Grandville, MI: Reformed Fellowship, 2008), 17-37; and Walter Lagerwey, "The History of Calvinism in the Netherlands," in *The Rise and Development of Calvinism: A Concise History*, ed. John H. Bratt (Grand Rapids, Eerdmans, 1968), 63-102.

took hold among the Dutch people and never became a popular movement.

The second stage of the Reformation in the Lowlands is often referred to as the "Sacramentarian phase." The "Sacramentarians" were generally a group of educated, upper-class individuals who were dissatisfied with conditions in the Roman Catholic Church. They often gathered in private groups to read and hear the Word of God. Like Lutheranism, this movement was never organized and never established itself in the Netherlands.

Third, the Low Countries were heavily influenced by the Anabaptist movement. Especially during the 1530s and 1540s did the Anabaptists gain a large following among the Dutch people. But the movement soon devolved because of radicalism and internal quarrels, leaving many Dutchmen disenchanted.

The growing unpopularity of Anabaptism prepared the way in the providence of God for the establishment of Calvinism, the fourth and final stage of the Reformation in the Lowlands. The teachings of Calvin took root in the southern part of the Lowlands (present-day Belgium) around 1545, and it was in that region that Reformed churches first sprang up and that the Netherlands (Belgic) Confession was written. A decade or so later Calvinism spread from there into the northern regions where it became more firmly established. Thus, the Reformed Church in the Netherlands was born.

One of those influenced by the spread of Calvinism into the Netherlands was a Roman Catholic priest named Johannes Bogerman.[4] Bogerman was a native of Friesland and was serving as a priest in the town of Kollum in 1564. He was delivered by God out of Catholicism and was converted to the Reformed faith, after which he was accepted into the ministry of the Reformed Church. Following the example of Martin Luther, the former priest then married a Frisian woman—Popck—of whom nothing is known.[5]

4 This is the father of our present subject. The family name was written a number of different ways, including Bogermannus, Boghermannus, Bogherman, and Bogaerdtman.

5 H. Edema Van der Tuuk, *Johannes Bogerman* (Groningen: J. B. Wolters, 1868), 297n2; G. P. Van Itterzon, *Johannes Bogerman*, Klassieken van het Gereformeerd Protestantisme, ed. W. Balke and W. Van 't Spijker (Amsterdam: Ton Bolland, 1980), 9; H. J. Morren, *De godsdienst verzekerd:*

In 1567, the Dutch stadholder Aremburg caved under the pressures of King Philip II of Spain. Goaded by the Catholic Philip, Aremburg sent his troops into Friesland in an effort to stamp out the Reformed faith. Bogerman and his fellow Reformed pastors were forced into exile. He and his wife fled into German-held East Friesland and eventually settled in the village of Uplewert.[6]

Spanish control over Friesland did not last long. By 1580, its grip had weakened, and Bogerman received and accepted a call to serve the church in the Frisian city of Bolsward. He remained in Bolsward for twelve years, during which time he became recognized as a wise, faithful minister of the Word. He was looked up to by his younger colleagues, was frequently delegated to the broader assemblies, and was twice chosen as president of the provincial synod of Friesland.[7]

Bogerman left Friesland and took the call to Kampen in 1592. He later served pastorates in Steenwijk, Appingedam, and Hasselt, before his death in 1606.[8]

It was in 1576, while Bogerman was in the East Frisian town of Uplewert, that Popck gave birth to their first child, a son whom they named Johannes. Little Johannes' earliest memories may have been in Uplewert, but the bulk of his childhood was spent over the border in Friesland proper, having moved there when he was four years old. And not long after the move to Bolsward he had a new playmate. His younger brother Regnerus was born there in 1582.[9]

The home in which these two young boys were raised had a tremendous influence upon them. Johannes Sr. and Popck were faithful

*Het leven van Johannes Bogerman* (Veenendaal: Uitgeverij Kool, 1979), 17. Bogerman and other converted priests who married were referred to as a "*Luthers priester*."

6 Van der Tuuk, *Bogerman*, 1-2; Morren, *Bogerman*, 17, 20.

7 He was elected president in 1583 and 1590. J. Reitsma and S. D. Van Veen, *Acta der Provinciale en Particuliere Synoden, Gehouden in de Noordelijke Nederlanden Gedurende de Jaren 1572-1620* (Groningen: J. B. Wolters, 1897), 6:1, 44.

8 Van der Tuuk, *Bogerman*, 6-11; Van Itterzon, *Bogerman*, 9; Morren, *Bogerman*, 20-21.

9 Van der Tuuk, *Bogerman*, 14; Van Itterzon, *Bogerman*, 9. For details on Regnerus, cf. *Nieuw Nederlandsch biografisch woordenboek*, s.v. "Bogerman, Regnerus."

to their God-given calling to nurture their sons in the fear of the Lord. They taught the boys from a young age to love the truths of God's Word and live a life of devotion to him.[10]

**Student Days**

The younger Johannes was molded not only by the home but also by the schools he attended. He received a fine education at the Latin school in Bolsward where he was instructed by a number of outstanding scholars.[11]

At an early age, Bogerman became convinced that God was calling him to follow in his father's footsteps and join the ranks of the Reformed clergy. With that end in mind, he enrolled at the crown jewel of Frisian higher learning—the University of Franeker—on May 23, 1591, at the tender age of fifteen.[12]

The University, founded in 1585, only a few years prior to Bogerman's enrollment, prided herself on the orthodoxy of her theological faculty. "Orthodoxy," according to one biographer, "was the first and greatest virtue of the Frisian preachers."[13] The University boasted a fine collection of Reformed professors, including two men who had a significant influence on Bogerman.[14]

The first was Sibrandus Lubbertus. Lubbertus was recognized not just in Friesland and the Netherlands but throughout the continent as a preeminent theologian. Although he was twenty years older than Bogerman, they established a close friendship during Bogerman's student days that lasted for the rest of their lives. It was Lubbertus

10 Van Itterzon, *Bogerman*, 9; Morren, *Bogerman*, 22.

11 Bogerman mentions these men in the unpaginated preface to his work *Praxis verae poenitentiae, sive Meditationes in historiam lapsus Davidis* (Herborn: C. Corvinus, 1616), https://books.google.com/books?id=UPsqAAAAYAAJ&printsec=titlepage#v=onepage&q&f=false (accessed October 27, 2015). Cf. also Van der Tuuk, *Bogerman*, 14-15.

12 Van der Tuuk, *Bogerman*, 15; Morren, *Bogerman*, 22. Van Itterzon gives the year as 1592 (*Bogerman*, 9).

13 Van der Tuuk, *Bogerman*, 18. "*Rechtzinnigheid was de eerste en grootste deugd der friesche predikanten*."

14 Bogerman mentions his four theological professors in his unpaginated preface to *Praxis verae poenitentiae*. Cf. also Van der Tuuk, *Bogerman*, 15-17; Van Itterzon, *Bogerman*, 9-10.

who later worked hard, albeit unsuccessfully, to get Bogerman added to the Franeker faculty, and the two men served together as delegates to the Synod of Dordt.

The other powerful influence on Bogerman at the University was Johannes Drusius. Drusius had made a name for himself throughout Europe as a master of the Eastern languages, particularly Hebrew. He taught Bogerman his Hebrew, and it was due to his instruction that his young pupil began receiving notice as an up-and-coming Hebrew scholar.[15] Bogerman's grounding in the knowledge of Hebrew was essential in his later work as chief translator of the *Staten Bijbel*.

Because of his father's meager finances, Bogerman's education at Franeker was funded by the Frisian provincial government. A number of his peers, also receiving state funds, used the money to finance their riotous living. But not Bogerman. He kept his nose out of trouble and in the books. He even published a little Latin treatise while he was at Franeker. In this work, Bogerman spoke of the benefits enjoyed by the Reformed church since Prince Maurice's recent recapture of certain areas of the Netherlands from Spain. The greatest blessing of this liberation, Bogerman argued, was the freedom to worship God and preach the gospel in all its purity. In gratitude for their willingness to underwrite his education, Bogerman dedicated the work to the Frisian government.[16]

The admiration was mutual. Recognizing the tremendous abilities of their native son, the government of Friesland happily decided, upon his graduation from Franeker, to finance his studies at some of the leading universities in Europe.[17] It was typical for a young graduate to make such a *peregrinatio academica*, an academic tour of the chief centers of learning.

Bogerman began his tour in 1596 in the city of Heidelberg, the "Geneva of Germany."[18] He mentions sitting through the lectures of such men as Jacobus Kimedoncius, Petrus Calaminus, and Daniel

15 Van der Tuuk, *Bogerman*, 15; Van Itterzon, *Bogerman*, 9.

16 Van der Tuuk, *Bogerman*, 19-21; Van Itterzon, *Bogerman*, 10; Morren, *Bogerman*, 24.

17 Van Itterzon, *Bogerman*, 11.

18 Van Itterzon gives the date as 1595, *Bogerman*, 11.

Tossanus.[19] Bogerman later wrote that he "had the highest esteem" for Tossanus.[20]

After spending about a year in Heidelberg, Bogerman continued on to Geneva, arriving there some time in 1597. Part of the draw was undoubtedly the presence of the venerable Theodore Beza. The successor of Calvin, Beza was still alive and still holding forth in the Academy, even though he was approaching eighty years of age. The young Bogerman regarded this aged reformer highly and absorbed the doctrines that he taught, including the doctrine of predestination.[21]

At the beginning of 1598, Bogerman departed from Geneva and went to Zurich. There he met and was taught by Johan Jacob Breitinger, a fellow alumnus of the University of Franeker and fellow delegate to the Synod of Dordt. Although he spent only a short time in Zurich, Bogerman made an impression on Breitinger, so much so that Breitinger wrote of him in glowing terms to Lubbertus back at Franeker.

> Toward the end of February, two Frisians came to us here in Zurich from Geneva, the one was certainly a nobleman and the other your Bogerman, who, although he does not need my recommendation, surely is very dear to us all on account of his modest character and the outstanding training which he has received in the Hebrew language; but you yourself know this best.[22]

19 Bogerman, *Praxis verae poenitentiae*. Bogerman's biographers mention that he studied under the well-known David Pareus also (cf. Van der Tuuk, *Bogerman*, 23, 24; Van Itterzon, *Bogerman*, 11; Morren, *Bogerman*, 25). However, Bogerman does not mention his name, and it seems that Pareus was not promoted to professor of theology until 1598, at least two years after Bogerman left Heidelberg.

20 Quoted in Van der Tuuk, *Bogerman*, 24. "*Wien ik de grootste achting toedroeg*."

21 Bogerman, *Praxis verae poenitentiae*. Bogerman also mentions the names of Antonius Fayus and Simon Goulart. In his biography of Jacobus Arminius, another student of Beza's in Geneva, Carl Bangs wrote, "Other students such as Johannes Bogerman and Gosvinus Geldorpius were disciples of Beza in holding to the content of his doctrines" (Bangs, *Arminius: A Study in the Dutch Reformation* [Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1971], 75.)

22 Breitinger to Lubbertus, March 17. 1598. Quoted in Van der Tuuk, *Bogerman*, 25. "*Tegen het einde van februari kwamen van Geneve bij ons te*

After his brief stop in Zurich, Bogerman continued his academic tour in Lausanne, where he studied under Wilhelmus Bucanus. From there he crossed the Channel to England. He went first to Oxford and attended lectures by John Rainolds, and then he visited Cambridge to hear the illustrious William Perkins.[23] At Cambridge Bogerman became friends with Joseph Hall, who was later delegated by the British to attend the Synod of Dordt.[24]

This was a significant period of development in Bogerman's life. By 1599, he had visited almost every major center of Reformed theology and sat at the feet of every major, living Reformed theologian. He had also established friendships with a number of men with whom he would later serve at the Synod of Dordt. He was ready now for the work of the ministry. He returned to his native Friesland to begin this next phase of his life.

**Pastor**

Although there are no records of the date of his wedding, we do know that Bogerman was married. His wife's name was Grietje Piers, and she was a tremendous help and encouragement to him in his often difficult ministry. But there was an added sorrow in their marriage; the two never knew the joy of having covenant children.

Bogerman officially began his work on behalf of the church in Friesland on September 23, 1599. On that day Bogerman was ordained and installed as a minister of the Word and sacraments in the Frisian town of Sneek. He was twenty-three years old.

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*Zurich twee Friezen, de een zeker edelman, en de ander uw Bogerman, die, terwijl hij mijne aanbeveling niet behoeft, voorzeker ons allen zeer dierbaar is wegens zijne ingetogenheid van inborst en de uitstekende opleiding, welke hij in de hebreeuwsche taal ontvangen heeft; overigens weet gij zelf dit het best*." The Latin original is given on page 305n42: "*Mense Februario proxime elapse venerunt ad nos Tigurum duo Frisii Geneva, alter nobilis quidam Aislimannus, vester Bogermannus alter, qui ut mea recommendation non indigeat, certe nostris omnibus charissimus ob ingenii modestiam et egregiam eruditionem, quam assequutus est ex lingua Hebraica, caeterum ipse haec nosti optime*."

23 Bogerman, *Praxis verae poenitentiae*.

24 Years later, Hall reminisced on their first meeting in a letter to Bogerman dated April 8, 1635 (cf. Van der Tuuk, *Bogerman*, 26).

His chief labor was preaching the gospel every Sunday. In the mornings he preached from biblical texts, and in the afternoons he would lave preached through the Heidelberg Catechism. During the week he taught the children and young people in catechism, led the consistory meetings, and comforted the sick and dying. All evidence seems to indicate that Bogerman was a faithful and beloved pastor. Before leaving Sneek he published and gave to his parishioners a comforting work which he had written to a widow after the death of her husband.[25]

Besides these labors, Bogerman was also involved in defending the truth. There was a large contingent of Anabaptists in and around Sneek, and shortly after he arrived Bogerman became involved in theological discussions with them. He was assisted by his friend Gosvinus Geldorpius who was also a pastor in Sneek.[26] The two men held a conference with the Anabaptists on February 13, 1600, where they debated the two main doctrinal differences between the Reformed and Anabaptists: infant baptism and the civil government. Bogerman labored patiently to show them their errors, holding several more meetings in the following weeks and months, but his efforts bore little positive fruit.[27]

Bogerman and Geldorpius also collaborated in another area of polemics. In May 1601, they published a work that they had translated together from Latin into Dutch. The book was written by their beloved teacher Theodore Beza and had to do with how heretics are to be treated. Beza originally wrote the book as a defense of Geneva's treatment of the infamous heretic Michael Servetus. He believed that in certain situations heretics must be handed over to the civil government for execution.[28]

At the time of the Synod of Dordt, the Remonstrants made mention of this work and tried to use it against Bogerman. It is certainly true that the position of Beza and Bogerman has since been rejected by the

25 Morren, *Bogerman*, 30.

26 Bogerman mentions Geldorpius in the *Praefatio* to *Praxis verae poenitentiae*.

27 Van der Tuuk, *Bogerman*, 29-31; Van Itterzon, *Bogerman*, 28; Morren, *Bogerman*, 12.

28 Van der Tuuk, *Bogerman*, 32-35; Van Itterzon, *Bogerman*, 12-13; Morren, *Bogerman*, 29-30.

Reformed. However, although this view seems strange to us, it should be pointed out that this was a commonly held view in Bogerman's day and reflects the prevailing view at that time of the relationship between church and state.

Bogerman was also involved in the work of the broader assemblies. On June 1, 1602, he was present at the provincial synod of Friesland held in Franeker. That body elected him to be the clerk of the meeting.[29] The other men recognized the abilities of the twenty-six year old Bogerman.

Not long after this meeting adjourned, Bogerman received a call letter from the church in Enkhuizen, a town on the opposite side of the Zuider Zee in the province of North Holland. Following the then-proper church political avenues, Bogerman asked permission to accept this call from the synodical deputies and from the provincial government, the States of Friesland. Both bodies saw how important Bogerman was to Friesland and refused. Enkhuizen persisted. They called Bogerman a second time. This time, the Frisian officials relented. But only slightly. Without formally dismissing Bogerman from Sneek, they gave him permission to go to Enkhuizen temporarily, with the understanding that he belonged to Friesland and must return there in due time. Bogerman was finally installed in Enkhuizen on January 12, 1603. He carried on his preaching and pastoral work and appears to have enjoyed his time there.[30]

He also continued to engage in polemics. In the neighboring town of Hoorn lived Cornelis Wiggerts. Wiggerts was significant because of his influence upon Arminius. Arminius mentioned him frequently in his writings, revealing that Arminius considered Wiggerts a "kindred spirit."[31]

Wiggerts was suspended by the provincial synod of North Holland in 1587 for promoting erroneous ideas on predestination, original sin, free will, and the perseverance of the saints. He continued to preach in private, until he was finally deposed and excommunicated in August 1598, just a few years prior to Bogerman's arrival in the area. But deposition did not silence Wiggerts; he continued to hold

29 Reitsma and Van Veen, *Acta*, 6:121, 130.

30 Van Itterzon, *Bogerman*, 14; Morren, *Bogerman*, 30.

31 Bangs, *Arminius*, 311.

private meetings in which he promoted his ideas. Bogerman engaged Wiggerts in debate and attempted to show him and his followers their errors, but with little success.[32]

Bogerman was also appalled by the godlessness and debauchery that prevailed in the city of Hoorn. Whether this was due to Wiggerts' influence or not is unknown. In any case, Bogerman sharply rebuked those who were guilty of this riotous living and worked hard to correct this wickedness.[33]

Bogerman's stay in Enkhuizen lasted only a year. His beloved Friesland soon came calling. On September 27, a certain J. Henrix paid a visit to Bogerman with a call letter in hand from Leeuwarden, the capital city of the province. As an incentive, they also offered Bogerman 300 guilders. It appears that Bogerman declined their call. But Leeuwarden persisted. In October, they secured the help of Prince Maurice and his cousin Willem Lodewijk, stadholder of Friesland, in their attempt to persuade Bogerman to return home. They now offered him 400 guilders to leave Enkhuizen. Bogerman finally accepted, departed from Enkhuizen, and was installed in Leeuwarden. The beloved son had returned to his native land.[34]

And he was quickly put to work on behalf of the churches. Besides his ordinary labors in Leeuwarden, Bogerman also frequently represented the churches at the provincial synod of Friesland. There his fellow delegates quickly came to respect him for his wisdom and ability and often voted him to be the president of the synod. He was president of the synod of 1605, when he was only twenty-nine years old. He was voted president again in 1610 and again in 1615.[35] His colleagues looked to him for leadership and guidance during these stormy times.

Bogerman became involved almost immediately upon his return in a conflict with the Jesuits, that militant wing of the Roman Catholic Church. Bogerman referred to the Jesuits as the "locusts from the Revelation of John" and considered them to be the most dangerous pests of Satan and the Antichrist. In 1608, he published his transla-

32 Bangs, *Arminius*, 312; Van Itterzon, *Bogerman*, 15.

33 Van Itterzon, *Bogerman*, 15; Morren, *Bogerman*, 30.

34 Van Itterzon, *Bogerman*, 15; Morren, *Bogerman*, 31-2.

35 Reitsma and Van Veen, *Acta*, 6:145, 187, 225.

tion of a French book condemning the Jesuits and included in it an extended section in which he opposed them as well.[36]

These early years in the ministry were an important way in which Bogerman was prepared by God for his later work. First, as a pastor he came to know and love the church and the people of God, and this would motivate him later in his defense of the truth. Second, Bogerman was often called upon to engage in polemics and this too prepared him to stand for the truth over against the lie.

**Polemicist**

At that time a conflict was brewing in the Reformed churches over Jacobus Arminius and his theology. Born in 1560, Arminius spent time studying under Beza in Geneva before accepting a call to serve as pastor of the church in Amsterdam in 1587. Trouble began there a few years later. In 1591 he was asked by his consistory to refute the position of Dirk Coornheert who was teaching conditional election. Arminius never did, because he secretly agreed with Coornheert. At about the same time, he was preaching through the book of Romans. When he came to Romans 7, he taught that the apostle Paul was referring to himself in his unregenerate state, a position that harmonized with the notion of conditional election.[37]

Objections were brought against Arminius' preaching to the consistory in Amsterdam by one of his colleagues in the city, Petrus Plancius. Even though he responded to these charges, a dark cloud of suspicion continued to hang over Arminius. This became evident in 1602, when Franciscus Junius, professor of theology at Leiden, died of the plague and Arminius was nominated to succeed him. The consistory in Amsterdam was wary of letting him teach. And so was Franciscus Gomarus, stubborn, outspoken professor of theology at Leiden and champion of the Reformed faith. Amsterdam's consistory agreed to let Arminius go if he met with Gomarus first to clear up matters. The two met on May 6 and 7, 1603, to discuss questions regarding Arminius' orthodoxy. Apparently Arminius said what Go-

36 Van Itterzon, *Bogerman*, 35; Morren, *Bogerman*, 17-18. The book was written by the French theologian Etienne Pasquier and originally published in 1564.

37 Bangs, *Arminius*, 139-140.

marus wanted to hear, because he was appointed to Leiden the next day.[38]

But the conflicts continued. Arminius was now in a position to spread his teachings among his students, who in turn could spread them into the churches. This began subtly in private discussions with students in Arminius' home, but Arminius was soon developing his teachings in the lecture hall as well. One former student wrote,

> I observed, among a number of fellow students enrolled in the private theological class of doctor Arminius, many things that, had I been ignorant, might easily have led me into dark and abominable errors. For in that class we were utterly drawn away from reading the works and treatises of Calvin, Beza, Zanchi, Martyr, Ursinus, Piscator, Perkins, and other learned and valuable theologians of the church of Christ, we were commanded to examine only holy scripture, but equally so the writings of Socinus, Acontius, Castellio, Thomas Aquinas, Molina, Suarez and other enemies of grace were commended to us.[39]

Arminius was leading students away from Calvin and the reformers, and the evidence was that he and his followers were clamoring for a complete overhaul of the Reformed confessions. The result of Arminius' tenure at Leiden was that an "Arminian" party began to grow and develop in the churches.

The battle lines were beginning to be drawn in 1607. The previous year the States-General had agreed to call a national synod, but they wanted to know what issues would be discussed at the synod. For that reason they summoned the country's leading theologians to a conference in The Hague on May 26. The professors Gomarus, Arminius, and Lubbertus were invited, and each province was asked to delegate two men, for a total of seventeen delegates. The province of Friesland sent Bogerman, who was the youngest man present at 31 years of age. At the conference, the divisive issue was whether or not to revise the creeds. Bogerman had been instructed by the deputies of Friesland to oppose all revision, which he did. He and twelve other

38 Bangs, *Arminius*, 142-3, 233-9.

39 Cited in Richard A. Muller, *God, Creation, and Providence in the Thought of Jacob Arminius: Sources and Directions of Scholastic Protestantism in the Era of Early Orthodoxy* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1991), 27-8.

delegates made it clear that there would be no revision of the creeds, while the remaining four delegates, including Arminius and his friend Uitenbogaart, argued for revision. Bogerman asserted that the confessions faithfully explain God's Word and that ministers must go to the Scriptures through the confessions. No conclusion was reached at the conference, but the result was that it became clear that there were two parties forming in the churches.[40]

Another meeting was held in the spring of 1608 to try to iron out the differences. Again Gomarus and Arminius discussed the issues. But again there was no coming to terms. In fact, Gomarus left the meeting persuaded, "With the faith of Arminius I would not dare to appear before the judgment seat of the Lord Jesus Christ." Gomarus' assessment was later conveyed by letter to Bogerman, who was more and more convinced that the political war with Spain was far less serious than the ecclesiastical war that was soon going to erupt.[41]

The conflict did not end with Arminius' death in the fall of 1609. Only a few months later, on January 14, 1610, more than forty followers of Arminius met together under the leadership of Uitenbogaart in the city of Gouda. There they composed the "Remonstrance," a petition to be brought to the government stating their case. They called for a revision of the creeds and also asserted their Erastian view of church government. They also summarized their doctrinal position in five articles, in which they defended conditional election, universal atonement, limited depravity, resistible grace, and the falling away of the saints.[42]

When these were finally published, the Counter Remonstrants informed the government that they were ready at any time to refute the Remonstrants. A conference was held in The Hague (the *Collatio Hagiensis*) from March 10 to May 20, 1611, to which six Arminians and six Reformed men were called. At this meeting the Reformed answered the five articles of the Remonstrants point by point.[43] This conference did not bring about the hoped for agreement and unity. In

40 Van Itterzon, *Bogerman*, 19-25; Morren, *Bogerman*, 40-1; Bangs, *Arminius*, 289-90.

41 Morren, *Bogerman*, 47-9; Van Itterzon, *Bogerman*, 25-6.

42 De Jong, *Crisis*, 243-5.

43 De Jong, *Crisis*, 52-6; 247-50.

the following years the divide only deepened. But this conference was important for laying out the basic issues that would later be addressed by the Synod of Dordt.

Bogerman was not present in The Hague, but he did appear at another conference in Amsterdam in 1615. At this conference thirty ministers gathered to discuss the problems plaguing the churches and appeal to the government to call a national synod.[44]

In God's providence, the political situation in the Netherlands was such that this was becoming more of a possibility. Beginning in 1566, the Dutch provinces were locked in combat with the Spanish in what became known as the Eighty Years' War. Although the official end of the War would not come until 1648 with the Peace of Westphalia, in 1609 the Twelve Years Truce was agreed upon by the two sides. The political peace made it possible to convene a national synod to deal with the ecclesiastical conflict that was brewing.

In addition, there were men in important positions in government that were keenly interested in the affairs in the church. One of these was Willem Lodewijk, stadholder of Friesland. He had a love for the Word of God and the Reformed faith and was a *boezemvriend* (bosom friend) of Bogerman. He kept abreast of the ecclesiastical situation and pulled strings to induce the government to call a national synod.[45]

His most important contribution was the influence he exerted on his cousin, Maurice, Prince of Orange. Maurice was the son of William the Silent and stadholder of the rest of the United Provinces, and, therefore, an influential politician. Prior to 1617, Maurice had been worshiping in churches that supported Arminius. But due in large part to the influence of his cousin, Maurice switched sides. On January 14, 1617, he called a meeting in The Hague and declared that he was going to fight to uphold the historic Reformed faith. At that time there were no churches in the city held by the Counter Remonstrants, so Maurice and his soldiers seized the large *Kloosterkerk* and held a worship service with 2,000 people in attendance. There Maurice confirmed that he was not going to have any further ecclesiastical

44 Van Itterzon, *Bogerman*, 36; Morren, *Bogerman*, 56.

45 L. H. Wagenaar, *Van strijd en overwinning: De groote synode van 1618 op '19, en wat aan haar voorafging* (Utrecht: G. J. A. Ruys, 1909), 68; Morren, *Bogerman*, 57-9.

relations with the Arminians.[46]

In the spring of the following year, Bogerman was asked by Maurice to take a leave of absence from Friesland and come to The Hague. Lodewijk gave his consent, and Bogerman went to The Hague for five months to preach in the *Kloosterkerk*. But Bogerman's mission was not only to preach in this Arminian stronghold. The Hague was also the seat of the Dutch government, and Bogerman was called upon to work with the government to call a synod. On June 15, 1618, the States General agreed to hold a national synod later that year in the city of Dordrecht.[47]

This period of Bogerman's life was important because through it he gained an intimate knowledge of the details of the doctrinal controversy. And, in addition, he earned the trust of the churches, who looked up to him as an orthodox, capable leader.

**President**

The Provincial Synod of Friesland met later that fall for the purpose of choosing delegates to the Synod of Dordt. Three ministers, including Bogerman, and three elders were delegated to represent the province in the deliberations.[48]

On October 17, a national day of prayer was called so that the churches could ask for God's blessing upon the Synod. And on November 13, the delegates gathered together for the first of what would be many sessions together. They met in the *Grote Kerk* in Dordrecht where Balthazar Lydius, the minister of that church, led the body in worship to God. From there the delegates walked next door to a building called the *Kloveniersdoelen* where the actual meetings would be held.[49]

In the second session held the next day, the officers of Synod were chosen. In choosing a man to serve as President, the delegates wanted someone who came from a province with little upheaval. This narrowed the list to a man from Friesland since this was the one province

46 Van Itterzon, *Bogerman*, 36-7; Morren, *Bogerman*, 59-62; De Jong, *Crisis*, 51.

47 Van Itterzon, *Bogerman*, 39; Morren, *Bogerman*, 63-4.

48 Van Itterzon, *Bogerman*, 42.

49 Morren, *Bogerman*, 66.

largely unaffected by the Arminian controversy; in fact, apparently there was only one Arminian minister in the whole province. In addition, the delegates wanted a man at the helm who had the trust of Maurice and Lodewijk, as well as a capable theologian who had been involved in the controversy for some time and was familiar with the arguments of the Arminians. The one man who met all these criteria was Bogerman, and he was duly appointed.[50]

Bogerman was an impressive presence at the head of the Synod.

> He was a very remarkable man physically and mentally. He had a fine presence – was tall, straight, and well proportioned. His forehead was high. His features were expressive and his eyes sparkling and piercing. A magnificent beard, of a light color like his hair, descended to his waist. He had a full voice, and his gestures, when he was excited (which was not seldom, for he was a man of strong passions), were very impressive. With intense convictions, he was impulsive and imperious in his manner of uttering them.[51]

Bogerman's appointment as President was opposed by the Remonstrants. They brought up his translation of the work by Beza and the way it prescribed dealing with heretics. And they also said that his preaching in the *Kloosterkerk* in The Hague was detrimental to discussion and helped deepen the divide.[52]

Throughout the course of the Synod, Bogerman would face opposition also. The government officials criticized him because they were concerned that the Synod was dragging on for too long and was costing the government too much money. The Remonstrants criticized his leadership relentlessly. Even some of his fellow delegates criticized him at times for decisions that he made.[53]

Despite all the criticism leveled against him, Bogerman proved

50 Van Itterzon, *Bogerman*, 42-3; Morren, *Bogerman*, 66. In other voting, the delegates chose Jacobus Rolandus (Amsterdam) and Hermannus Faukelius (Middelburg) as Vice Presidents, and Sebastianus Dammannus (Zutfen) and Festus Hommius (Leiden) as Clerks. All these men were known as staunch defenders of the Reformed faith over against the Arminians.

51 De Jong, *Crisis*, 57.

52 Van Itterzon, *Bogerman*, 43.

53 Van Itterzon, *Bogerman*, 43.

himself a capable leader. He was "a peace-loving president, who through patience and kindness was able to control the emotional and even quarrelsome natures of the delegates."[54]

One of the first issues that the Synod had to face was how to deal with the Remonstrants "both fairly and definitively." They wanted to hear from the Remonstrants themselves what they believed, but they did not want the Remonstrants themselves to decide in a sort of "counter-synod" who would appear before them. Therefore, during the fifth session, the assembly decided to send letters to thirteen known Remonstrant ministers demanding that they appear before the Synod within two weeks' time.[55]

In order to make good use of their time while they waited for the Remonstrants to appear, the Synod decided to enter into certain issues not directly related to the doctrinal or church political disagreements. This part of the Synod became known as the *Pro-Acta*. From November 19 to December 6, the Synod dealt with six major issues: a new Dutch translation of the Bible, Heidelberg Catechism preaching, catechetical instruction, the baptism of heathen children, the preparation of theological students for the ministry, and the censure of books.[56]

On December 6, the Remonstrants made their first appearance before the Synod. On December 7, their unofficial leader, Simon Episcopius, took his place opposite Bogerman. He launched into a long oration, saying, "Dear Jesus, from thy throne how much hast thou heard or seen against us, simple and innocent people." Later he said, "We have not kept before us, have not wished, have not sought anything else than that golden liberty which keeps the middle road between servitude and licentiousness." And he concluded,

> Therefore whosoever does not come here in such a frame of mind that he is ready to permit anyone to speak freely because he does not favor him, and judges or puts wrong to him whom he loves, truly he is not worthy that he has a voice in this gathering. Our friend must

54 De Jong, *Crisis*, 59.

55 De Jong, *Crisis*, 259.

56 Richard R. De Ridder, trans., *The Church Orders of the Sixteenth Century Reformed Churches of the Netherlands together with Their Social, Political, and Ecclesiastical Context* (Grand Rapids: Calvin Theological Seminary, 1987), 524-8; Van Itterzon, *Bogerman*, 44-50.

> be Plato, our friend Socrates, our friend the synod. Above all our rock must be the Truth.

The President was not impressed. "[H]e took the opportunity to admonish Episcopius for speaking out of turn – as he had not yet received permission from Synod to deliver his oration – and for hurling accusations against fellow-ministers so as to seek a following and to embitter his opponents." When Bogerman asked for a copy of the oration, Episcopius allegedly handed over a copy that was not identical to what he had said but was much milder in tone and language. When quizzed regarding the apparent discrepancy, Episcopius fired back that Bogerman and the others must have misunderstood him.[57]

Episcopius also argued that the Synod was actually another conference to discuss these theological differences. He wanted a conference of equal parties and full freedom for both sides. The Remonstrants presented a protest stating "that they do not consider this synod a legal judge about their opinions, and that therefore its judgment will be of no importance to them and to their churches." They gave two grounds for this statement: "1. because this synod is the other party; 2. because it is schismatic."[58] Bogerman disabused them of the notion. This was not, in fact, a conference or disputation between two equal parties but a Synod that was called to pass judgment on their false teachings.[59]

It appeared as if the Remonstrants were doing all they could to avoid facing the doctrinal issues, so finally Synod demanded of them that they present their views in writing. On December 13, they presented their opinion on the first article concerning predestination. A few days later, on December 17, they presented their opinions on the remaining four articles.[60]

The tactic of the Remonstrants was to obstruct the work of the Synod and bog down the proceedings in all sorts of technicalities

57 De Jong, *Crisis*, 60; Van Itterzon, *Bogerman*, 54-7.

58 De Ridder, *Church Orders*, 528.

59 Van Itterzon, *Bogerman*, 53, 58-63.

60 De Jong, *Crisis*, 261-8; Homer C. Hoeksema, *The Voice of Our Fathers: An Exposition of the Canons of Dordrecht* (Grand Rapids: Reformed Free Publishing Association, 1980), 103-9.

and evasions. There was even the hope among some of them that the foreign delegates would leave with the approach of winter and that their case might be dropped.[61] Bogerman tried to bear with them, but it became obvious that they were *ongehoorzaam* (disobedient) and *hardnekkiglijk* (stiff-necked).[62]

The Synod finally reached a point where no further progress could be made with the Remonstrants. One of the foreign delegates from the Palatinate, Abraham Scultetus, a professor at Heidelberg, advised Bogerman to send the Remonstrants out.[63]

Bogerman followed his advice. It was during the fifty-seventh session on January 14, that the usually patient Bogerman finally erupted.

> You boast that many foreign divines did not refuse to grant your request. Their moderation arose from a misunderstanding. They now declare that they were deceived by you. They say that you are no longer worthy of being heard by the Synod. You may pretend what you please, but the great point of your obstinacy is that you regard the Synod as a party in the case. Thus you have long delayed us. You have been treated with all gentleness, friendliness, toleration, patience, and simplicity. Go as you came. You began with lies and you end with them. You are full of fraud and double-dealing. You are not worthy that the Synod should treat with you further. Depart! Leave! You began with a lie, with a lie you ended! Go![64]

The Remonstrants left immediately, but "with much muttering." Episcopius' parting words were, "Lord God, judge the fraud and falsehood. Cast out of the church the malignant!"[65]

61 Van Itterzon, *Bogerman*, 76.

62 Sessions 40 and 41 of *Acta of Handelingen der Nationale Synode Dordrecht 1618-1619* (Leiden: Donner, 1883).

63 Van Itterzon, *Bogerman*, 73; Morren, *Bogerman*, 73.

64 De Jong, *Crisis*, 59.

65 John Hales, *Golden Remains of the Ever Memorable Mr. John Hales of Eaton College* (London: E. Pawlet, 1711), 460, https://books.google.com/books (accessed October 28, 2015). He wrote this letter on January 15, 1619. Episcopius' words in Latin were, "*Dominus Deus judicabit de fraudibus & medaciis…Exeo ex ecclesia malignantium*."

There was criticism from the other side of the bench also. Some of the delegates of the Synod were not pleased with Bogerman's handling of the Remonstrants. Some thought that the whole Synod should have decided to send them out, and not just the President. John Hales wrote a few days after the dismissal,

> Against Mr. Praeses [President] so rough handling the Remonstrants at their Dismission there are some exceptions taken by the Deputies themselves. …Lud. Crosius of Breme [Ludovicus Crocius of Bremen] signified that he perceived that Mr. Praeses in that business had been *paulo commotior*, and had let flip, *verba quaedam acerba*, which might well have been spared; that in so great an act, as that was, a little more advice and consideration might have been used. The Synod ought to have been consulted with, and a form of Dismission conceived and approved of by all, which should in the name of the Synod have been pronounced, and registered; whereas now the Synod stands indicted of all that unnecessary roughness which then was practiced. It had stood better with the Honor of the Synod to have held a more peaceable and passionless order.[66]

After the Remonstrants were dismissed, the Synod spent a great deal of time formulating the Canons. With the completion of the Canons and the end of the Arminian dispute, the foreign delegates were excused. On May 6, Bogerman led the body in prayer, and then they all retired to the *Grote Kerk* where they again worshiped and expressed gratitude to God. A few days later, on May 9, Bogerman bade farewell to the foreign delegates and thanked them for their labors. Each delegate received a commemorative coin – the foreign delegates' was gold while the Dutch delegates' was silver—minted for this historic occasion.[67]

Synod did not end with the departure of the foreign delegates, however. The Dutch delegates still had various matters to discuss, matters that concerned "the regulations for the churches of the motherland in particular." These decisions became known as the *Post-Acta*, and largely concerned the approval of a Church Order.[68]

66 Hales, *Golden Remains*, 461-2.

67 Morren, *Bogerman*, 75-7; Hoeksema, *Voice*, back cover.

68 De Ridder, *Church Orders*, 530-544, 559-585.

After more than five months and almost two-hundred sessions, the Synod of Dordt was finally over. In the last session on May 29, the delegates again went to the Great Church where Baltazar Lydius preached from Isaiah 12:1-3, part of which reads, "Behold, God is my salvation; I will trust, and not be afraid: for the Lord Jehovah is my strength and my song; he also is become my salvation." They then returned to the meeting place where Bogerman addressed them one last time.

> Thereafter the president, turning to the synodical delegation, thanked them one and all particularly for the work and advice with which they have helped this synod. He apologized that, overcome by various troubles, he could not do everything as he had wanted to or that the synod might have wanted, desiring that they would put up with his work done at this synod in good conscience. He in general offered to everyone all possible services, and prayed to God that they at last may be able to gather in that heavenly synod and there praise God unitedly forever.
>
> In this manner the assembly was finished and adjourned in the name of the Lord after solemn thanksgiving to God by the president and after mutual and friendly greeting and giving the right hand of fellowship with abundant testimony of brotherly unanimity and love.[69]

In the end, what took place at the Synod of Dordt was not the work of Bogerman or any other man. It was the work of the Holy Spirit leading the church into the truth. But in this work the Spirit was pleased to make use of the means of many gifted men who were called to that assembly. Bogerman was one of them. At the helm of the meeting God placed an extremely gifted man, a man with a love for the church, a man with a backbone of steel and belly full of fire when it came to the truth. By means of this man, as well as the other gifted men present at the Synod, God preserved his church.[70]

**Translator**

One of the first matters to reach the floor of Synod was whether

69 De Ridder, *Church Orders*, 584-5.

70 Van Itterzon, *Bogerman*, 131-5.

or not to commission a new Dutch translation of the Bible.[71] There were other translations, but they all had their weaknesses. Bogerman especially was insistent that there had to be a new translation. He argued that other countries had good translations, including the recently published and highly acclaimed King James Version (1611). Synod agreed. It was decided that six men would carry out the work, three translating the Old Testament while three worked on the New Testament. Bogerman was assigned to the task of translating the Old Testament, and with him were chosen Guilhelmus Baudartius (minister at Zutphen) and Gerson Bucerus (minister at Veere). The New Testament translators were Jacobus Rolandus (minister at Amsterdam), Hermannus Faukelius (minister at Middelburg), and Petrus Cornelii (minister at Enkhuizen).

Bogerman was chosen to this work in part because of his international renown as a Hebrew scholar. But he was also chosen because of his commitment to the Bible as the Word of God and his godliness. What Luther once wrote about translators was certainly true of Bogerman: "Ah, translating is not every man's skill as the mad saints imagine. It requires a right, devout, honest, sincere, God-fearing, Christian, trained, informed, and experienced heart."[72]

The plan was to begin work on the translation three months after the completion of the Synod and have the translation completed in four years' time. But this was not to be. Work did not begin until many years later. This was due to the fact that Bogerman had a great deal of work to do in implementing the decisions of the Synod and helping to depose the Remonstrant preachers. In addition, a number of the translators had churches to pastor still. And to top it all off, war with Spain broke out again, and the government was not ready to underwrite the work. And while they waited for the government, two of the original New Testament translators–Faukelius and Cornelii – died were replaced by Festus Hommius and Antonius Walaeus.

Bogerman and his fellow Old Testament translators decided to

71 For what follows, cf. De Jong, *Crisis*, 121-142; Van Itterzon, *Bogerman*, 116-119; Morren, *Bogerman*, 93-97.

72 Luther, quoted in David J. Engelsma, *Modern Bible Versions* (South Holland, IL: Evangelism Committee of the Protestant Reformed Church, 1999), 24.

move to Leiden so that they could work together there. They met in the home of Bogerman for the first time on November 13, 1626, exactly eight years after the start of the Synod of Dordt. They decided to split each book of the Bible into three parts and each translate one of those parts on their own. When they were finished, they would meet together and go over the translation verse by verse. The Old Testament committee suffered a heavy loss in 1631 when Bucerus died. Bogerman and Baudartius discussed adding another man, but decided to continue on their own. By September 4, 1632, their draft was completed, four years after the New Testament committee had finished their work.

Once the drafts were completed, they were presented to a college of revisers who double-checked their work. Finally, on July 29, 1637, more than ten years after the project began, a copy of the published *Staten Bijbel* was presented to the States General. Bogerman and Baudartius were not present; they were completely worn out by the strain of their labors.

**Professor**

Bogerman's gifts were evident to all in the churches. He was a good preacher, a sound theologian, a respected leader, and a gifted linguist, fluent in Hebrew, Chaldean, Aramaic, Greek, Latin, and French.[73] Because of this, Bogerman was called to be professor at Franeker already on June 30, 1614. But the church in Leeuwarden refused to release him, in part because of the amount of money they had paid to have him be their minister.[74] Franeker called him again on August 9, 1633. He agreed to come, but again Leeuwarden refused to release him. Finally, on January 31, 1634, Leeuwarden reluctantly consented. But now the issue was the Bible translation. Bogerman refused to leave the work unfinished, and told the curators of Franeker that he would not come until it was completed. Finally, on December 7, 1636, Bogerman moved to Franeker and took up his work as a professor of theology there.[75]

But Bogerman was not able to labor there long. He came to

73 Van Itterzon, *Bogerman*, 133-4.

74 Van Itterzon, *Bogerman*, 33; Morren, *Bogerman*, 51-2.

75 Van Itterzon, *Bogerman*, 120-124; Morren, *Bogerman*, 83, 98-101.

Franeker sick and exhausted from the labors of the preceding years in the controversy with the Arminians and with his work on the translation of the Bible. Just a few months later, he and his wife thought it necessary to write their will. On September 11, 1637, Bogerman died.[76]

**Part 2: The Influence of Bogerman on the First Head**

After Bogerman drove out Episcopius and his comrades, the Synod decided to determine what the Remonstrants believed from their writings. They adopted the following procedure: in the morning each of the nineteen delegations would meet privately to study the writings of the Remonstrants, and then in the afternoon sessions they would meet as a body to deliberate and discuss. Although some wanted these afternoon sessions to be open to the public, Bogerman judged it best to meet in closed session so that any disagreements between the delegates would not be made public and used as fodder by the Remonstrants.[77] The wisdom of this decision became evident when Gomarus challenged Matthias Martinius of Bremen to a duel on the floor of Synod because the latter was defending the position of the Remonstrants.[78] By March 21, 1619, the delegates had finished reading and discussing all the opinions.

Once the discussion had ended, Bogerman observed that he saw a great deal of unity in the opinions presented by the various delegations. He informed the Synod that during his spare time he had composed a draft of the Canons, and that on the following day he would dictate that draft. He advised each delegation to send one man to come the next day and write down his dictation.[79]

On the following day, March 22, Bogerman began by offering some suggestions on the format and style of the Canons. Although the written opinions of most of the delegations were technical in nature, Bogerman believed that the Canons should be written in a popular style. He also believed that after stating the truth positively, each article ought to end with a rejection of the errors of the Remonstrants.

76 Van Itterzon, *Bogerman*, 129; Morren, *Bogerman*, 101.
77 Van Itterzon, *Bogerman*, 82.
78 Van Itterzon, *Bogerman*, 79.
79 Sinnema, "Drafting," 295.

The rest of the morning was spent dictating his draft on the First Head concerning predestination. That afternoon he dictated the rejection of errors for Head I as well as the draft of the Second Head with the corresponding rejection of errors.[80]

A number of delegates were unhappy with Bogerman for doing this. They did not want the final product to be composed by one man, but they pushed for a committee to take the various opinions and draft a final copy. Others, such as Lubbertus and Scultetus, were content to let Bogerman do the work. In the end, it was decided to form a committee of nine men to draft the Canons. Bogerman was chosen, as were the two vice presidents, Jacobus Rolandus and Hermannus Faukelius. Besides these three, there were three Dutch delegates chosen (Johannes Polyander, professor at Leiden; Antonius Walaeus, professor at Middelburg; and Jacobus Triglandius, minister of Amsterdam) and three foreign delegates (George Carleton of England, Abraham Scultetus of Heidelberg, and Johannes Deodati of Geneva). After the committee finished a draft of one of the Heads, opportunity was given for the other delegates to make suggestions and amendments. Finally, on April 23, during the 135th and 136th sessions, the final edition of the Canons was read, and all the delegates signed their names to each of the Five Heads of Doctrine.[81]

None of Bogerman's work on Head II was incorporated into the final edition of the Canons, due to differences among the delegates about the matter of the atonement.[82] But it is readily apparent from a comparison of Bogerman's concept of Head I and the final edition of the same Head that the drafting committee used Bogerman's draft as the foundation for their work. In fact, the two are nearly identical, both in form and content. Especially is this noteworthy in the definitions of election and reprobation (Articles 7 and 15).

80 Sinnema, "Drafting," 296; Godfrey, "Popular and Catholic," 245.

81 Van Itterzon, *Bogerman*, 85-6; Sinnema, "Drafting," 297-306, 310-311.

82 For more on the history surrounding this head of doctrine, cf. W. Robert Godfrey, "Tensions within International Calvinism: The Debate on the Atonement at the Synod of Dort, 1618-1619" (Ph.D. diss., Stanford University, 1974). One of the chapters of this dissertation was published as "Reformed Thought on the Extent of the Atonement to 1618," *Westminster Theological Journal* 37, no. 2 (Winter 1975): 133-171.

One similarity worth noting is that Bogerman's draft of Head I, like the final edition of the Canons, approaches the truth of predestination from an infralapsarian perspective. The simplest explanation for this is that Bogerman was summarizing the position of the other delegates, of which the vast majority favored the infralapsarian position. Whether Bogerman himself favored infralapsarianism is uncertain. Bavinck includes Bogerman as one of the men who "warmly advocated and ably defended" the infralapsarian position, while also admitting that "at times he used very strong and hard expressions" that bordered on supralapsarianism.[83] One historian of the Reformed churches lists Bogerman as a supralapsarian,[84] while Bogerman's biographers insist that he was infralapsarian.[85] Whatever the case may have been, Bogerman was satisfied to present the Reformed position from an infralapsarian perspective.

There are a few noticeable differences between Bogerman's draft and the Canons. First of all, there are minor differences in format. Bogerman proposed having two sections in Head I that refute the errors of the Arminians, one refuting errors concerning election and the other refuting errors concerning reprobation. In the final edition of the Canons the drafting committee combined these two sections into one.

In the second place, there are minor differences in content. Bogerman included long lists of proof texts at the end of several articles, but these are absent from the Canons. Bogerman's lengthy Article 12 became Articles 12 and 13 in the Canons. The well-known Article 17 in the Canons was not found in Bogerman's edition.[86] Bogerman included an epilogue, but the drafting committee changed this into Article 18 in the Canons. Bogerman included the rejection of four-

83 Herman Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2004), 2:368n84, 367.

84 J. H. Scholten, *De leer der Hervormde Kerk in hare grondbeginselen* (Leiden: P. Engels, 1870), 2:603.

85 Van der Tuuk, *Bogerman*, 226, 349n299; Van Itterzon, *Bogerman*, 132.

86 For more on the history of this article, cf. Cornelis P. Venema, "The Election and Salvation of the Children of Believers Who Die in Infancy: A Study of Article I/17 of the Canons of Dort," *Mid-America Journal of Theology* 17 (2006): 57-100.

teen errors, while the Canons include the rejection of only nine. In his rejection of errors, Bogerman simply states the errors, but in the Canons there are extended refutations of those errors as well.

Although there are these differences between Bogerman's draft and the final edition of the Canons, the similarities are far more numerous and substantial and far outweigh the differences. Bogerman's hand is clearly seen in the finished product. To him we essentially owe the First Head of the Canons on predestination.

What follows now is my translation from the Latin of Bogerman's draft of Head I. For the sake of comparison, I have included in the right hand column the corresponding articles of Head I from the final edition of the Canons.[87]

87 Bogerman's draft is found in D. J. De Groot, "Stukken met betrekking tot de opstelling der Dordtsche Canones." *Bijdragen en Mededelingen van het Historisch Genootschap* 58 (1937): 134-210, http://resources.huygens.knaw.nl/retroboeken/bmhg/#page=213&accessor=toc&source=58 (accessed October 14, 2015). For the final edition of the Canons, I used the translation found in *The Confessions and the Church Order of the Protestant Reformed Churches* (Grandville, MI: Protestant Reformed Churches in America, 2005), 155-162. The Latin original of the Canons is readily available in Schaff's *Creeds*, 3:550-558.

**Bogerman –**
**First Head of Doctrine**

Article 1. As all men have sinned in Adam, lie under the curse, and are deserving of eternal death, God would have done no injustice by leaving them all to perish, and delivering them over to condemnation on account of sin, "for the wages of sin is death." Rom. 6[:23].

**Canons –**
**First Head of Doctrine**

Article 1. As all men have sinned in Adam, lie under the curse, and are deserving of eternal death, God would have done no injustice by leaving them all to perish, and delivering them over to condemnation on account of sin, according to the words of the apostle, Romans 3:19, "that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty

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| | before God." And verse 23: "for all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God." And Romans 6:23: "for the wages of sin is death." |
| Article 2. But in this the love of God was manifested, that he sent his only begotten Son into the world, that whosoever believeth on him should not perish, but have everlasting life. I John 4[:9], John 3[:16]. | Article 2. But in this the love of God was manifested, that he sent his only begotten Son into the world, that whosoever believeth on him should not perish, but have everlasting life. I John 4:9. John 3:16. |
| Article 3. And that men may be brought to believe, God sends the messengers of this gospel to whom he will and at what time he will; by whose ministry Christ crucified is preached and men are summoned to faith in him. "How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher?" Rom. 10[:14]. | Article 3. And that men may be brought to believe, God mercifully sends the messengers of these most joyful tidings, to whom he will and at what time he pleaseth; by whose ministry men are called to repentance and faith in Christ crucified. Romans 10:14, 15: "How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach except they be sent?" |
| Article 4. The wrath of God abideth upon those who stubbornly reject this gospel. But such as receive it, embracing the Savior by a true and living faith, are by him delivered from the wrath of God and destruction. | Article 4. The wrath of God abideth upon those who believe not this gospel. But such as receive it, and embrace Jesus the Savior by a true and living faith, are by him delivered from the wrath of God, and from destruction, and have the gift of eternal life conferred upon them. |
| Article 5. The guilt of this unbelief | Article 5. The cause or guilt of this |

as also of all sin and ruin is in man; whereas faith in Jesus Christ and salvation through him is the free gift of God, according to the Scriptures: "By grace ye are saved […] not of yourselves, it is the gift of God." Eph. 2[:8]. Unto you it is given to believe in Christ. Phil. 1[:29].

unbelief as well as of all other sins, is no wise in God, but in man himself; whereas faith in Jesus Christ, and salvation through him is the free gift of God, as it is written: "By grace ye are saved through faith, and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God," Ephesians 2:8. "And unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on him," etc. Philippians 1:29.

Article 6. Moreover what God does in time, he decreed to do from eternity, for known unto him are all his works from eternity. Acts 15:18. And herein is especially displayed the profound and lofty and also the just and merciful discrimination between men equally involved in ruin; or that decree of election and reprobation, revealed in the Word of God, which as perverse, impure, and unstable men distort unto their own destruction, thus to holy and pious souls it affords ineffable consolation.

Article 6. That some receive the gift of faith from God, and others do not receive it proceeds from God's eternal decree, "For known unto God are all his works from the beginning of the world," Acts 15:18. "Who worketh all things after the counsel of his will," Ephesians 1:11. According to which decree, he graciously softens the hearts of the elect, however obstinate, and inclines them to believe, while he leaves the non-elect in his just judgment to their own wickedness and obduracy. And herein is especially displayed the profound, and merciful, and at the same time the righteous discrimination between men, equally involved in ruin; or that decree of election and reprobation, revealed in the Word of God, which though men of perverse, impure and unstable minds wrest to their own destruction, yet to holy and pious souls affords unspeakable consolation.

Article 7. Election to salvation is the

Article 7. Election is the unchange-

unchangeable decree of God, whereby from eternity or before the foundation of the world, he hath out of mere and free grace, according to the sovereign good pleasure of his own will, chosen, from the whole human race, which had fallen through their own fault, from their primitive state of rectitude, into sin and destruction, some who are neither better nor more deserving than others but involved in one common misery, to salvation in Jesus Christ. This elect number he hath decreed to give to his Son, to be kept by him, and effectually to call and draw them to his communion by his Word and Spirit, to bestow upon them true faith, justification and sanctification; and having powerfully preserved them in the fellowship of his Son, finally, to glorify them for the demonstration of his mercy, and for the praise of his glorious grace. This grace God prepared from eternity and in time confers only to us; nothing in the world, neither Christianity nor salvation nor certainty of salvation was or ever will be the basis. Eph. 1; Rom. 8; Rom. 9; Acts 13; II Thess. 2; John 6; John 17.

able purpose of God, whereby, before the foundation of the world, he hath out of mere grace, according to the sovereign good pleasure of his own will, chosen, from the whole human race, which had fallen through their own fault, from their primitive state of rectitude, into sin and destruction, a certain number of persons to redemption in Christ, whom he from eternity appointed the Mediator and Head of the elect, and the foundation of Salvation.

This elect number, though by nature neither better nor more deserving than the others, but with them involved in one common misery, God hath decreed to give to Christ, to be saved by him, and effectually to call and draw them to his communion by his Word and Spirit, to bestow upon them true faith, justification and sanctification; and having powerfully preserved them in the fellowship of his Son, finally, to glorify them for the demonstration of his mercy, and for the praise of his glorious grace; as it is written: "According as he hath chosen us in him, before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy, and without blame before him in love; having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will, to the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted

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| | in the beloved," Ephesians 1:4, 5, 6. And elsewhere: "Whom he did predestinate, them he also called; and whom he called, them he also justified; and whom he justified, them he also glorified," Romans 8:30. |
| Article 8. According to the Scriptures, there are not various decrees of election, but one, or one concerning the good pleasure, purpose, or counsel of the divine will, or – this is the same – by one decree of election God hath chosen us from eternity to glory and grace, or to salvation and the way of salvation, or to the end and the means by which he desires to bring us to salvation. II Thess. 2; I Peter 1; Rom. 8; Eph. 1. | Article 8. There are not various decrees of election, but one and the same decree respecting all those, who shall be saved, both under the Old and New Testament: since the scripture declares the good pleasure, purpose and counsel of the divine will to be one, according to which he hath chosen us from eternity, both to grace and glory, to salvation and the way of salvation, which he hath ordained that we should walk therein. |
| Article 9. And likewise the election of these persons whom God hath chosen from eternity was not founded upon some foreseen faith or considered good quality, disposition, dignity, cause, or condition in man on which it depended and foresaw would be fulfilled, considering the light of nature properly or using the revelation of the gospel, uprightness or faith, the obedience of faith, repentance, conversion, holiness and piety or perseverance in these: but election is the work of mere grace and mercy and the fountain or source of all saving gifts. Thus we are not elect on account of all the above or | Article 9. This election was not founded upon foreseen faith, and the obedience of faith, holiness, or any other good quality of disposition in man, as the pre-requisite, cause or condition on which it depended; but men are chosen to faith and to the obedience of faith, holiness, etc., therefore election is the fountain of every saving good; from which proceed faith, holiness, and the other gifts of salvation, and finally eternal life itself, as its fruits and effects, according to that of the apostle: "He hath chosen us (not because we were) but that we should be holy, and without blame, before him in love," Ephesians 1:4. |

some of these things or according to those things which were foreseen or the things foreseen to exist, but he hath chosen us to faith, the obedience of faith, holiness, etc., or as such we were, and consequently these things and the other saving gifts are the fruits and effects of divine election, not the cause or antecedent of it.

Article 10. Furthermore the only cause of this election everywhere celebrated in Scripture is the good pleasure, purpose, or counsel of the divine will, which doth not consist herein, that out of all possible conditions – among which are also the works of the law – or out of all things appointed God chose the act of faith in itself ignoble and the imperfect obedience of faith as a condition of salvation and graciously considers it as perfect and desires to esteem it worthy of the reward of eternal life – without being able to affirm the shame of Christ's merit – but it consists in this, that God chose us, unworthy and deserving the opposite, out of the common mass of sinners to salvation and faith and as a peculiar people to himself. Eph. 1; Matt. 11; Rom. 9; Mark 13; Rom. 8; John 13 and 17.

Article 10. The good pleasure of God is the sole cause of this gracious election; which doth not consist herein, that out of all possible qualities and actions of men God has chosen some as a condition of salvation; but that he was pleased out of the common mass of sinners to adopt some certain persons as a peculiar people to himself, as it is written, "For the children being not yet born neither having done any good or evil," etc., it was said (namely to Rebecca): "the elder shall serve the younger; as it is written, Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated," Romans 9:11, 12, 13. "And as many as were ordained to eternal life believed," Acts 13:48.

Article 11. Moreover this election, as it is the act of the most wise, unchangeable, omniscient, and omnipotent God, thus it cannot be interrupted nor

Article 11. And as God himself is most wise, unchangeable, omniscient and omnipotent, so the election made by him can neither be interrupted nor

changed, recalled or annulled, neither can the chosen people be cast away nor the number of the elect be diminished. Rom. 8, 11; Matt. 24; II Tim. 2.

changed, recalled or annulled; neither can the elect be cast away, nor their number diminished.

Article 12. The elect in due time, though in various degrees and in diverse measures, attain from God the assurance of this eternal choice of God's unchanging election of grace to salvation, not by prying into the secret and deep things of God, but by observing in themselves, with a spiritual joy and holy pleasure, the infallible fruits of election pointed out in the Word of God, when with deep feeling they humble themselves before God, adore and proclaim the depth of his mercies, cleanse themselves, and are kindled by the spirit of adoption to a fiery love for him who first manifested so great love towards them, to a zeal for righteousness and all good works, to constancy and filial confidence under the cross and temptations according to the example of the elect saints who are everywhere recorded in Scripture. This doctrine of election and the consideration of it by the child of God are so far from sinking men in carnal security or from encouraging remissness in the observance of the divine commands; this, by the just judgment of God, usually happens to those who while claiming to be conscientious and pious, care nothing for idle and wanton trifling with these mysteries without any reverence of God.

Article 12. The elect in due time, though in various degrees and in different measures, attain the assurance of this their eternal and unchangeable election, not by inquisitively prying into the secret and deep things of God, but by observing in themselves with a spiritual joy and holy pleasure, the infallible fruits of election pointed out in the Word of God - such as a true faith in Christ, filial fear, a godly sorrow for sin, a hungering and thirsting after righteousness, etc.

Article 13. The sense and certainty of this election afford to the children of God additional matter for daily humiliation before him, for adoring the depth of his mercies, for cleansing themselves, and rendering grateful returns of ardent love to him, who first manifested so great love towards them. The consideration of this doctrine of election is so far from encouraging remissness in the observance of the divine commands, or from sinking men in carnal security, that these, in the just judgment of God, are the usual effects of rash presumption, or of idle and wanton trifling with the grace of election, in those who refuse to walk in the ways of the elect.

Article 13. As God has taken care that this doctrine of divine election was proclaimed by the prophets, by his own Son, and the apostles, and declared in sacred Scripture, according to the incomprehensibility of his wisdom and good pleasure, to the glory of his most holy name and the manifold good of the church and her solid comfort in life and death, so in the same church – for whom this pearl was peculiarly designed – it is to be proclaimed in due time for these same purposes with the spirit of discretion, piety, and holiness, without any curious, untimely, and unedifying searching of the secret ways of the Most High, which either uselessly torments the minds of the pious, or draws them away from the doctrine which is according to godliness.

Article 14. As the doctrine of divine election by the most wise counsel of God, was declared by the prophets, by Christ himself, and by the apostles, and is clearly revealed in the Scriptures, both of the Old and New Testament, so it is still to be published in due time and place in the Church of God, for which it was peculiarly designed, provided it be done with reverence, in the spirit of discretion and piety, for the glory of God's most holy name, and for enlivening and comforting his people, without vainly attempting to investigate the secret ways of the Most High. Acts 20:27; Romans 11:33, 34; 12:3; Hebrews 6:17, 18.

Article 14. Scripture especially commends to us this eternal and free grace of our election, because it further testifies that not all men are elect, but that some certain ones are not elect, or are in the eternal election of God passed by, whom namely God out of his most free, most just, and irreprehensible good pleasure unchangeably decreed to relinquish in the common misery into which they have by their own fault plunged themselves, and not to call efficaciously or to give true faith in his Son, not to regenerate, not to justify, not to glorify: but having been left in their own ways and justly hardened,

Article 15. What peculiarly tends to illustrate and recommend to us the eternal and unmerited grace of election, is the express testimony of sacred Scripture, that not all, but some only are elected, while others are passed by in the eternal election of God; whom God, out of his sovereign, most just, irreprehensible and unchangeable good pleasure, hath decreed to leave in the common misery into which they have willfully plunged themselves, and not to bestow upon them saving faith and the grace of conversion; but leaving them in his just judgment to follow their own ways, at last for the

not only on account of their unbelief but all their original and actual sins, finally to damn and to punish them forever for the declaration of his own justice according to their own merit. And this is the decree of reprobation which by no means makes God the author of sin (the very thought of which is blasphemy), but declares him to be an awful, irreprehensible judge and avenger thereof.

Article 15. Those who do not yet feel within themselves a true faith in Christ, filial fear of God, sorrow for sins against God, peace of conscience, an earnest endeavor after filial obedience, glorying in God through Christ, prayers of the saints and concern for pious exercises, the testimony finally of the Spirit of adoption whereby we cry Abba Father, and other similar evidences of election, ought not despair or rashly count themselves among the number of the reprobate – which is known only to God – but diligently to use the means which God hath promised for working these and similar things in us and devoutly and humbly to expect a season of grace, when God is also found by them, who does not seek and the Holy Spirit never teaches that we rashly consider either ourselves or others as reprobates, but on the contrary he desires to mark the whole church – in which are also hypocrites – by the judgment of charity with the title of the elect through his

declaration of his justice, to condemn and punish them forever, not only on account of their unbelief, but also for all their other sins. And this is the decree of reprobation which by no means makes God the author of sin (the very thought of which is blasphemy), but declares him to be an awful, irreprehensible, and righteous judge and avenger thereof.

Article 16. Those who do not yet experience a lively faith in Christ, an assured confidence of soul, peace of conscience, an earnest endeavor after filial obedience, and glorying in God through Christ, efficaciously wrought in them, and do nevertheless persist in the use of the means which God hath appointed for working these graces in us, ought not to be alarmed at the mention of reprobation, nor to rank themselves among the reprobate, but diligently to persevere in the use of means, and with ardent desires, devoutly and humbly to wait for a season of richer grace. Much less cause have they to be terrified by the doctrine of reprobation, who, though they seriously desire to be turned to God, to please him only, and to be delivered from the body of death, cannot yet reach that measure of holiness and faith to which they aspire; since a merciful God has promised that he will not quench the smoking flax, nor break the bruised reed. But this doctrine is

servants. Moreover, much less ought those to count themselves reprobates who are engaged in the way of a serious desire to be turned to God and are affected with a sincere care and concern to be pleasing to God and transforming life for the better: the Lord promises that he will not quench the smoking flax nor break the bruised reed.

justly terrible to those, who, regardless of God and of the Savior Jesus Christ, have wholly given themselves up to the cares of the world, and the pleasures of the flesh, so long as they are not seriously converted to God.

[*There is no equivalent in the Bogerman manuscript*.]

Article 17. Since we are to judge of the will of God from his Word, which testifies that the children of believers are holy, not by nature, but in virtue of the covenant of grace, in which they, together with the parents, are comprehended, godly parents have no reason to doubt of the election and salvation of their children, whom it pleaseth God to call out of this life in their infancy.

Epilogue: To those who murmur at the grace of free election, and the severity of just reprobation, we respond with the apostle: "Nay, but, O man, who art thou that repliest against God?" [Rom. 9:20]. Therefore we conclude this with the same apostle: "O the depths of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out! For who hath known the mind of the Lord, or who hath been his counsellor? or who hath first given to him, and it shall be recompensed unto him again? For of

Article 18. To those who murmur at the free grace of election, and just severity of reprobation, we answer with the apostle: "Nay, but, O man, who art thou that repliest against God?" Romans 9:20, and quote the language of our Savior: "Is it not lawful for me to do what I will with my own?" Matthew 20:15. And therefore with holy adoration of these mysteries, we exclaim in the words of the apostle: "O the depths of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out! For who

him, and through him, and to him are all things: to whom be glory for ever. Amen." [Rom. 11:33-36].

**Bogerman –**
**Rejection of Errors on Election**

Error 1. The will of God to save those who would believe and would persevere to the end of life in faith and the obedience of faith is the whole and entire decree of predestination or election unto salvation, and that nothing else concerning this is revealed in the gospel.

Error 2. There are various kinds of

hath known the mind of the Lord, or who hath been his counsellor? or who hath first given to him, and it shall be recompensed unto him again? For of him, and through him, and to him are all things: to whom be glory for ever. - Amen."

**Canons –**
**Rejection of Errors**

Error 1. Who teach: That the will of God to save those who would believe and would persevere in faith and in the obedience of faith, is the whole and entire decree of election unto salvation, and that nothing else concerning this decree has been revealed in God's Word.

For these deceive the simple and plainly contradict the Scriptures, which declare that God will not only save those who will believe, but that he has also from eternity chosen certain particular persons to whom above others he in time will grant both faith in Christ and perseverance; as it written: "I manifested thy name unto the men whom thou gavest me out of the world," John 17:6. "And as many as were ordained to eternal life believed," Acts 13:48. And: "Even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blemish before him in love," Ephesians 1:4.

Error 2. Who teach: That there are

election of God: the one general and indefinite, the other particular and definite; and that the latter in turn is either incomplete, revocable, non-decisive, and conditional, or complete, irrevocable, decisive, and absolute.

various kinds of election of God unto eternal life: the one general and indefinite, the other particular and definite; and that the latter in turn is either incomplete, revocable, non-decisive and conditional, or complete, irrevocable, decisive and absolute. Likewise: that there is one election unto faith, and another unto salvation, so that election can be unto justifying faith, without being a decisive election unto salvation. For this is a fancy of men's minds, invented regardless of the Scriptures, whereby the doctrine of election is corrupted, and this golden chain of our salvation is broken: "And whom he foreordained, them he also called; and whom he called, them he also justified; and whom he justified, them he also glorified," Romans 8:30.

Error 3. The good pleasure of mere and free grace, purpose, or counsel of God in the decree of election consists in this, that God out of many possible conditions, among which are also the ability to fulfill the law exactly after the destination in the death of Christ, graciously considers the undeserving act of faith and its imperfect obedience as a condition communicating salvation and worthy of the reward of eternal life.

Error 3. Who teach: That the good pleasure and purpose of God, of which Scripture makes mention in the doctrine of election, does not consist in this, that God chose certain persons rather than others, but in this that he chose out of all possible conditions (among which are also the works of the law), or out of the whole order of things, the act of faith which from its very nature is undeserving, as well as its incomplete obedience, as a condition of salvation, and that he would graciously consider this in itself as a complete obedience and count it worthy of the reward of eternal life. For

by this injurious error the pleasure of God and the merits of Christ are made of none effect, and men are drawn away by useless questions from the truth of gracious justification and from the simplicity of Scripture, and this declaration of the Apostle is charged as untrue: "Who saved us, and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before times eternal." II Timothy 1:9.

Error 4. God neither did nor could choose us by one and the same decree to both salvation and faith, nor did he choose all those whom he chose to faith to salvation.

[*Cf. Error 2 for a similar statement*.]

Error 5. In the election unto faith this condition is beforehand demanded, namely, that man should be pious, humble, meek, and fit for eternal life.

Error 4. Who teach: that in the election unto faith this condition is beforehand demanded, namely, that man should use the light of nature aright, be pious, humble, meek, and fit for eternal life, as if on these things election were in any way dependent. For this savors of the teaching of Pelagius, and is opposed to the doctrine of the apostle, when he writes: "Among whom we also all once lived in the lust of our flesh, doing the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, even as the rest; but God being rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead through our

trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (by grace have ye been saved), and raised us up with him, and made us to sit with him in heavenly places, in Christ Jesus, that in the ages to come he might show the exceeding riches of his grace in kindness towards us in Christ Jesus; for by grace have ye been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not of works, that no man should glory," Ephesians 2:3-9.

Error 5. Who teach: That the incomplete and non-decisive election of particular persons to salvation occurred because of a foreseen faith, conversion, holiness, godliness, which either began or continued for some time; but that the complete and decisive election occurred because of foreseen perseverance unto the end in faith, conversion, holiness and godliness; and that this is the gracious and evangelical worthiness, for the sake of which he who is chosen, is more worthy than he who is not chosen; and that therefore faith, the obedience of faith, holiness, godliness and perseverance are not fruits of the unchangeable election unto glory, but are conditions, which, being required beforehand, were foreseen as being met by those who will be fully elected, and are causes without which the unchangeable election to glory does not occur.

This is repugnant to the entire

Error 6. The election of particular persons to salvation occurred because of a foreseen or considered faith and its obedience, likewise because of a foreseen conversion, holiness, godliness, which either began or continued for some time or endured to the end of life depending on whether election is either incomplete and non-decisive or complete and decisive, and that this is the gracious and evangelical worthiness, for the sake of which he who is chosen, is more worthy than he who is not chosen.

Error 7. Faith, the obedience of faith, holiness, godliness and perseverance are not fruits or effects of the immutable election unto glory, but are the prerequisite and foreseen conditions and causes without which election does not occur.

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| | Scripture, which constantly inculcates this and similar declarations: Election is not out of works, but of him that calleth. Romans 9:11. "As many as were ordained to eternal life believed," Acts 13:48. "He chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy," Ephesians 1:4. "Ye did not choose me, but I chose you," John 15:16. "But if it be of grace, it is no more of works," Romans 11:6. "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son," I John 4:10. |
| Error 8. Not every election unto salvation is unchangeable, but that some of the elect can yet perish and do indeed perish. | Error 6. Who teach: That not every election unto salvation is unchangeable, but that some of the elect, any decree of God notwithstanding, can yet perish and do indeed perish. By which gross error they make God to be changeable, and destroy the comfort which the godly obtain out of the firmness of their election, and contradict the Holy Scripture, which teaches, that the elect can not be lead astray, Matthew 24:24; that Christ does not lose those whom the Father gave him, John 6:39; and that God hath also glorified those whom he foreordained, called and justified. Romans 8:30. |
| Error 9. No one, unless in the very moment of death or dying in faith, is considered by God to be completely elect. | *[There is no equivalent in the Canons.]* |

Error 10. There is in this life no fruit and no consciousness of the unchangeable election to glory, nor any certainty, except it be contingent.

Error 7. Who teach: That there is in this life no fruit and no consciousness of the unchangeable election to glory, nor any certainty, except that which depends on a changeable and uncertain condition. For not only is it absurd to speak of an uncertain certainty, but also contrary to the experience of the saints, who by virtue of the consciousness of their election rejoice with the Apostle and praise this favor of God, Ephesians 1; who according to Christ's admonition rejoice with his disciples that their names are written in heaven, Luke 10:20; who also place the consciousness of their election over against the fiery darts of the devil, asking: "Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect?" Romans 8:33.

**Bogerman – Rejection of Errors on Reprobation**

Error 1. God, simply by virtue of the good pleasure of his will, did not decide either to leave anyone in the fall of Adam and in the common state of sin and condemnation, or to pass anyone by in the sufficient and efficacious communication of grace which is necessary for faith and conversion.

**Canons – Rejection of Errors**

Error 8. Who teach: That God, simply by virtue of his righteous will, did not decide either to leave anyone in the fall of Adam and in the common state of sin and condemnation, or to pass anyone by in the communication of grace which is necessary for faith and conversion. For this is firmly decreed: "He hath mercy on whom he will, and whom he will he hardeneth," Romans 9:18. And also this: "Unto you it is given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it is not given," Matthew 13:11. Likewise:

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| | "I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that thou didst hide these things from the wise and understanding, and didst reveal them unto babes; yea, Father, for so it was well-pleasing in thy sight," Matthew 11:25, 26. |
| Error 2. God did not decree to reprobate or damn anyone on account of original sin, but they were reprobated and damned only on account of their own actual sins which they could have avoided. | [*There is no equivalent in the Canons*.] |
| Error 3. There are various kinds of the reprobation of God, the one general and indefinite, the other particular and definite and that the latter in turn is either incomplete, revocable, non-decisive, and conditional, or complete, irrevocable, decisive, and absolute. | [*There is no equivalent in the Canons*.] |
| Error 4. The reason why God sends the gospel to one people rather than to another is not merely and solely the good pleasure of God, but human unworthiness. | Error 9. Who teach: That the reason why God sends the gospel to one people rather than to another is not merely and solely the good pleasure of God, but rather the fact that one people is better and worthier than another to whom the gospel is not communicated. For this Moses denies, addressing the people of Israel as follows: "Behold unto Jehovah thy God belongeth heaven and the heaven of heavens, the earth, with all that is therein. Only Jehovah had a delight in |

thy fathers to love him, and he chose their seed after them, even you above all peoples, as at this day," Deuteronomy 10:14,15. And Christ said: "Woe unto thee, Chorazin! woe unto thee, Bethsaida! for if the might works had been done in Tyre and Sidon which were done in you, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes," Matthew 11:21. ●

# John Calvin Research Bibliography

Compiled by Ronald Cammenga

**#4: Calvin's Doctrine of the One, True, and Triune God**

**Related Topics:**

**The evil of idolatry**

**The one true God as revealed:**

**a. In creation**

**b. In sacred Scripture**

**Calvin's doctrine of the Trinity as:**

**a. Embracing the language and distinctions of the early church fathers**

**b. Embracing the language and distinctions of the early church creeds**

**Calvin's orthodox confession of the truth of the Trinity**

**a. God as singular in essence**

**b. God's one divine being subsisting in three distinct persons**

**Two important emphases in Calvin's doctrine of God**

**a. God's Fatherhood**

**b. God's absolute sovereignty**

**Criticism of Calvin's Trinitarian doctrine to which he was forced to respond**

**a. Michael Servetus**

**b. Matteo Gribaldi**

**c. Giorgio Blandrata**

**d. Giovanni Valentino Gentiles**

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**#5: Calvin's Doctrine of Predestination**

**Related Topics:**

**Placement of predestination in the Institutes**

**Starting point in consideration of predestination in the unbelief of some who hear the gospel**

**Calvin's doctrine of election and its biblical basis**

**Calvin's doctrine of reprobation and its biblical basis**

**Calvin's explanation of the relationship between election and reprobation**

**Various objections to predestination answered**

**Calvin's controversies over predestination**

**a. Jerome Bolsec**

**b. Albertus Pighius**

**c. Sebastian Castellio**

**Calvin's understanding of the importance of the doctrine of predestination**

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**#6: Calvin's Doctrine of Creation and Providence**

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**God's creation of the material universe**

**God's creation of rational, moral creatures**

**a. Angels and devils**

**b. Human beings**

**Possibility of harmonizing Calvin's doctrine of creation with modern evolutionary theories**

**The spiritual lessons of creation**

**Creation and providence inseparably related**

**The nature of divine providence**

**The scope of God's providence**

**God's providence as it extends to human beings**

**The great benefit derived from the doctrine of providence**

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# Book Reviews

***Prepared by Grace, for Grace,*** Joel R. Beeke and Paul M. Smalley, Grand Rapids, Michigan: Reformation Heritage Books, 2013. Pp. xiii + 287. $19.00 (paper). [Reviewed by Martyn McGeown.]

It is no secret that Joel Beeke loves the Puritans. In this book, Beeke and Smalley examine one of Puritanism's most controversial doctrines, preparatory grace or "preparation." The Puritans were faced with a situation in which almost everyone was a member of the church. Clearly, a great number of churchgoers were unbelievers. How, then, could the preacher awaken the carnal, self-righteous hypocrites sitting in the pews to their need of salvation? The Puritans developed a theology to awaken their listeners by preaching the law of God. The idea was that God used the law to convict sinners of their sin, so that they would see their need for Christ and come to Him for salvation. This in itself was not wrong: the Heidelberg Catechism uses the law to teach us our misery (LD 2). The problem was that the Puritans made preparation a very elaborate process, which in practice distressed the consciences of true believers. Conversion becomes impossibly convoluted and complex.

*Prepared by Grace, for Grace* traces the doctrine of preparation through many different Puritan writers (William Perkins, Richard Sibbes, John Preston, William Ames, Thomas Hooker, Thomas Shepard, John Cotton, and many others). Most of these men agreed on the main lines of preparation, but they differed on the details. Much of the disagreement involved *when* exactly regeneration could be considered to have taken place, *how much* preparation is necessary, and (to me this is crucial) how preparation *differs* in the elect and reprobate. Exactly at that point, Puritan preparatory theology becomes distressing: how much preparation must a sinner undergo before he can have assurance that he is saved? Often as I read the book, I found myself writing in the margin, "Is this regeneration yet?" "Is such a person a believer yet?" "Can a person reach this step and still perish?" That is the fundamental issue that I have with Puritan preparatory theology: it makes assurance of salvation very difficult to attain. What might ap-

pear to be evidence of regeneration and saving faith could, in fact, be simply preparation. Reprobates might come so far!

Thomas Hooker, for example, wrote, "In preparation the soul grieves because of the Holy Spirit's piercings and woundings, yet it does not yet have an inward principle of grace to love God and hate sin as sin" (81) and "a man under godly sorrow is not yet 'in Christ' but only 'prepared for Christ.' This sorrow is not 'sanctifying sorrow.'" To this, Beeke and Smalley remark, "Here Hooker diverged from most Puritans in teaching a true, godly sorrow in the unregenerate" (87). They could have referred the reader to the Canons of Dordt, where we read, "To hunger and thirst after deliverance from misery and after life, and to offer unto God the sacrifice of a broken spirit, is peculiar to the regenerate and those that are called blessed" (III/IV:B:4).

Thomas Shepard explained that "there is in the elect a farther stroke of severing the soul from sin, conjoined with the terrors and sorrows [before their closing with Christ], which is not evident in the reprobate." Shepard's order of salvation was "common preparatory sorrows, the special grace of cutting off the old man, grafting into Christ by faith (calling), justification and sanctification" (96). John Norton had as many as *twelve steps* of preparation in his scheme!

The Puritans' exegesis was, in my view, quite fanciful. They labored to explain preparation using many figures and illustrations, some taken from Scripture, others not. For example, preparation was like drying wood before it was burned; preparation was God giving the soul "fitness to receive" grace, like an empty bucket can receive water "but has no ability to fill itself or even to move itself under a faucet" (57); preparation was God gathering together the dry bones in Ezekiel 37 before He breathed life into them (one might be a gathered, flesh-covered, yet lifeless, skeleton); preparation was the forming of Adam's body from dust before God breathed into it the breath of life (248-249). John Cotton posited a doublework of the Spirit, giving a "spirit of bondage" (severing sinners from worldly entanglements and impressing upon them the weight of their sins) and a "spirit of burning" (consuming their hypocrisy), before He gave them the Spirit of regeneration. "People may go so far and not enter into adoption," he warned (120). That is very

fanciful exegesis of passages such as Romans 8:15 and Isaiah 4:4!

The research and the scholarship of the book are good and quite extensive, and the authors interact with some modern critics of Puritan theology, clearing away some misconceptions. If one is not interested in what the Puritans taught, however, simply read the last chapter for the authors' conclusions. There I find myself in agreement with the criticisms (cautions) offered by Beeke and Smalley (251-254). These include the fact that the Puritans "at times did not choose their words as wisely as they should have;" the Puritans were guilty of a "lack of balance in presentation even in the context of a sound system of doctrine" (one man memorably put it that "a man may be held too long under John Baptist's water"!); and the Puritans "rigorously developed and painfully applied sequences of steps that could easily mislead their audiences into thinking that they were not yet saved" (253).

The Puritans have written some good material, but their doctrine of assurance (which flows out of their doctrine of preparation) is, quite frankly, miserable. Why, then, do Beeke and his allies insist on publishing books which praise the worst of what the Puritans have written? If you are interested in historical theology, this book will be helpful; if you are interested in the assurance of salvation, avoid the Puritans. A more appropriate title for this book would be "A Dart in the Liver," to echo the miserable experience of John Winthrop whose assurance was shaken through reading the "old Puritan writers, who convinced him that he had gone no further in spirituality than a reprobate man" (36).

I would advise all readers who struggle with assurance to drink deeply at the Canons, especially Head I, Articles 12-13 and Head V, Articles 9-13. ●

***The Hole in our Holiness: Filling the Gap between Gospel Passion and the Pursuit of Godliness***, by Kevin DeYoung. Wheaton: Crossway, 2012. Pp. 159. $17.99 (hardcover). [Reviewed by Ronald Cammenga.]

This is a popularly written book about the doctrine of sanctification. The book's author is Kevin DeYoung, the pastor of

University Reformed Church (URC) in East Lansing, Michigan, and recently appointed Chancellor's Professor of Systematic and Historical Theology at Reformed Theological Seminary (RTS). University Reformed Church was affiliated with the Reformed Church in America (RCA), but under DeYoung's leadership recently withdrew from that denomination and has joined the Presbyterian Church in America (PCA). While teaching for RTS, DeYoung intends to continue to pastor URC. Kevin DeYoung is one of the younger faces representing conservative evangelicalism in the United States. He is well known for his blog, "DeYoung, Restless, and Reformed," sponsored by The Gospel Coalition. He is also the author of several books, among them *The Good News We Almost Forgot: Rediscovering the Gospel in a 16th Century Catechism* (an explanation of the Heidelberg Catechism), *Taking God at His Word: Why the Bible is Knowable, Necessary, and Enough, and What That Means for You and Me*, and *What Does the Bible Really Teach about Homosexuality?* He has also co-authored with Ted Kluck, *Why We Love the Church: In Praise of Institutions and Organized Religion* and *Why We're Not Emergent: By Two Guys Who Should Be;* and with Greg Gilbert he has written *What Is the Mission of the Church?: Making Sense of Social Justice, Shalom, and the Great Commission*. All of these books are worthwhile reads.

In ten chapters *The Hole in our Holiness* explains the basics of sanctification. In the first chapter, "Mind the Gap," DeYoung gives the main reasons for the hole in the holiness of many professing Christians today. Those reasons are: 1) Too often in the past holiness was equated with a few taboo practices, such as drinking, smoking, and dancing. In his view, too often holiness consisted simply in avoiding the "no-no list." 2) Fear of being regarded as some kind of weird hold-over from a bygone era and therefore out of step with the times. 3) Too many churches have too many unregenerate people in their membership. Unfortunately, DeYoung does not address the cause of this in the deficiencies in what passes for preaching today, as well as the loss of Christian discipline. 4) Hesitation to be labeled as judgmental and intolerant. 5) Among certain Christians the mistaken notion that if we are

truly gospel-centered we should not talk about commands and calling—antinomianism. Some are so concerned not to confuse the Bible's indicatives (what God has done) with imperatives (what we must do) that they are leery of calling people to obedience. 6) The reality that holiness is hard work and we are often just plain lazy. 7) Finally, many Christians have simply given up on sanctification out of a sense of frustration. We can do nothing that pleases God. Our best works are filthy rags. And try as we might, we fall far short of perfection. So, what is the use trying to live a holy life?

Although I have no doubt that these are all factors in the neglect of holiness among Christians today, I believe that DeYoung has overlooked a number of other equally significant factors. One of those additional factors is the loss of the antithesis in the churches. Members are not living the spiritually separate lives that they ought to be living. They are too greatly influenced by the world because they are living not only in but with the world. A lot of this has to do with the influence of modern media, like the television and the Internet, by means of which we regularly invite the world into our homes.

Second, and closely related to this, is the fruit of the widespread acceptance in the churches today of the false teaching of common grace. That false doctrine has been taught as gospel for many years now in most Reformed and Presbyterian churches. The practical fruit of that heresy has contributed significantly to the loss of holiness in the churches. In addition, there is a scandalous neglect in the churches of the exercise of Christian discipline, as I have already mentioned. Those living openly in sin are left at ease in the church. Although DeYoung recognizes the presence of many unregenerate members in the church today, he fails so much as to mention the obvious neglect of Christian discipline. Those continuing in sin must finally be excommunicated from the church. Add to this the fact that there is also a loss of sharp, antithetical preaching today, that the message in many churches is a message of the love of God for all men and the desire of God to save every human being, without any warning of the judgment of God on those who refuse to repent and go on living in their sins.

Yet another factor contributing to unholiness in the church today is that many are unwilling to endure the rejection and persecution that inevitably come to those who live

holy lives. In every age, this is the cost of discipleship of Jesus Christ. DeYoung's failure to recognize these additional factors and the part that they play in the loss of holiness in the church today is a deficiency in his overall analysis of the reasons for the hole in our holiness. A proper diagnosis of the symptoms of any disease is critical to a proper treatment plan. That certainly is the case when it comes to the dread disease of unholiness.

In chapter 2, "The Reason for Redemption," DeYoung underscores the teaching of Scripture that holiness is the reason on account of which we have been saved. Although the chapter could be improved upon by pointing out that we have been *ordained* to holiness—the connection between election and sanctification explored—the relationship between the cross and Christian holiness is of great importance. In the chapter, DeYoung develops the proper relationship between justification and sanctification, a critical aspect of the truth of sanctification.

"Piety's Pattern" is the title of chapter 3." In DeYoung's view, "You can't make sense of the Bible without understanding that God is holy and that this holy God is intent on making a holy people to live with him forever in a holy heaven" (31). What is holiness? And, what does holiness actually look like? These are the questions that occupy the third chapter. DeYoung first contrasts true holiness to the "cheap imitations" that are often passed off as genuine holiness, such as, holiness is mere rule-keeping, or that holiness is "generational imitation"—the good ol' days, or that holiness is generic spirituality, or that holiness is "finding your true self," or that holiness is only negative—not the way of the world. By contrast, real holiness consists of the renewal of God's image in us, is marked by biblical virtue instead of vice, concerns a good and clean conscience before God and men, consists of obedience to God's commandments, and is genuine Christlikeness.

No one can understand the truth of sanctification without understanding the proper place (use) of the law. In the fourth chapter, "The Impetus for the Imperatives," DeYoung defends what in theology we describe as the third use of the law. He takes time to expose and refute the pestilential error threatening the church in every age, the heresy of antinomianism. But DeYoung is also concerned to emphasize the positive, that God has given us the law in His goodness to us:

> The law is good because firmness is good. God cares enough to show us his ways and direct our paths. How awful it would be to inhabit this world, have some idea that there is a God, and yet not know what he desires from us. Divine statutes are a gift to us. God gives us law because he loves us (50).

DeYoung reminds us of the truth that the law leads to the gospel. But it is also true, as he points out, that the gospel leads to the law. In the law we are taught how we ought to live in light of the gospel and in response to the gospel.

What ought to be the greatest motivation to live a life of holiness is the desire to please God. Holiness is required by God, to be sure. But holiness is required by God because holiness pleases Him. God's glory, above all, must be the motivation for holiness. Godly living must aim at God to be truly godly. This fundamental truth is the message of chapter 5, "The Pleasure of God and the Possibility of Godliness."

Chapter 6 addresses the role of the Holy Spirit in sanctification. The Spirit regenerates us, which is the possibility of holiness. The Spirit creates in us the desire for holiness. And the Spirit actually empowers us to strive to live holy lives. As redemption is the great work of God the Son, so sanctification is the great work of God the Holy Spirit.

In chapter 7, DeYoung develops holiness in relation to the truth of union to Christ. The reality of the Christian life is that through faith we are united to Jesus Christ. Being in Christ, we are called to be like Christ. The fruit of union to Christ from God's point of view is that "by the Holy Spirit I have joined you to Christ. When he died, you died. When he rose, you rose. He's in heaven, so you're in heaven. He's holy, so you're holy" (105).

The eighth chapter is one of the best in the whole book. The chapter is devoted to the holiness of Christians in one particular area: sexual holiness. The chapter is a forthright treatment of the temptations and struggles of God's people, especially single young people, on behalf of sexual purity. DeYoung especially underscores the importance of sexual purity for young people who are dating, and takes the sound, biblical position that God's call to holiness forbids any sexually intimate contact (not just intercourse) before marriage. All use of God's good gift of sex is to be confined to marriage. This

is unquestionably the sound, biblical, but very unpopular view today. As DeYoung says: "What is important is to understand that the Bible has no category of dating where people who aren't married can kinda sorta start acting in some ways like they are" (115). In this respect, DeYoung calls Christians to be "radically counter-cultural," as well as to deny their own natural and sinful lusts. Every young man is called to view the young women of the church as his sisters (I Tim. 5:1, 2). What he would never do to or with his sister, he must never do to or with any woman in the church, including the young woman he may happen to be dating. It would be worthwhile for pastors and parents alike to give this chapter of the book to their young people who are dating to read. And, discuss it with them after they have read it!

"Abide and Obey" is the title of chapter 9. It is a chapter that calls to a life in communion with God and with Christ. As we live in fellowship with God, we will live in holiness. There is no real distinction between communion with Christ and obedience to Christ.

> The reality is the two are virtually synonymous. We obey as we abide and abide as we obey. Frustrated believers need to be reminded that they will bear fruit only as they are connected to the Vine. …lazy believers need to be reminded that if they are serious about remaining in Christ's love and experiencing abundant life they must get serious about obeying the Father's commandments…. Fellowship with Christ does not exist apart from fealty to Christ (126-7).

Chapter 10, "That All May See Your Progress," addresses the important subject of growth (development) in sanctification. The only question is not, "Are you living a holy life?" But the question is also, "Are you growing in holiness? Are you making progress in a life of obedience to God's commandments?" DeYoung emphasizes that growth may be slow, but it ought to be steady. He notes that often it seems that we take one step forward and two steps backward. And very often our growth in holiness is the greater understanding of how great our unholiness is. But, under God's grace and by the power of the Holy Spirit, there is real growth in holiness. It belongs to that growth that when we sin, we are repentant. A good portion of this

last chapter is taken up with the difference between the grief of the world—primarily over the consequences of sin—and the grief of the Christian that is over sin itself. "Sincere biblical repentance is as much a work of grace as not sinning in the first place" (144).

The book is designed to be used in group Bible studies or discussion groups. The end of the book contains a section of "Study Questions," with three to five questions for each chapter in the book. Most questions contain several related questions. Take, for example, the first question for chapter 1, "What comes to mind when you hear the word "holiness"? Are your thoughts primarily positive? Negative? Encouraging? Discouraging? Burdensome? Free?" (147).

For all the positives of this book—and there are many—there is one large negative. This reviewer was extremely disappointed at the endorsement for *The Hole in our Holiness* by Kirk Cousins, NFL quarterback for the Washington Redskins, a professional football team (American football—not soccer, you Brits and other Europeans who may be reading this review). Among the endorsements included on the back of the dustjacket, along with such notables as John Piper and Michael Horton, is the endorsement by Cousins. Likely, Cousins became acquainted with DeYoung during his student days at Michigan State University, after graduating from Holland Christian High School, in Holland, Michigan.

In reality, Cousins is himself a glaring example of the hole—the gaping hole—in the holiness of many professing Reformed Christians today. As a professional football player, apart from membership in an objectionable labor union, he is regularly involved in desecration of the New Testament Sabbath (Heidelberg Catechism, Q&A 103). This is both a symptom of the unholiness of the contemporary (Reformed) church, that the Sabbath is no longer observed as it ought to be according to the Fourth Commandment, and also a major contributing cause. Invariably the desecration of the Sabbath involves neglect of public worship. Tell me how a professional football player is able regularly to attend divine worship on Sunday in the true church of which he is a member, or how, if he is able to attend public worship, he can possibly focus on the worship and Word of God, rather than the impending contest in which his

team is going to be involved. Such Sabbath breaking is both an indication of the widespread lack of holiness—that is, worldliness—in the church today, and a cause for the growth of this cancer among professing Christians. Such a man ought not to be endorsing a book by a Reformed pastor and seminary professor, but ought to be cited in the book as an example of what holiness emphatically is not.

Apart from this disappointing feature—throw the dustjacket away—*The Hole in our Holiness* is a generally good introduction to the Reformed doctrine of sanctification. It is well worth reading as a primer on the doctrine. And it could serve very well as the basis for a group study of this glorious truth that is so prominent in the pages of Holy Scripture. ●

***The Whole Christ: Legalism, Antinomianism, and Gospel Assurance—Why the Marrow Controversy Still Matters*,** by Sinclair B. Ferguson. Wheaton, Illinois: Crossway, 2016. Pp. 256. $24.99 (hardcover). [Reviewed by David Engelsma.]

Much of this book is sound Reformed doctrine concerning Jesus Christ as the complete ("whole") Savior; justification; sanctification; and assurance of salvation. There are provocative insights, particularly, that legalism and antinomianism are not, in fact, heretical opposites, but closely related errors—"non-identical twins," as Ferguson describes them. Also, there is helpful pastoral wisdom concerning the struggles of some believers to possess and enjoy assurance of salvation.

Lending worth to the work for Presbyterians and Reformed is the author's relating all these fundamental doctrinal and practical matters to a significant controversy in Scottish Presbyterianism in the early 18th century. The controversy is known as the "Marrow Controversy." Ferguson's book is his defense of the theology set forth in the book, *The Marrow of Modern Divinity*, from which book the controversy took its name.

It is Sinclair Ferguson's contention that the heresies of legalism and antinomianism are closely related in that both deny that Jesus Christ is the "whole

Savior" from sin by His grace. Legalism obviously posits the sinner's own obedience to the law as necessary for salvation. Thus, legalism adds the sinner's own obedience to the saving work of Jesus Christ.

**Antinomianism**

Antinomianism denies that Christ's saving work includes making the sinner holy, or, in other words, writing the law upon the sinner's heart. Correct as this analysis of antinomianism may be, it does not, however, do justice to the characteristic opposition of antinomianism to the truth that in His sanctifying work Christ uses the law as the objective standard of the holy life. In advancing his thesis that legalism and antinomianism are twin forms of the same basic error, Ferguson runs the risk of ignoring, or underestimating, the unique and fundamental error of antinomianism: rejection of the law of the ten commandments as the authoritative guide of the Christian life.

The pastor who is required to do battle with antinomianism in the Reformed sphere must be prepared to confront antinomianism's repudiation of the "must" of the law as though this "must" contradicts the gospel of salvation by grace. Antinomianism rejects the "thou *shalt*" and the "thou *shalt* not" of the commandments. At its cleverest, antinomianism explains the "*shalt*" and "*shalt* not" as meaning simply, "will," or "will not," as certainties, rather than as imperatives or prohibitions.

**Unconditional Covenant**

In his defense of the gracious salvation that is the "whole Christ," Ferguson contends forcefully for an unconditional covenant. Rightly, he condemns the doctrine of a conditional covenant as a form of legalism. Expressly, he rejects the theology that views the covenant of grace as a "contract."

> God's *covenant* is his sovereign, freely bestowed, unconditional promise: "I will be your God," which carries with it a multidimensional implication: *therefore* "you will be my people." By contrast, a *contract* would be in the form: "I will be your God *if* you will live as becomes my people" (115).

In support of the doctrine of an unconditional covenant, Ferguson appeals to the Greek word used for the covenant in the

New Testament, "*diatheekee*," rather than "*suntheekee*." The former describes a "unilateral disposition one person makes to the other, whereas the latter is "an agreement two individuals make with…one another" (116).

Ferguson also calls attention to the biblical metaphor for the covenant, namely, marriage. "There is no conditional ('if') clause in a marriage covenant. On the contrary the couple commit themselves to each other unconditionally—'for better or for worse, for richer or for poorer, in sickness and in health, till death do us part'" (116).

**Assurance**

Likewise, Ferguson says many sound and pastorally helpful things about assurance of salvation. "The New Testament regards the enjoyment of assurance of salvation as *normal*…Christian experience" (213; emphasis added). This seeming assertion that assurance is of the *essence* of faith is weakened, however, if not negated, by Ferguson's defense of the dubious distinction regarding assurance between "the direct and the reflex acts of faith" and by his contention that assurance is "the *fruit* of faith" (196, 197; emphasis added). Ferguson seems to be content with faith's essentially being only the assurance that Christ is the Savior of sinners. That He is *my* savior does not belong to the essence of faith. That He is *my* Savior is a certainty that comes, or may not come, later, as faith develops.

However, when Reformed orthodoxy holds, with John Calvin, that faith essentially *is* personal assurance of salvation, the meaning is not that a believer is certain that Jesus is the Savior of sinners. The meaning is, rather, that the believer is certain that Jesus is *his* or *her* Savior. This is the perfectly clear explanation of the Heidelberg Catechism, in Question 21:

> What is true faith?
> True faith is not only a certain knowledge, whereby I hold for truth all that God has revealed to us in His Word, but also an assured confidence, which the Holy Ghost works by the gospel in my heart, *that not only to others, but to me also,* remission of sin, everlasting righteousness, and salvation are freely given by God, merely of grace, only for the sake of Christ's merits (emphasis added).

"An assured confidence… that…*to me also*"!

**Weaknesses**

Two related weaknesses seriously trouble Ferguson's book. The first is that, as the book's subtitle indicates, Ferguson explains the gospel of grace against legalism and antinomianism and examines assurance in light of a doctrinal controversy in Scotland that is known as the "Marrow Controversy" and in harmony with a book of theology titled *The Marrow of Modern Divinity*. The controversy erupted over the theology advanced in the book. Ferguson himself analyzes his own book as "an extended reflection on theological and pastoral issues that arose in the early eighteenth century [in the "Marrow Controversy," occasioned by the book, *The Marrow*], viewed from the framework of the present day" (19).

Ferguson is concerned to defend and promote the doctrinal views and statements of the "Marrow men" in the 18th century, who were defending and promoting the doctrinal views set forth in the book, *The Marrow*. These views and statements had to do with legalism, antinomianism, and assurance of salvation. Ferguson, therefore, makes the weaknesses and errors of the Marrow theology his own.

The second serious weakness troubling Ferguson's book is that the book does not say what ought to be said, both about the Marrow theology and the controversy it caused and about the fundamental doctrines involved in that controversy. The weakness is not so much what Ferguson says as what he fails to say.

Two peculiar doctrinal statements were especially at the heart of the Marrow controversy. The first concerns the preaching of the gospel to all men indiscriminately—what the Marrow men and Ferguson significantly insist on describing as the "offer" (rather than the "call"). According to the Marrow theology, in the preaching of the gospel God in Jesus Christ, "moved with nothing but his free love to mankind lost, hath made a deed of gift and grant unto them all, that whosoever shall believe in this his Son, shall not perish, but have eternal life" (38).

Strange, and even confusing, as the language is, specifically, the phrase, "deed of gift and grant," it is evident that the statement intends to teach that the preaching of the gospel is God's official act ("deed") graciously bestowing Christ and His salvation ("gift and grant") upon all humans who hear the preaching ("unto them all"), on the condition that they believe. This "deed of gift and grant" has

its source in a love of God for all humans without exception ("his free love to mankind lost"), which love is the (would-be) saving love of God in Jesus Christ ("in the preaching of the gospel God in Jesus Christ").

Implied in this statement is the doctrine that Christ died for all humans without exception. If in the gospel God makes a "deed of gift and grant" of Jesus Christ the Savior and of eternal life in Him to all who hear and if God does this "moved…with his free love to mankind lost," the obvious, and intended, implication is that Christ died for all of mankind lost, that is, universal, ineffectual atonement.

**"Christ is Dead" for Every Human?**

This implication concerning the extent of the atonement was made clearer by the other doctrinal statement that was at the heart of the Marrow controversy. In preaching the gospel, according to the Marrow theology, the church must "go and tell every man, without exception, that here is good news for him! *Christ is dead for him*! and if he will take him, and accept of his righteousness, he shall have him" (40; emphasis added).

Again, the language is odd and confusing. "Christ is *dead*"? And Christ is dead *for every human who hears the gospel*? Not: "Christ *died* for every human." But: "Christ *is dead* for every human." Apart from any other criticism of the statement, the statement is condemnable, if not sinfully wrong, simply by virtue of its deliberately confusing nature. Theological language must be clear, guarding against confusion and misunderstanding. Especially is this demanded with regard to such fundamental truths as the extent of the atonement. No one, and certainly not a theologian, in the Presbyterian and Reformed tradition is unaware of this demand and its urgency.

Contrast with this confusing statement concerning the extent of the atoning death of Christ the clear language of the Canons of Dordt:

> For this was the sovereign counsel and most gracious will and purpose of God the Father, that the quickening and saving efficacy of the most precious death of His Son should extend to all the elect, for bestowing upon them alone the gift of justifying faith, thereby to bring them infallibly to salvation; that is, 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, who were from eternity chosen to salvation and given to Him by the Father, etc. (Canons of Dordt, II.8).

What the statement in *The Marrow* purposes to convey is that there is a sense—an important sense—in which it is true that Christ died to atone for the sins of all humans without exception. Universal atonement in some form, and announced in some admittedly obscure manner in the preaching, is required, according to the thinking of the Marrow theology, for the promiscuous preaching of the gospel and its call to all and sundry to believe—what the Marrow theology calls the "offer of the gospel." If what orthodox Reformed theology regards as the external call of the gospel is, in fact, a gracious deed of gift and grant of Jesus Christ to every human who hears the gospel, in the saving love of God for all mankind lost, Christ must have died for all mankind lost. Hence, the message, "Christ is dead" for all mankind lost, that is, for every human without exception.

In fact, this fundamental statement of the Marrow theology is simply false on its very face. Christ is not dead! He is not dead in relation to anyone, including the elect. He died, in the past. But He is not dead. He is alive, having risen from the dead.

The Geneva Bible was mistaken in its translations, "Christ which is dead," in Romans 8:34, and, "Jesus is dead," in I Thessalonians 4:14. Besides, the Geneva Bible does not state that Jesus is dead *for every human* (on the phrase, "Christ [or Jesus] is dead," and on the intended meaning of the phrase in John Preston, and the Marrow men, see Jonathan D. Moore, *English Hypothetical Universalism,* Eerdmans, 2007, 120ff.).

In order to introduce into the Presbyterian churches the doctrine of universal atonement (in support of their heretical teaching of the "offer"), without exposing themselves to the charge of teaching universal atonement, as would have been the case had they explicitly stated that the church may say to every human, "Christ *died* for you," the Marrow men resorted to linguistic subterfuge: "Christ is *dead* for you." This is despicable theology, altogether apart from the heresy itself.

Sinclair Ferguson defends these statements of the Marrow

theology and the theology the statements teach. In doing so, he himself proposes an orthodox interpretation of the statements. They do not, in fact, necessarily teach universal atonement and an ineffectual, saving love of God for all humans. What the statements only amount to, according to Ferguson, is a defense of the free offer of the gospel. They are intended to guard against such an understanding of limited atonement and election as restricts the call of the gospel to those who show themselves to be elect.

**The "Offer"**

It is not exaggeration to summarize *The Whole Christ* as a 240-odd page defense of the "offer" of the gospel. What is striking about the defense is that Ferguson himself never explains what he understands by the offer. An uncritical reader might suppose that Ferguson means by the offer nothing more than what the Canons has in mind when the creed affirms that Christ is "offered" in the gospel (Canons, III/IV.9). What the Canons means is that Christ is presented in the gospel to all hearers as God's Savior of guilty, depraved humans from sin and death unto eternal life and glory; that in the gospel God Himself (externally) seriously calls all hearers to repent and believe; and that God promises that everyone who believes, regardless how vile a sinner he may be, will be forgiven and saved.

The Canons itself makes plain that by the "offer" it does not mean a gracious effort on God's part to save all who hear, in view of a love of God for all hearers and with the desire to save them all. Head one of the Canons confesses the eternal reprobation of some humans in a hatred of God for them. Head two confesses that Christ died for the elect alone, according to the eternal love of God for them, and for them among men only. Heads three and four confess that the saving call of the gospel, that which has its source in God's election, is for some hearers of the gospel, not for all without exception. And, importantly with regard to the Marrow's assertion that the gospel is a deed of gift and grant to all who hear, head two of the Canons teaches that Christ "purchased" for the elect, not only forgiveness and eternal life, but also faith itself (Canons, II.8).

The reprobate unbeliever does not have a warrant to believe in Jesus Christ. He does not have the ability. But neither does he have the right. Faith in Jesus Christ is a privilege, a right

earned for the elect by the death of Jesus. "Warrant" implies right. The reprobate hearer of the gospel has the duty to believe in Jesus, but he lacks both the ability and the right. This truth demolishes the theology of the Marrow, and of Sinclair Ferguson.

This truth of particular, sovereign grace—the truth of Christ as the whole Savior of the elect, and of the elect only—does not restrict the preaching of the gospel to those whom the preacher identifies as the elect. Neither does the gospel of sovereign, particular grace hinder the promiscuous, fervent call to all and sundry to repent and believe. That the gospel of particular grace hampers, if it does not prohibit, the promiscuous preaching of the gospel and especially the call to all to believe on Christ offered in the gospel was the charge against the Reformed faith by the Arminians. It is today the fear of Ferguson and his circle. He allows his fear to compromise the particularity of the love of God in Jesus Christ and, thus, to corrupt the very truth that his book is intended to defend: Jesus as the whole Savior. If God in the gospel lovingly offers salvation to all humans without exception, on the ground of Christ's death for everyone, Christ is not the whole Savior. But the sinner himself, by his acceptance of the offered Christ, is instrumental in his own salvation. Indeed, the whole Christ is dependent upon the sinner's acceptance. The Arminians call his acceptance "free will."

**What is Not Said**

I charged at the beginning of this review that the weakness of the book is what Ferguson does not say. He never tells the reader exactly what he means by the "offer" that is central to his book and to his theology. Although as a knowledgeable theologian he is surely aware of what their all-important offer is in Arminian theology, he never thoroughly describes and sharply rejects the Arminian offer: a gracious, well-meant effort by God in the preaching to save all hearers. Ferguson never takes pains, particularly when defending the statement, "Christ is dead for you," to expose and condemn the heresy of universal atonement. Never does he vigorously defend the doctrine of limited atonement. Never does he carefully explain that the truth of limited atonement in no way hampers and hinders the free preaching of the gospel, including issuing its call.

Similarly, his treatment of assurance leaves something to be desired. There is no bold, unqualified insistence that assurance of one's own personal salvation is of the essence of true faith. There is no uncompromising condemnation of the view that assurance is merely a fruit of faith—in some. And among the errors concerning assurance, against which Ferguson guards, is not to be found the deadly, and contemporary, Puritan error of basing assurance on a dramatic, mystical "experience." This gross error of Puritanism, which Ferguson does not so much as recognize, is the reason why today both in North America and in Europe only a handful of old people in congregations numbering hundreds and even thousands partake of the Lord's Supper. All the rest, although confessing faith in Christ, abstain, doubting their salvation, because they have not yet had the "experience." Any Reformed treatment of assurance must expose this grievous error. Ferguson is silent.

This failure to say what needs to be said, indeed cries out to be said, extends to yet another important aspect of the Marrow controversy. The controversy in Scotland was occasioned by a confusing question put to a young man aspiring to the ministry. Would the candidate for the ministry in the Presbyterian church affirm this proposition: "I believe that it is not sound and orthodox to teach that we forsake sin in order to our coming to Christ, and instating us in covenant with God" (28)?

This statement explains the presence of the issue of antinomianism in the Marrow controversy. One who would affirm the theological proposition could be suspected of believing that one might come to Christ in true faith without forsaking sin, that is, while continuing to live in flagrant disobedience to the law of God. The Marrow men and Ferguson defended and defend the proposition. Their argument was, and is, that the call to Christ by true faith in Him is unconditional. The believing sinner simply comes to Christ without first fulfilling the condition of forsaking sin.

Compelling as Ferguson's argument in defense of what has come to be known as the "Auchterarder Creed" (the church meeting was held in Auchterarder, Scotland) is, what Ferguson, and the Marrow men before him, neglected to say is that the way, the *only* way, the *necessary* way, of coming to Christ by true faith is the way of forsaking sin. True faith, inasmuch as it involves

repenting of sin, necessarily consists of forsaking sin. So much is this true that often in the New Testament the call to true faith in Christ is expressed by the imperative, "Repent!" Repenting is forsaking sin. One who claims to come to Christ but does not forsake sin lies. He has not come to Christ at all.

**Fundamentally, the "Offer"**

Fundamental in the book is the "offer." For this reason alone, the book can be beneficial to the Reformed and Presbyterian community of churches. It might occasion a careful study of the concept. It might result in self-examination on the part of Reformed and Presbyterian churches and theologians whether, under the influence of the Marrow theology and of other agents, they have not uncritically accepted the Arminian view of the offer of the gospel, abandoning the Reformed doctrine of the Canons of Dordt.

Despite his own hesitation to set forth, clearly and fully, what he himself understands by the "offer," Ferguson leaves no doubt as to what his doctrine of the offer is. He makes his view plain by his favorable quotations of Thomas Boston concerning the offer. The offer is God's gracious gift of Jesus Christ to all who hear the gospel, those who are not saved by the gospel as well as those who are saved. It is not a gift in such a way as effectually to save all, but in such a way as to make Jesus available to all, if they will accept and receive Him. Boston uses the example of the gift of money to a poor man: "Even as when one presents a piece of gold to a poor man saying, 'Take it, it is yours'; the offer makes the piece really his in the sense and to the effect before declared; nevertheless, while the poor man does not accept or receive it…it is not his in possession, nor hath he the benefit of it; but, on the contrary, must starve for it all, and that so much the more miserably, that he hath slighted the offer and refused the gift" (232).

By the offer, according to Boston, in defense of the theology of the Marrow, God gives to all who hear the gospel "eternal life…(which) life is in his Son." Boston is quoting I John 5:11. This giving, which especially in light of I John 5:11 is certainly gracious on God's part, does not, however, put anyone in possession of eternal life. It merely makes it possible for humans to "take possession" of eternal life. This giving of eternal life by God in the offer is not to and

for the elect, but to and for all who hear the gospel, including those who may be reprobate, and perish. "The party to whom [eternal life is given by the offer], is not the election only, but mankind lost." To reprobate, "lost mankind… God hath given eternal life in the way of grant, so as they, as well as others, are warranted and welcome to take possession of it" (233).

In the offer, there is a giving of Christ and salvation to many, "where there is no receiving, for a gift may be refused" (234).

This is Ferguson's doctrine of the offer. This doctrine is plainly the teaching of resistible grace, that is, on Ferguson's own reckoning, a resistible Jesus Christ. Necessarily, it is a doctrine of the "whole Christ" available to all, but dependent upon the acceptance (will) of the sinner.

The Christ of this theology may be a "whole Christ," but He is an impotent Christ. In light of the biblical and Reformed truths of the total depravity of the sinner, including the bondage of his will ("acceptance"), the "whole Christ" of the Marrow's and Ferguson's theology is wholly unavailing to any. Or, if He does come to profit some, He does so only because they have made His willingness to save reality by their "acceptance" of His well-meant offer to all. In this case, the "whole Christ" is Savior wholly because of the sinner's acceptance of the offer. And this is as much a denial of Christ as the one, only, sovereign Savior as any of the errors Ferguson combats in his book. ●

***Hendrik P. Scholte: His Legacy in the Netherlands and in America,*** by Eugene P. Heideman. Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2015. Pp. xxxv + 278. $30.00 (paper). [Reviewed by Ronald Cammenga.]

*Hendrik P. Scholte: His Legacy in the Netherlands and in America* is a fascinating treatment of the life and legacy of one of the earliest leaders of the Secession of 1834 in the Netherlands known as the *Afscheiding*. Dr. Eugene Heideman's account of Scholte's ministry, interaction with other A*fscheiding* notables, contributions to the development and solidification of the reform movement that separated from the state church of the Netherlands,

his founding and editorship of the Dutch church paper *De Reformatie*, responsibility for the eventual polarization among the leaders of the *Afscheiding*, immigration to the United States, and founding of his "city of refuge" in the plains of the mid-west, the town of Pella in central Iowa, is fascinating reading—even gripping at times. From the first chapter, "Hendrik P. Scholte and Hendrik De Cock: Fathers of the Secession of 1834" to the concluding chapter, "Scholte's Legacy" (chap. 14), Heideman held the attention of this reviewer. The history is told in an interesting way. Woven into the story are solid documentation, critical historical evaluation, and penetrating theological analysis. Throughout the book, Heideman offers helpful insights into the issues that separated the men of the *Afscheiding* from their fellows in the state church of the Netherlands, the *Hervormde Kerk*, as well as the issues that eventually separated the men of the *Afscheiding* from each other, especially from the most controversial of their number, H. P. Scholte. Significant doctrinal and church political controversies that bedeviled the *Afscheiding* and created tensions within the movement, resulting in deposition from office and alienation of men who had earlier collaborated, are examined. This is the first in-depth study of H. P. Scholte to appear in English in over fifty years. The only other significant work was written by Lubbertus Oostendorp and published in 1964. That work is entitled *H. P. Scholte: Leader of the Secession of 1834 and Founder of Pella*. I find the present work to be superior—more carefully researched and better written—even though Heideman does frequently reference Oostendorp's earlier work. I have no doubt that Heideman's book will become the definitive work on Scholte in the English language for the foreseeable future.

Although a sympathetic analysis of a figure to whom we in the Dutch Reformed tradition are indebted, particularly those of us who are heirs of the *Afscheiding* and *Doleantie*, Heideman's account is not biased. He tells it like it is, which is to say, he tells us about Scholte as he was. On the one hand, his courage and contributions are lauded. On the other hand, his blemishes are also exposed. More than once, Heideman faults Scholte for his outstanding personality flaw—his "autocratic character." He writes:

> Unfortunately, Scholte had an autocratic character….

> After the deaths of his father and grandfather when he was seventeen years old, his being an autocrat served him well as the manager of the Scholte box factory. His strong personality also served him well as leader of the Scholte Club in their decision to remain faithful to the traditions of the Synod of Dort over the opposition of the theological faculty of the University of Leiden and the hierarchy of the directorate over the Nederlandse Hervormde Kerk. It also enabled him to be the driving force for the Secession from the days of his visit to Hendrik De Cock in Ulrum through the General Synod of 1836. Beginning, however, with his effort to introduce his newly written church order in congregations and provincial synods prior to consultation with his ministerial colleagues and the meeting of the 1837 General Synod, his autocratic character proved to be divisive at a time when unity was needed (107).

Later, at the end of chapter 7, the chapter that details the controversy over church order in the *Afscheiding*, a controversy at the heart of which was H. P. Scholte, Heideman writes:

> Scholte also refused to recognize what was done at the Synod of 1840. He refused to meet with the committee that had hoped to find a way to avoid deposing him, saying he did not recognize the authority of the synod to take that action. The combination of his radically Congregationalist interpretation of his church order *and his autocratic character* had resulted in an impasse that could not be overcome. In the Netherlands, it brought about Scholte's ecclesiastical isolation. In North America, it would become an ecclesiastical and personal tragedy (126, emphasis added).

Whereas "[h]is autocratic character served well in providing strong leadership in new ventures, in articulating a vision for what had to be done, and in encouragement for those who faltered when the odds were against them," at the same time "his autocratic character resulted in failure and tragedy for him personally, his wife Maria, and for the church" (232).

In the course of his treatment of Scholte's life and legacy, Heideman relates several of the controversies in which Scholte was embroiled—controversies in which the leaders of the Secession also took part. Consideration of these controversies not only has

historical value—our better understanding of Scholte and developments within the Afscheiding, but a study of the issues involved in these controversies also has contemporary relevance. Many of the issues that were raised then continue to be debated in Reformed churches: matters of church order, the authority of the broader assemblies, baptism and covenant, and eschatology.

One of the most important of the controversies in which Scholte played a leading role concerned the adoption of the Church Order of Dort by the fledgling denomination. From the very beginning of the history of the *Afscheiding*, Scholte opposed the adoption of Dort's Church Order. Heideman reports that "Scholte's colleagues were surprised by how quickly he moved to implement the development of a new [alternative] church order for the emerging congregations" (105). When the General Synod opened its meetings on September 28, 1837, they learned that Scholte had already drafted his own church order and had persuaded the churches in several of the provinces to adopt it. Scholte's church order was much more of a bare-bones document than the more elaborate and specific Church Order of Dort.

Although in his outspoken criticism of the Church Order of Dort, Scholte argued that this early seventeenth-century church order could hardly fit the needs of the mid-nineteenth-century Reformed church, in reality his opposition to its adoption was fueled by his extremely independent spirit. Reacting against the hierarchy of the state church, Scholte refused to yield any real (binding) authority to the broader assemblies, the classes and synods. Synods and classes could be helpful, as long as they did not exercise any authority over officebearers elected by the members of a local congregation. And consistories ought to feel free to consult the broader assemblies, especially in difficult discipline cases. But the decisions of the broader assemblies were only advice that the local consistory was free to take or leave at its discretion. In the end, all matters of discipline, whether deposition of officebearers or excommunication of members, was subject to the decision of the local consistory—period! Scholte's position was that "the elders…were in the best position to know the facts and what was useful for the edification of the congregation. There must be no ecclesiastical hierarchy of as-

semblies in matters of discipline" (214). And to Scholte, hierarchy was any binding decision of the broader assemblies.

This independent spirit showed itself in Scholte after he immigrated to America. Unlike Van Raalte, after Scholte established his colony in Pella, he made no effort to bring his congregation into a classis or join the RCA—or any other denomination for that matter. His congregation remained independent until the day Scholte died. Within a year after his death, the congregation dissolved and its members scattered. Heideman reports that

> the congregation he served in his final years did not endure after his death. Some people still appreciated his sermons and the strength of his personality. But within a year, the congregation had disbanded. Some became members of a group led by Jacob Maasdam. A very few joined together under the leadership of Scholte's son, David, and Robert Beard, who became Maria's second husband, to found a Darbyite or Plymouth Brethren group. Others joined the Reformed Church in America congregation or the Christian Reformed congregation in Pella (249).

Heideman demonstrates, to his credit, that independentism is a dead-end street—spiritual and ecclesiastical folly. This clearly was the case with H. P. Scholte.

Another controversy that Heideman relates is that over the baptism of the infants of non-communicant (non-confessing) church members. This was an extremely divisive issue, one that brought to light some of the fundamental differences over the doctrine of the covenant among the men of the *Afscheiding*. This controversy pitted Hendrik De Cock and Hendrik Scholte, the two original fathers of the Secession, against each other. Already prior to the *Afscheiding* De Cock was involved in irregularities regarding the administration of baptism. Against church regulations, and contrary to decency and good order, he had consented to baptize infants of parents who were not members of his congregation in Ulrum. Now he was involved in the baptism of infants whose parents had not yet made confession of faith. They had not made confession of faith because "they had not yet received a secure confirmation of their 'marks' of election" (73). As this statement indicates, differences over the assurance of salvation also

polarized clergy and members within the *Afscheiding* churches. Some were of a mystical bent who "cherish[ed] their doubts and unbelieving thoughts so as to remain outside the fellowship of Christ. They spend their time defending their unbelief" and "using the excuse that faith is a gift of God, they lay the blame on God for their lack of faith" (135). Scholte insisted that baptism was to be administered to *believers* and their children. That they are "believers" certainly implied, in his judgment, that they are confessing, communicant members in the church. They are believers who know and are assured of their faith, as well as bring forth the fruits of faith in holiness of life. Scholte's position eventually won the day at the Synod of 1837.

Yet another controversy in which Scholte became involved was occasioned by his embrace of certain tenets of premillennial eschatology. At least as early as 1838, Scholte exchanged correspondence with John Nelson Darby, who was a prominent figure in the Plymouth Brethren movement in England. Scholte even translated some of Darby's works into Dutch. Although not in agreement with Darby in every detail, Scholte expressed that he was in the main of one mind with Darby. Scholte promoted his millennial views, which he recognized were out of step with the historic Reformed faith, in the Netherlands in his paper *De Reformatie*, and later in the magazine that he founded after settling in Pella, *De Toekomst* ["The Future"]. Interestingly, much later the Christian Reformed Church in North America would become involved in controversy over premillennial/dispensational theology, when those false teachings were promoted by the Rev. Harry Bultema in the early part of the twentieth century. Significantly, Bultema became convinced of his aberrant millennial views while doing research on H. P. Scholte. Thus, Scholte's millennial views would continue to influence Reformed churches long after his departure.

The fourth significant controversy in which Scholte was involved concerned his own deposition from office. Bad blood developed between Scholte and Simon Van Velzen, another leader of the Secession. Although Scholte would not accept a call to the Amsterdam congregation, he did exercise a general pastoral influence in the congregation. Towards the end of 1838, the Am-

sterdam congregation called Van Velzen. Although he accepted the call, Van Velzen refused to move from Friesland to Amsterdam. When the congregation learned of his intentions, there was a great deal of dissatisfaction, as might be expected. Scholte was openly critical of Van Velzen and supportive of those in the congregation who disapproved of his being an absentee pastor. Scholte also found fault with Van Velzen's preaching and charged him with preaching "a dead Christ" (132). Undoubtedly this charge originated in the disagreement between Van Velzen and Scholte—and other of the leaders of the Secession—over whether the preaching of the gospel is a well-meant offer of salvation and grace to all who hear the preaching. There were numerous attempts by Scholte's and Van Velzen's colleagues, as well as attempts by the church assemblies, to reconcile the two men. All these attempts proved unsuccessful. Scholte remained adamant in his position and in defense of his behavior. The result was finally that the *Christelijke Afgescheidene Kerk* General Synod, held in November-December of 1840, deposed Scholte from the office of the ministry of the Word and sacraments. This became a significant factor in Scholte's decision to leave the Netherlands and immigrate to America.

Besides his role in the controversies that convulsed the *Afscheiding* and led to the tensions between various leaders of the reform movement, Scholte's positive contributions both to the churches in the Netherlands prior to his pioneering efforts in the United States and in the establishment of the Reformed faith in the mid-western part of this country are also highlighted by Heideman. Scholte did indeed bring the Reformed faith to the prairies of Iowa. And from Pella, groups established daughter colonies in Orange City and Hospers, Iowa, as well as other parts of northwest Iowa, southwest Minnesota, northwest Washington, Montana, and South Dakota. Scholte deserves much of the credit for this Reformed "dispersion."

Scholte also left his stamp on Reformed Christian education, instrumental as he was in founding Central College in Pella, Iowa and serving as its first president.

Though a tragic and controversial figure in many respects, a man who had a knack for alienating those around him, Scholte has left a positive legacy that needs to be acknowledged. That

is the theme of the fourteenth and last chapter of Heideman's book, "Scholte's Legacy." That legacy is a legacy in three distinct areas: 1) His legacy on behalf of the state of Iowa; 2) His legacy on behalf of the Secession of 1834; and 3) His legacy to the Reformed Churches in America (247-56).

Included in Heideman's book are a helpful introduction and timeline, a map of the Netherlands in 1900, and some thirty pictures and illustrations, including sample pages from both *De Reformatie* and *De Toekomst*. There is a picture of the historic "Scholte Church" and "Scholte house." This original manse—the first house built in Pella—was specially designed for Scholte's aristocratic wife, Maria. It was spacious—extravagant in its day—a virtual mansion in comparison to the sod homes of many of Pella's original settlers. Both the Scholte house and church stand to this day in Pella and both are historical museums that are well worth visiting, if ever you are in Pella, Iowa. My wife and I have toured both and found that both tours were enjoyable and informative. (By the way, Wyatt Earp's boyhood home is also in Pella, Iowa and is preserved as a museum. You might want to take that in as well.) Heideman's book also includes a fascinating appendix on Scholte's library. It is amazing what can be learned from the books that belong to one's personal library, or, in some instances, from those that are not found in one's library.

*Hendrik P. Scholte: His Legacy in the Netherlands and in America* is the eighty-fourth book in "The Historical Series of the Reformed Church in America." Heideman has produced the book in cooperation with the A. C. Van Raalte Institute, which is attached to Hope College and Western Theological Seminary in Holland, Michigan. In 2013-14, Heideman served as a Visiting Research Fellow of the Van Raalte Institute, when he engaged in concentrated research on Scholte, with special attention to *De Reformatie*, the magazine that Scholte founded and edited for eleven years (1836-47). Heideman has a long and distinguished teaching career. He served as a pastor in Edmonton, Alberta, Canada, and for ten years as a Reformed Church in America missionary with the Church of South India. After returning to the United States, he served as a professor and chaplain at Northwestern College, in Orange City, Iowa, later as academic dean at

Western Theological Seminary, and as secretary for Program and World Missions for the Reformed Church in America. He is the author of several books and numerous scholarly articles. Among the organizations to which he belongs, Heideman serves on the Board of Directors of the Dutch Reformed Translation Society. His retirement years have been very productive years; *Hendrik P. Scholte: His Legacy in the Netherlands and in America* belongs to the fruit of these years of service of this humble servant of the Lord. We are grateful for Dr. Heideman's gifts and for the use of them for the profit of the Reformed church in this country and abroad.

This his latest book, this reviewer highly recommends! It is a book that every reader will enjoy and from which he or she will learn a great deal, whether professor, pastor, or interested layperson. From cover to cover, it is a stirring account of a man and a movement. ●

***Riots, Revolutions, and the Scottish Covenanters: The Work of Alexander Henderson*, by** L. Charles Jackson. Grand Rapids, MI: Reformation Heritage Books, 2015. Pp. 312 (hardcover). $30.00. [Reviewed by Douglas Kuiper.]

As king of England, Scotland, and Ireland from 1625 to 1649, Charles I believed that all answered to him, and he to none. He considered the English Parliament unnecessary, dismissing it more than once. He viewed himself ruler not only of the state but also of the church, and worked to impose the Episcopalian form of worship and church government on all churches.

Understandably this troubled many, particularly in Scotland, whose conscience directed them to favor the Presbyterian (Reformed) religion, form of worship, and church government. When Charles I imposed his view of church polity on the churches in his *Book of Canons (1636),* and a year later imposed his Episcopalian form of worship by requiring all ministers to use the *Service Book*, many resisted. Leading the way in this resistance was a minister named Alexander Henderson.

The volume under review is a scholarly biography of Henderson and an analysis of his work.

**The Book: Timely and Scholarly**

Though an influential man, Alexander Henderson has not received much attention from biographers. His first biographical *book* was written in 1836, two centuries after his name became commonly known. Noting that "no modern biography of Alexander Henderson exists," Jackson's purpose is "to reintroduce and return Henderson to his rightful place in Scottish history" (2). In this respect, the book is timely. It is not one more contribution to a figure regarding whom much has been written, but a new biography of a man little known, outside of Scottish Presbyterian circles.

The six chapters are lengthy. The first chapter ("The Preparation") traces Henderson's life from birth (1583) through his university years and first pastorate. Chapter 2, "The Covenanter," sets forth the real issues that led Henderson to get involved in the religious-political struggle. Scottish Presbyterians already know that his fundamental work was in writing the Scottish National Covenant of 1638. In his preaching, Henderson often defended the National Covenant on Biblical grounds, encouraged its adoption, and extolled its benefits, as chapter 3 ("The Preacher") indicates. Chapter 4, "The Presbyterian," sets forth Henderson's role as moderator of the Glasgow General Assembly, which adopted the National Covenant. Here Jackson develops Henderson's ecclesiology, which Henderson put in the service of his eschatology. In chapter 5, "The Pamphleteer," Jackson examines Henderson's writings, primarily pamphlets, by which he made his views more widely known. Ultimately, Henderson's aim was that England also adopt his ecclesiology and eschatology and become Presbyterian. In chapter 6, "The Westminster Assembly and the Collapse of a Cause," Jackson informs the reader that this ultimate goal was not attained. Henderson, sixty years old by the time Westminster Assembly first met in 1643, worked tirelessly to get England also to adopt Presbyterianism as the national religion. But in August 1646, two years after the Westminster Confession and Catechisms had been written, but seven years before the Assembly was finished, Henderson died.

The book is scholarly and carefully researched, with Jackson's quotes and assertions duly footnoted. Jackson also interacts with past scholarship regarding

Henderson, about whom much has been written, even if not in the form of biographical books. Jackson has a mind of his own, ready to critique Henderson, but also to defend him at times against the negative assessment of others.

The book's main value is that it accomplishes Jackson's purpose of (re)introducing Henderson. Other valuable aspects of the book, distinct from its treatment of Henderson, include its treatment of the general history of Scotland at the time (throughout the book), its contribution to the study of preaching in early modern Scotland (94-98, with the rest of chapter 3 stating Henderson's contributions), and its observations regarding the power and effectiveness of writing ("pamphleteering") as a way to convince the general public of the validity of one's cause ("propaganda"; chapter 5). "Pamphleteering" was impossible just a century earlier.

I have no substantive critique of the book as such. It is the subject of the book, Alexander Henderson, who gets my mixed review.

**Henderson's Doctrine**

Without question, Alexander Henderson was Presbyterian—which is to say, Calvinistic and Reformed—in his doctrine. Little is said in the book about his views of God, man, Christ, and salvation, but it is clear from his preaching that Henderson viewed man as a sinner (127) and Christ as the only Savior who saved by atoning for sin (117).

Henderson's ecclesiology, eschatology, and view of the covenant are on the foreground. Whether his doctrinal convictions in these areas were orthodox, godly believers will debate. But that he put his doctrines to a novel use is beyond debate.

His contribution to ecclesiology is in the area of church polity. His treatise *The Government and Church Order of the Church of Scotland* (1641), written five years after the king imposed his *Book of Canons,* is a defense of Presbyterian church polity with its synods, presbyteries, and church sessions, and a polemic against the Anglican system of church government (159ff.). Henderson also taught that God gave the church authority to govern herself (170), and that this authority was distinct from that of the civil government. Here he is orthodox.

His view of Scotland as a nation that God raised up for a

special purpose (somewhat akin to Old Testament Israel, 131), his view that the struggle with Charles I was "nothing less than a battle between Christ and Anti-Christ" (140), and his conviction that through this struggle the Reformation would take hold more deeply not only in Scotland but also England and throughout the world (141), will be enough evidence for some to say that he was postmillennial in his eschatology. In Henderson's defense the reader must note that he never addressed the subject of the millennium or offered significant exegesis of the books of Daniel and Revelation, and he did clearly posit that Christ's kingdom was spiritual and heavenly, and not to be identified with any particular earthly nation (141). At the same time, he held forth that if the church in Scotland faithfully struggled to defend Presbyterianism, "then God would be pleased and Scotland would be blessed to play an important role in the prophecy of future blessings to the world" (141). Henderson may never have spoken explicitly of his ideas being millennial, but Jackson implies it when he names the heading of the section of chapter 4 in which he treats Henderson's role as moderator of the Glasgow Assembly, "Managing the Millennium." Henderson's eschatology certainly included an optimism regarding the future success of the Reformation and the future history of the world, in addition to the final hope of the coming of Christ and perfection of His kingdom in heaven.

Henderson's doctrine of the covenant is not spelled out at length. Clearly, he understood the concept as fundamental to Presbyterian theology. He "carefully avoided" a definitive answer to questions such as who are in the covenant, and how or why they were in it. Why this careful avoidance? "It appears Henderson understood that delving into fine-tuned theological definitions was either unnecessary or unrelated to serving the more immediate success of the movement" (74).

This brings us to the novel use to which he put these three doctrines. His goal was to resist Charles I and to make Scotland a Presbyterian nation: "Alexander Henderson created the National Covenant of 1638 to serve as theological and constitutional pillars on which the Covenanters based their resistance to Charles I" (49). Covenant obedience—that is, obedience to the National Covenant—"was the necessary

means of procuring blessings for Scotland, and perhaps for the whole world" (87-88). As repentance and faith are always required of those who are in the covenant, so here, except that in this case, repentance from the sins of idolatry and of a wrong form of church polity took the form of adhering to the National Covenant (129). Henderson was convinced that "the National Covenant was a divine means of continuing the work of Reformation" (91), and encouraged preachers by reminding "them that their efforts as preachers would be the central means by which God would revive the gospel and save Scotland and then through Scotland continue the Reformation to the whole world" (103).

In sum, Henderson put these three doctrines into the service of politics. Unlike Abraham Kuyper, Henderson did not enter politics by taking a political office, thus neglecting his ecclesiastical office. But like many "reverends" in the news today, Henderson had much to say about political matters, largely because Anglicanism and civil government simply could not be divorced from each other. He used these doctrines for political ends and, particularly, by using them to develop a theology of resistance to the king if the king would not carry out the primary purposes of civil government, "which he believed were always connected to the protection and promotion of true religion" (80).

My reminder to myself, in this connection, is always to use doctrine for the purpose for which God gave it, namely, to guard the church against apostasy (Henderson would argue he was doing this), and to promote godliness in the lives of the people. I do not mean to suggest that doctrine has no use outside the church. It always forms the substance of our evangelism labors, missions, and broader witness, and it is the foundation for our entire Christian life. Doctrine may even form the substance of our letters to civil authorities. But it must not motivate us to resist authority in the way in which Henderson did.

**Henderson's Methods**

If Henderson's methods of addressing the sins of Charles I and the errors of Anglicanism were limited to his preaching and personal rebukes of the King, well enough. But they were not. In the National Covenant, Henderson set forth his religious justification for Christian resistance. This resis-

tance called for more than following the example of the apostles, who insisted they would obey God rather than men, and willingly suffering the consequences (Acts 4:18ff., 5:29ff.). It called for active, organized resistance of the king and his bishops.

To justify this resistance, Henderson appealed to political arguments, as well as to God's law itself. Regarding the latter he claimed, first, to be defending God's glory against the idolatry which the king tolerated. Second, he claimed that the fifth commandment, although requiring citizens to be subject to their king, also gave "every individual, no matter what his station in life...a divine obligation to resist, or to direct superiors to their covenant obligations" (83). Notice: directing superiors to their covenant obligations may include "a divine obligation to resist."

Henderson's preaching, pamphleteering, and position as moderator of the Glasgow Assembly, were ways by which he encouraged the people to such resistance.

But what forms, concretely, did this resistance take?

One was "supplications and petitions" (64ff.). But this is not active resistance; we are free to ask our superiors to change their minds, and give reasons why they would be wise to do so.

The Service Book Riots (62ff.) was another. During a worship service, when the Service Book was used, the congregation responded by yelling and "the women...threw the stools they sat on at the preachers, and...invaded them more nearly and strove to pull them from their pulpits" (63).

A third was that of leading the Glasgow Assembly as it "began deposing and excommunicating each of the bishops on one level simply for being bishops" (157). One could well appreciate the struggle in which Henderson was involved and take his side regarding the issues, and yet view this method of dealing with the issues as a high-handed church political move.

A fourth was that of "openly defying" (175) the king by encouraging the people in the Bishops' Wars and the English Civil Wars that followed. Henderson did not start the wars. But in several treatises he encouraged the people to resist the king's side in the war. For example, in his treatise *Instructions for Defensive Arms* he made clear that to fight the king did not mean that they were "engaged in rebellion, but in godly 'defence' (sic)" (193).

He also encouraged an offensive move, when the Scots invaded England during the Second Bishops' War.

Earthly wars fought in the name of the gospel but involving the use of carnal weapons were a sad reality during the time of the Reformation. Yet, they are always a blot on the gospel. Christ told Peter to put down his sword, when he could have used it defensively. So another reminder to myself as I read this book was to fight not with carnal weapons that kill or injure the body, but with spiritual weapons which, when properly used in reliance on God who accomplishes His will, pull down strongholds, cast down that which exalts itself against God, and bring every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ (II Cor. 10:4). Yes, we are in a war in which we do need defensive armor. Let us be clothed with the armor of God (Eph. 6:10ff.).

The history recorded in this book is worthwhile reading. The book is a significant contribution to our understanding of a man whom God did use for good in many ways. The lessons, both positive and negative, ought not be forgotten. ●

***The Theology of Augustine: An Introductory Guide to His Most Important Works***, by Matthew Levering. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2013. Pp. xviii + 224 $26 (paper). [Reviewed by Marco Barone.]

The aim of this book is to present the theology of Augustine of Hippo (AD 354–430) through the exposition of "seven pivotal works" (xii). This is an ambitious task for two reasons. First, Augustine of Hippo is one of the greatest theologians in the entire history of the church, and arguably the greatest theologian of the ancient and medieval church. To summarize the teaching of such a great mind is never easy, and such a summary will necessarily leave something out. Secondly, as Levering himself says, "Augustine wrote over one hundred treatises, countless sermons, and more than five million words in all" (xi). One may get lost in them, or get discouraged, or one may not know where to start his reading. In spite of these significant difficulties, Levering succeeds in the task that he has set himself to in his book.

Levering thinks that there is a

conceptual line that connects the Augustinian works chosen as representative of the theology of Augustine: "'You have made us for yourself, and our heart is restless until it rests in you' (*Confessions* 1.1.1). We are made to love the triune God and to participate in his life. This is the message of these seven works of Augustine" (190).

Levering's introduction begins with *On Christian Doctrine* (chapter 1), Augustine's "account of biblical interpretation and preaching" (1). This is "a manual of instruction for Christian biblical interpretation, education, and preaching" (xiii). Through this book, Augustine establishes the rules for reading, interpreting, and preaching the Scripture. This is the foundation of theology. Scripture, however, is divided into two testaments. How to deal with them? Augustine's *Answer to Faustus, a Manichean* is helpful (chapter 2). Levering selects certain books of this work (4, 6, 9, 10, 12-19, 22, and 30-32) in which Augustine offers "an extraordinary Christian theology of the Old Testament" (19).

*Homilies on the First Epistle of John* (chapter 3) explain what should be the goal of our knowledge of Scripture: the love of God and of His church. The *Homilies* surely have good things to say also to the Christian of today. Against the background of the Donatist controversy, the *Homilies* teach us to consider the good and peace of the congregation and the spiritual welfare of the fellow believers as more important than our own ambitions and personal agendas. However, this love is possible only because God loved us first. The next step in Levering's account is *On the Predestination of the Saints* (chapter 4). It is the electing grace of God in Jesus Christ that, through the Holy Spirit, works our faith, conversion, and perseverance. Augustine experienced this absolute dependence upon God's grace. In fact, Levering examines *Confessions* (chapter 5), a book which every Christian should read. It is the outstanding account that Augustine gives of his own life, a life described against the background of the marvelous, sovereign grace of God.

While *Confessions* recounts the grace and providence of God in the life of Augustine, *City of God* (chapter 6) is the account of the grace and providence of God in human history. Through his Christian understanding of history, the African theologian offers a beautiful account of history as providentially guided by our sovereign God for the good of the

"city of God" (the church) as opposed to the "city of Satan." This history culminates in the eschatological completion of the eternal Sabbath. In that final day, we will be in glory, serving God and contemplating Him through the face of Jesus Christ. This triune God is presented and defended in *On the Trinity* (chapter 7), which is a tenacious defense of the unity and Trinity of God, with a particular focus on the explanation of the unity of the three Persons. To fellowship forever with God is the final end of the Christian, and this is why the last Augustinian work discussed is *On the Trinity*.

I have a few remarks to make on this presentation of Augustine's theology. In connection with the *Homilies*, Levering says that "Augustine sought a dialogue with the Donatists, but he also polemically critiqued them. He is thus a somewhat unlikely progenitor of the contemporary ecumenical theology" (189). Levering wants to emphasize this because, unfortunately, he is a member of the compromising group *Evangelicals and Catholics Together* (even more unfortunate, he is on the Roman Catholic side). However, Levering needs to be more careful. In fact, Augustine has nothing to do with the contemporary ecumenical movement. Augustine would never have sacrificed God's truth on the altar of outward unity, as the modern ecumenical movement does. Moreover, Levering rightly says that "*On the Predestination of the Saints* demonstrates that it [predestination] is a biblical doctrine" (189). If this is true, one wonders why Levering is still a member of the Roman Catholic Church, a church that is at enmity against this doctrine. Furthermore, Levering asks why, "if everything depends on God's infinite love, God does not transform and save all" (87), and adds that "although this mystery cannot be plumbed, we must not suggest that God's superabundant love is lacking or deficient with respect to any rational creature" (87). This last assertion does not reflect the focus of Augustine's theology of particular grace. It is enough to read Augustine's works against Pelagius and the Semi-Pelagians to see it, *On the Predestination of the Saints* included. Levering spoiled the end of a good chapter, although the summary itself is well written.

*The Theology of Augustine* is an interesting and helpful book both for ordained and lay people. First, the exposition is clear, a feature that makes the book suitable for all kinds of readers interested

in Augustine. Second, Levering treats the text with precision and fairness. We can read Augustine speaking through Levering's chapters. In fact, his intrusions are very rare and easily discernible. Third, the selection of the Augustinian works is appropriate. Through the knowledge of these seven works, we can really know and appreciate Augustine at his best (and, sometimes, at his worst). Levering provides a good introduction that is both an accessible starting point for the beginner and a refresher for those who already know Augustine. As an introduction, it aims to direct the reader to Augustine's works themselves. For Christian theology, especially Reformed theology, Augustine is very important. The Reformed believer would profit having a general grasp of his theology. *The Theology of Augustine* can help him in this endeavor. ●

***Hebrews*,** by David B. McWilliams. Powder Springs, Georgia: Tolle Lege Press, 2015. Pp. xxxvii + 408. $39.95 (hardcover). [Reviewed by David Engelsma.]

Rarely does a commentary on a book of the Bible lend itself to a continuous reading from start to finish for instruction, edification, and pleasure. Still more rarely is a commentary suitable for this kind of reading by a layman. The rule is that ministers read commentaries and then only the particular section that pertains to the passage of Scripture with which the preacher is working at the time.

David McWilliams' commentary on Hebrews is an exception to the rule. The Christian layman can read this commentary from start to finish for profit and pleasure. When he has completed his reading, he will have greatly increased both his knowledge and his appreciation of the spiritually rich epistle to the Hebrews. This is to say that he will have learned much about the gospel of our High Priest, Jesus Christ, who is sympathetic to His new covenant people in our often severe, painful, burdensome trials. By this learning, he will be encouraged to persevere faithfully to the very end—his inheriting the new world in the day of Christ.

The explanation of the unique readability of this commentary is its nature. It is not the typical exposition of a book of the Bible,

verse by isolated verse and, often, word by distinct word. Rather, the commentary is one in a series designated as "the *lectio continua* expository commentary" on the New Testament. *Lectio continua* (literally, "continuous reading") refers to a method of preaching on a book of the Bible. This method consists of preaching through a book verse by verse and chapter by chapter in the order in which the chapters and verses stand in the book. A *lectio continua* commentary, which this commentary is, very much resembles, if it does not consist of, a series of sermons on a book of the Bible, proceeding passage by passage, if not verse by verse and chapter by chapter.

By no means does this special nature of commentary lessen the usefulness and worth of the exposition of Hebrews for the preacher or the theological scholar. The sermonic essence of the commentary is painstakingly exegetical. Attention is paid to specially significant or difficult words and phrases. Connections in and between the passages are carefully noted.

The commentary repeatedly calls attention to the theme of the epistle to the Hebrews. "The point of the book is the heavenly high priestly work of Christ…[The] entire book is a warm, pastoral exhortation and encouragement not to turn back but to realize the Christian life in view of the accomplishment of Christ and his ongoing ministry as high priest of his people" (407). The purpose of the Holy Ghost with the letter at the time of its writing was to warn mainly Jewish Christians not to fall back into Judaism under the threat of persecution and because of the hardships of the way of confessing Jesus to be the Christ. A prominent truth in the epistle is the "theme of perseverance in the faith and warning against apostasy" (xxix). To those members of the church who, under the pressure of persecution, were tempted to fall away from Jesus Christ, then to return to the shadows of the old covenant, "Hebrews is about the supremacy of Christ" (17).

The exposition of Hebrews is doctrinally sound. This is true particularly with regard to the repeated warnings of Hebrews against apostasy. Commonly, the sharp warnings against apostasy in the book are explained as implying the falling away of saints to eternal damnation. Such is the common explanation of Hebrews 6:4-8, which speaks of a falling away of some who have "tasted

the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come." McWilliams denies that the sharp warnings against falling away imply the possibility of the falling away and perishing of those who were once brought into a saving union with Jesus Christ. Rather, the warnings are the means—the *necessary* means—of the Holy Spirit to preserve the saints, including bringing those to repentance who were inclined to forsake Christ under the pressure of suffering for His sake.

> The warnings of Hebrews 6 address professing believers who may not in reality possess what they profess. The writer is…concerned…with apostasy as a real alternative. Of course those who apostatize are not real, genuine Christians. However, the temptation to turn back brings the writer to apply deep and pointed warning to his readers. It is as if he were saying, "Are you who you say you are? Do you realize what going back really means?"…The writer speaks of those who have been in the sphere of the church, but who have never been regenerated, convicted, or justified (152-4).

Repudiating dispensationalism's gross error regarding the relation between the old covenant and the new covenant, McWilliams affirms the "unity of God's plan of salvation. However, the writer also wishes to draw the contrasts between the old and the new. The old was provisional and typological while the new fulfills the old and brings to fruition the plan of salvation determined from the beginning" (200).

In his treatment of Hebrews 10:1-18, "the finished work of Christ," the commentator launches a vigorous defense of the efficacious, particular atonement of the cross.

> Such is the finished work of Christ that he has even purchased the faith with which his people trust him. The Lord has not said in essence "I purchased salvation for them but I leave it to each one to take salvation by faith." What faith? What faith does a sinner dead in trespasses and sins possess? No, rather the Lord has done it all. On the cross, Christ purchased our salvation and also determined to give the gift of faith with which to believe in him. So sufficient is the cross of Christ!...Once he hung upon a cross in bloody agony but now he wields the royal scepter in sovereign au-

> thority as the risen, ascended king-priest of his people. From there he applies his blood in sovereign mercy to his own (266-7).

In keeping with this defense of the efficacy of the grace of the atonement, McWilliams declares that the promise of the gospel is unconditional (321) and, therefore, "sure" (321-2). This is the truth about the promise that is revealed particularly, and conclusively, in Hebrews 11:11, 12—God's promise of seed to barren, old Sarah and her husband, he "as good as dead."

Yet another virtue of the commentary is its determination to apply the doctrine of the text to the practice of the church today. Expounding Hebrews 12:28, 29, "let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear: for our God is a consuming fire," the author condemns the present-day fad of the church's bringing "pop culture into her worship," as is being done increasingly even by Presbyterians, and pleads for the solemn, reverent worship that has "defined Reformed worship in the past" (378-9). Such worship centers on the believer's hearing the preaching as the very word of God: "Every time the Word is preached, God personally addresses his people through the faithful exposition of his will. Life without the Word of God read and preached is absurd" (375).

In view of the necessity of faith (which is both knowledge and confidence) for the realization of the purpose of the Holy Spirit with the book of Hebrews in all of God's people, and not just a few who have had, or have deceived themselves into thinking that they have had, a mystical experience, and in view of the resurgence in our day of the grievous error of the Puritans to base confidence upon spiritual feelings, McWilliams' explanation of the "full assurance of faith" in Hebrews 10:19-23 is important, if not urgent.

> The preacher [in the Hebrews passage] does not stress the subjective feeling of confidence; rather, he stresses the objective reality of the believer's confidence. Freedom of access into the presence of God is given with the blood of Christ and is not removed by moods (4:16)…Even if the believer does not feel bold and confident, his moods do not change the reality (271).

If the commentary has any weakness at all, it would be the

failure explicitly, sharply, and fully to describe the *nature* of the new covenant of grace, while at the same time explicitly criticizing the popular conception of the covenant as a conditional contract that prevails in evangelical and in Presbyterian and Reformed churches today. As the author himself observes, the truth of the new covenant is fundamental and prominent in the epistle to the Hebrews. There ought to be, therefore, perfect clarity as to what the covenant *is*.

One expects such a description, if not definition, in chapter 13, "The New Covenant," which chapter explains Hebrews 8:7-13. The author promises such a description, or definition, asking the question, "What is this 'new covenant'?" (199)

But the question never receives an answer. Instead, at once McWilliams explains the relation of the old covenant and the new, demonstrating that the new is better than the old. The explanation is sound. Still lacking, however, is a definition of the covenant.

The closest the commentary comes to a precise description or definition of the covenant is its quotation of O. Palmer Robertson, almost in passing, that the covenant is a "bond in blood sovereignly administered" (176). This epigrammatic description is true, but it does not satisfy the need in evangelical and Reformed circles for a thorough, positive description of the covenant, as the reality of the covenant is revealed in the book of Hebrews, accompanied by a clear, pointed refutation of the prevailing conception of the covenant as a cold, conditional contract, or agreement, or even, as some Presbyterians have dared to describe it, bargain.

Adding to the value of the commentary are frequent substantial quotations of notable theologians, including Herman Hoeksema.

McWilliams is also the author of an excellent commentary on Galatians. This book was reviewed and recommended in the November 2015 issue of this journal. ●

***Brand Luther: 1517, Printing, and the Making of the Reformation,*** by Andrew Pettegree. New York: Penguin Press, 2015. Pp. xvi + 383. $29.95 (hardcover). [Reviewed by David Engelsma.]

Of the making of many books about Martin Luther and the Protestant Reformation of the church, there is no end. This is not a bad thing. Luther was one of God's great men in history, and his work, the accomplishment of the furtherance of God's great and grand purpose with history: the salvation of the church of Jesus Christ by the gospel of grace.

Neither is the making of yet another book on Luther senseless, because repetitive. Luther was hugely gifted and incredibly many-sided. *Brand Luther*, while approximating still another biography of the great man of God (the author denies that the book is, in fact, another biography of Luther, Preface, x), calls attention to an aspect of Luther's gifts and achievements that can be, and has been, slighted, if not overlooked. This is Luther's contribution to, indeed almost creation of, mass publishing.

"Within five years of penning the ninety-five theses, he [Luther] was Europe's most published author—ever. How he achieved this was the most extraordinary of the Reformation's multiple improbabilities. It is also the story of this book" (Preface, xi, xii). In the course of his reformatory work and as a main means of the movement, Luther made little Wittenberg "Germany's largest printing center" in the sixteenth century (Preface, xii, xiii). The numbers of copies of Luther's various writings—pamphlets, printed sermons, booklets, and books—published in Germany and distributed throughout many nations during the lifetime of Luther are staggering.

Whereas the interest of some readers may be the influence of Luther on publishing as such—the promotion of book publishing—the Reformed reader will take note of the strategic importance of books for the Reformation. Luther set forth, spread, and defended the Protestant, Christian faith largely by books and other writings. The Reformation began with the publishing, first on the church door in Wittenberg and then in booklet form, of the ninety-five theses against the Roman Church's false doctrine and corrupt practice of indulgences.

Pettegree proves the conclusion at which he arrives towards the end of the book:

> Luther could not have been a force in the German church without his instinctive, towering talent as a writer. This was his most astonishing gift to the Reformation and to the German print industry. After Luther, print and public communication would never be the same again. It was an extraordinary legacy for an extraordinary man (338).

Basic to the importance for the Reformation of Luther's writing was his style. Deliberately, Luther wrote to and for the common people in their language—German. He shunned the ecclesiastical Latin in which theologians and churchmen usually wrote their tomes. This language was unaccessible to the people—an unknown tongue. Thus, he aimed at, and effectively hit, his intended audience: the German people, and not only the clergy. In keeping with this intention, his style of writing was "short, clear, and direct." This style was "Brand Luther" (5). Every reader of Luther, even in English translation, understands that the author's "direct" means blunt, earthy, and forceful.

One other characteristic of Luther's style of writing is noted by Pettegree, and can well be noted by theological writers in our day of insipid theological writing: "familiar truculence and passion" (281). This characteristic of the Reformer, specifically, in his writing—vigorous polemics born of zeal for the truth—would have made him as unpopular with most Protestants, indeed most nominally Reformed, in the twenty-first century as he was with Roman Catholics in the sixteenth century.

Well aware of the importance of his writings for the Reformation, Luther took a hands-on approach to the publication of his books. He visited the publishing houses regularly. He insisted on the attractive appearance of his publications. The result was books that were "recognizably distinct from what had gone before" (Preface, xiv). If the Reformer was dissatisfied with the work that was being done on one of his books by a publisher, he did not hesitate to transfer the manuscript to another publisher. Much as the publishers vied for the honor and financial benefit of publishing the works of the best-selling author of his own or any other time, they must have dreaded the regular appearances of Luther in their publishing houses to check on their work. Once he had handed over his manuscript, it is likely that the

publishers regarded Luther as a nuisance in their facilities.

The book concentrates on the publishing activities of Martin Luther. By no means, however, is it narrowly restricted to this aspect of the life and work of the Reformer. Even though the author denies that the book is another biography of Luther, it comes close, describing and analyzing especially the highlights of the Reformer's ministry. The author's insight into and judgment of these highlights are excellent.

Not only professing Lutherans but also most nominally Reformed theologians, indeed church members in general, ought to consider the historian's analysis of Luther's response to Erasmus' defense of the dependency of God's saving grace upon man's supposed "free will." About Luther's *The Bondage of the Will*, Pettegree writes:

> Crushing, comprehensive restatement of Reformation doctrine…Luther set out his position with brutal clarity. It was not possible for a person to turn to God. Conversion was God's promise and gracious act, and from this there could be no stepping back. Only the elect fulfilled God's will; as far as salvation and reprobation are concerned, human will could determine nothing. Luther is here the master theologian…(233-4).

Indeed, he is.

And by virtue of this confession of the bondage of the will and the accompanying doctrine of salvation by the sovereign grace of God, originating in eternal election, Luther is as obnoxious to most of the contemporary Protestant church as he was—and still is—to the Roman Catholic Church.

As little as Luther's defense of salvation by the sovereign, discriminating grace of God, that is, the recovery of the gospel and the Reformation of the church, finds favor with Lutheran, *and Reformed*, theologians today, so little does his condemnation of civil revolution (think: labor unions and the strike) on behalf of the physical welfare of the workingman find support among Protestants. Having related Luther's vehement condemnation of the Peasants' Revolt in 1525, Pettegree observes, rightly, that "the hope that Luther articulated was for salvation in the hereafter: the promise of a social gospel was for Luther an irrelevant and ultimately cruel delusion" (244).

AD 2017 will mark the 500th anniversary of the Reformation of the church. *Brand Luther* is an early celebration of the event. Reformed believers ought to turn off their television sets and discard their electronic gadgets and games, in order to read this instructive work concerning God's work in modern history on behalf of their and their children's salvation. And then, recognizing that the Reformation of the church was launched and promoted largely by the publication of the truth in books and other printed materials, they ought to decide to devote themselves to good, theological reading, lest the Reformation be lost to them and their children. They might well begin with Luther's *The Bondage of the Will*. ●

***1 & 2 Thessalonians,*** by Richard D. Phillips. Reformed Expository Commentary series, Richard D. Phillips and Philip Graham Ryken, general editors, Ian M. Duiguid, Old Testament editor, and Daniel M. Doriani, New Testament editor. Phillipsburg: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing, 2015. Pp. xiv + 437. $34.99 (hardcover). [Reviewed by Ronald Cammenga.]

Good commentaries—tools of the trade for preachers and seminary professors. What a hammer and saw are to a home builder, gun and grenade to a soldier, tractor and combine to a farmer, scalpel and stethoscope to a doctor, biblical commentaries are to a minister and seminary professor. The Reformed biblical commentary tradition is a rich tradition. Beginning with John Calvin, Reformed preachers and theologians have sought to explain and apply the biblical text for the instruction of their readers. Since the Reformation, solid exegetical commentaries have been used by God both for the spread of the Reformed faith and for its preservation for future generations. Again, think of Calvin's commentaries and the extent to which they have been instrumental in achieving these ends. Ever since the publication of his first commentary in 1540, not surprisingly his commentary on the Epistle to the Romans, Calvin's commentaries have exerted an influence on every generation of Christians. Nearly five hundred years after they first began to appear in print, seminary students

are being told—seminary students at the Protestant Reformed Theological Seminary, at least—that they ought not to begin to write out their sermon until after they have consulted John Calvin.

This commentary by Dr. Richard D. Phillips, *1 & 2 Thessalonians*, is part of the Reformed Expository Commentary series. The series now includes commentary on nearly thirty books of the Bible and that number is increasing as the series expands. In the "Series Introduction," which is included in the front matter of this commentary, Philips and Phillip G. Ryken, who together serve as general editors, express the four fundamental commitments of all the contributors to the series. First, "these commentaries aim to be *biblical*" (ix). The writers all share a commitment to the infallible inspiration of Scripture, as becomes plain from Phillip's exposition in *1 & 2 Thessalonians*. Secondly, "these commentaries are unashamedly *doctrinal*" (ix). That, too, becomes plain from Phillip's exposition of these two Pauline epistles in which critical doctrines of the Reformed faith are set forth. All the writers "are committed to the Westminster Confession of Faith and Catechisms as containing the system of doctrine taught in the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments. Each volume will teach, promote, and defend the doctrines of the Reformed faith as they are found in the Bible" (ix-x). Third, the commentaries in this series "are *redemptive-historical* in their orientation" (x). All the writers "believe in the unity of the Bible and its central message of salvation in Christ" (x). They share a "Christ-centered view of the Old Testament, in which its characters, events, regulations, and institutions are properly understood as pointing us to Christ and his gospel…." (x). And fourth, the commentaries in the series are intended to be "*practical*, applying the text of Scripture to contemporary challenges of life—both public and private—with appropriate illustrations" (x). In *1 & 2 Thessalonians*, Phillips is to be commended for meeting these four aims of the series.

The Reformed Expository Commentary series intends, as the very name of the series indicates, to be exposition of the biblical text. The editors speak of the "interdependent tasks of biblical exposition and theological reflection," and argue that they "are best undertaken in the church, and most specifically in

the pulpits of the church" (ix). That is what makes up the content of these commentaries and is the method followed in interpreting the text, which is the task of the commentator. These commentaries do not interpret the text phrase by phrase, verse by verse, chapter by chapter from the beginning to the end of each book of the Bible. Rather, these commentaries are an exposition passage by passage. All the contributors are preacher-scholars. The content of their commentaries began as expositions in the pulpits of their respective churches. These commentaries were first preached in their congregations. Undoubtedly the blocks of text covered in the chapters, were originally the blocks of text that formed the basis for the author's Sunday sermons. The chapter titles were originally sermon themes. Along the way, the author's view and practice of preaching comes out—the historically Reformed view and practice of preaching. In Dr. Richard Phillips' case, his commentary *1 & 2 Thessalonians* was originally preached to the congregation of Second Presbyterian Church (PCA) in Greenville, South Carolina. The commentary is not only the fruit of preaching, but it is the fruit of *series* preaching, that is, preaching through a book of the Bible. This, as is well-known, was Calvin's method of preaching in Geneva. So much was this the case that on the Sunday following his return to Geneva after his two-and-a-half-year banishment, Calvin simply picked up his exposition of the biblical text where he had left off when he was forced to leave the city.

Phillips' *1 & 2 Thessalonians* is a solid, faithful, and confessionally Reformed commentary. And that is high praise—the highest! By "solid" I mean substantive. This is not a superficial paraphrasing of the text, with fluff added for entertainment—stories and humor thrown in for good measure. Not at all. There is a working with the text and a concerted effort to make known the Word and will of God as revealed in the specific text under consideration. The commentary is doctrinal. It highlights the key doctrines that are set forth in Paul's epistles to the Thessalonians. The focus in the letters is on Paul's eschatology. Says Phillips:

> The letters to the Thessalonians are particularly known… for their concentrated doctrinal teaching regarding the second coming of Jesus Christ. Indeed, Paul's eschatology in these letters is of primary

> importance for those seeking a firm understanding of end-times teaching. It is my conviction that Paul's teaching here reproduces in a doctrinally clear fashion the teaching of Jesus' Olivet Discourse in Matthew 24-25 and Luke 21. Thessalonians also provides an essential doctrinal grid for approaching the book of Revelation. ("Preface," xiii).

One very commendable feature of this commentary is that it is unabashedly amillennial in its eschatology. Throughout his exposition of the text of Paul's epistles to the Thessalonians, Phillips defends the amillennial viewpoint, not only, but engages in polemic against both premillennial/dispensationalism and postmillennialism. In both instances he demonstrates that they are exegetically impossible and indefensible.

Although Phillips addresses these end-times issues earlier in the commentary, he addresses them in a much more concentrated fashion in Chapter 15, "The Coming of the Lord: 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18." This is the passage that the apostle introduces with the well-known words, "But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope" (v. 13). It is the passage in which he says that "we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent them which are asleep" (v. 15). And it is the passage in which he says that "we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord" (v. 17).

Despite the "error and hysteria" of the "end-times fervor" that marked the conclusion of the twentieth and the beginning of the twenty-first centuries, a fervor fanned by such things as the best-selling *Left Behind* series and the widely publicized tomfoolery of Harold Camping,

> the Bible's teaching is not as obscure on this subject [of the end-times] as many would have it. Among our most important resources on Christ's return are Paul's letters to the Thessalonians. His remarkably clear teaching touches on Christ's return to earth, the rapture of the church, the resurrection of the dead, the final judgment and eternal punishment in hell, the coming Antichrist, the millennial question, and the eternal age of glory. (150)

Several chapters of the commentary are devoted to critical subjects of eschatology. Chapter 15 is entitled "The Coming of the Lord: 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18." In the chapter, Phillips develops the truth that Christ's personal, bodily, visible, and glorious return will be "history-concluding." He contends that

> [t]he coming and appearing of Christ in glory is not an event that *precedes* the final episode of God's plan for history but is rather an event that *brings about* the end of history. This rules out, again, an idea of the rapture in which Christ returns only to depart so that more history can be played out, since the return that Paul describes actually ends history. It also rules out the premillennial view of eschatology, the view that there will be a thousand-year period after Christ returns, during which God fulfills his purpose for the people of Israel, and after which occurs the final crisis of history. Instead, the return of Christ *is* the final crisis of history and the last day of which Scripture so frequently speaks. The return of Christ does not usher in additional phases of history, but is simultaneously the end of this present age and the consummation of the eternal age that is to come (154).

Phillips identifies three main results to Christ's return. Of these results, "[t]he first is the judgment of all people who have ever lived" (155). "The second result of Christ's return may be regarded as the reverse side of the final judgment, namely, the deliverance and vindication of those who are made righteous in Christ" (155).

> And third, Christ's return culminates history by fulfilling God's sovereign purpose in the eternal kingdom of Christ…. As Christians live in a world that flouts the rule of Christ's gospel reign, how glorious is our knowledge that his return will bring the fulfillment of God's purpose to exalt his Son as sovereign over all. When he comes, Paul wrote to the Philippians, every knee will bow and "every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father" (Phil. 2:10-11) (156).

Only the Reformed amillennialist views these as the three main results of Christ's return. Neither the premillennial/dispensationalist nor the postmillennialist does or can.

Chapter 16, "Grieving with Hope: 1 Thessalonians 4:13-14," is both powerful and beautiful.

This is the passage in which the apostle refers to believers who have died as "them which are asleep" and as "them…which sleep in Jesus." In this section of the epistle, Paul is addressing an error that was held by some in Thessalonica. They taught that one had to be alive when Christ returned in order to experience the transformation and glory that the Lord's return will usher in. "Paul's response to this problem, as with other problems of Christian experience, is instructive…. The answer to questions of doubt, confusion, or distress is the plain teaching of God's Word." This gives Phillips the opportunity to point out that "[s]o many problems in the experience of believers today likewise stem from ignorance of biblical truth, so that the great need of God's people is the careful teaching of Scripture" (161). Amen to that!

Phillips explains carefully and poignantly the reasons on account of which the Bible speaks of the death of believers as "sleep," thus "distinguishing it from that death which truly is death" (162). Among the reasons for this uniquely biblical description of death is that, first, death is not harmful to the believer. Positively, "just as sleep is beneficial for the living, death also benefits the Christian. Sleep is often the best prescription for those ailing from sickness or fatigue. Sleep restores the body, and the sleep of death does more for the soul: it transforms us into glory, removing every vestige of sin and sorrow" (162). And then, third, "like sleep, the death of a Christian is temporary" (163). Those who are fallen asleep in Jesus are destined to awake again, refreshed and revived, to a new life, everlasting life and glory.

An important part of this chapter is the polemic in which Phillips engages against the heresy of soul sleep. On the basis of the teaching of 1 Thessalonians 4:13-14 itself, along with the rest of Scripture, he demonstrates the error that "claims that believers enter an unconscious state in death until Christ returns. Instead, the Bible teaches that our conscious selves will be awake in the glory of the Lord while our bodies sleep in the grave, waiting their summons to resurrection" (163).

But this does not take away from the reality of death, the pain and real sorrow that the people of God experience over the death of a loved one. "Understanding the Bible's teaching, however, does not completely spare Christians from the grief of death. Death

remains a fearful enemy that has invaded God's garden. Being informed of our hope keeps believers from grieving in ignorance, but it does not relieve all the suffering of grief over those who have departed from us" (163). Over against the despair that overcomes the unbeliever in the face of death, believers in every age have hope. And with this hope, we are able to comfort ourselves and one another: "Wherefore comfort one another with these words" (1Thess. 4:18).

Chapter 17 contains solid exposition of 1 Thessalonians 4:14-17, where the apostle teaches the final, bodily resurrection, particularly the resurrection of "the dead in Christ" (1 Thes. 4:16). In the chapter he asks and answers several critical questions with regard to the doctrine of the final resurrection: What is the resurrection of the dead? Who will be raised from the dead? When will the dead be raised? How will the dead be raised? Why will the dead be raised? And, how do we know that the dead will be raised? In this chapter, too, Phillips exposes and refutes error, particularly the error of the premillennialists. He writes:

> According to premillennialism, there will be two distinct resurrections: the raising of the godly before a literal thousand-year reign of Christ and then the resurrection of the ungodly after Christ's millennial reign on earth. This is supposedly supported by Paul's statement in 1 Thessalonians 4:16 that 'the dead in Christ will rise first.' The problem with this interpretation is that Paul is not comparing the resurrection of the just to that of the unjust, but rather is comparing the resurrection of the dead to the transformation of believers who are still living when Christ returns. We can see Paul's point if we keep reading into verse 17: 'And the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive, who are left, will be caught up together with them.' Paul is not describing, first, the believers' resurrection and, second, the unbelievers' resurrection. Rather, he speaks of those who are dead in Christ and then those believers who are still living (176).

His conclusion is "that the Bible clearly teaches that the resurrection is a single event involving both the just and the unjust at the time of Christ's return. Revelation 20 informs us that at the end of the millennium, which is best understood as the present gospel age (a view

known as *amillennialism*), all mankind—saved and unsaved—will stand before Jesus to be separated in the judgment" (176).

"Meeting the Lord in the Air: 1 Thessalonians 4:16-18," is chapter 18 of *1 & 2 Thessalonians*. This, of course, is the critical passage to which they who teach the pre-tribulation, secret rapture appeal. The teaching of the rapture is a distinctive teaching of premillennialists and dispensationalists. It is a teaching popularly promoted, for example, by Hal Lindsey in his best-selling novel *The Late, Great Planet Earth* (published in 1970 by Zondervan) and, more recently, the *Left Behind* series, written by Tim LaHaye and Jerry B. Jenkins (published by Tyndale House). The entire sixteen-volume *Left Behind* series begins with the chaotic aftermath of the rapture—believers suddenly disappearing without a trace. Ever since this teaching became popular, it has been used by its advocates to impress upon people the urgency of their making a "decision for Christ" and "accepting Jesus into their hearts," as they say. In other words, the view of the secret rapture and Arminian theology have long ago forged an intimate alliance.

Phillips carefully examines this view and the interpretation of 1 Thessalonians 4:16-18 by its proponents. Not only does 1 Thessalonians 4:16-18 not support this view, it is positively opposed to it. He is critical not only of the view itself, but also of attendant doctrines, especially the dual purpose of God in history: an agenda for Israel and the Jews that is separate from His agenda for the church and non-Jews. Further, the teaching of the rapture gives Christians the false hope that they will be spared the coming great tribulation. In Phillips' view, "the doctrine that Christians are raptured before the great tribulation is thoroughly refuted by any number of Bible verses that warn Christians to be prepared to endure these very trials" (185). Besides refuting the false rapture view of this passage, Phillips gives a careful positive explanation. He points out two important things as regards the correct understanding of the passage. The first is that these saints meet the Lord "in the air," not in heaven. That is significant. And then there is the fact that the passage says that these saints who meet the Lord in the air shall "ever [that is, forever] be with the Lord" (v. 17 (the last part). Thus, "[w]hen Jesus returns, with heaven and earth passing away, those who are caught up in the air to meet him will return

with him to the new heavens and the new earth." When He returns, the saints who are still alive on the earth will go "to meet him in the splendor of his glory. Then, believers in Christ will gain the new world together with him" (192).

A distinctive teaching of Reformed eschatology is its teaching concerning Antichrist. Sprinkled throughout *1 & 2 Thessalonians*, Phillips sets forth the biblical and confessional truth concerning Antichrist. But there are especially two chapters that are devoted to treatment of Antichrist: Chapter 31, "The Man of Lawlessness: 2 Thessalonians 2:3-10 and Chapter 33, "The Mystery of Lawlessness: 2 Thessalonians 2:5-8." In these passages, the coming Antichrist is described in several ways, but the outstanding description of him is "the Man of Lawlessness." In its opposition to the teaching of Scripture regarding Antichrist, postmillennialism is exposed as grievous error. Says Phillips: "Contrary to postmillennial eschatology, which sees Christ returning only after a golden age in which the church has triumphed over the world in Christian faith and culture, Paul's teaching on the Antichrist urges us to anticipate such a concentrated expression of satanic power that only the sudden appearing of Christ can save the church from destruction" (335). Paul teaches that Antichrist will violently persecute the faithful and will make idolatrous demands, insisting that he be worshipped, "but Paul also makes it particularly clear that the final Antichrist must be taken as an individual human being in service of Satan" (329).

This passage also provides warrant for Phillips to expose the premillennial error. This in connection with Paul's teaching in 2 Thessalonians 2:4 that the Antichrist "sitteth in the temple of God, shewing himself that he is God." Phillips writes:

> The question is raised as to what Paul means in saying that the Antichrist "takes his seat in the temple of God" (2 Thess. 2:4). Dispensationalists take this statement to refer to a rebuilt temple in Jerusalem, which the Antichrist will physically occupy for personal veneration. The chief of many problems with this view is that not once in all his writings does Paul use the word *temple* to describe a rebuilt temple structure. Rather, contrary to the dispensational denial of the connection between Israel and the church, Paul sees Israel's physical

> temple as finding fulfillment in the spiritual building that is the Christian church (see Eph. 2:20, for instance). Moreover, the idea of God's being worshiped again by his people at a physical temple, complete with animal sacrifices, is utterly repugnant to the New Testament, which sees the temple as being fulfilled in the once-for-all atoning death of Jesus Christ (Heb. 10:1-9) (331).

Connected to Antichrist is the persecution that God's people will experience. This has been the lot of God's people in every age, and is what the future holds for the church, especially in the future great tribulation, contrary to the contention of postmillennialism that the great tribulation is past. In Phillips' view, the Scripture's give no reason for the church ever to expect anything other than rejection and persecution. The epistles to the Thessalonians makes plain that this was the experience of the saints in Thessalonica at this time. This persecution is only going to intensify as the end approaches and is going to be the worst at the very end of the New Testament age when the faithful people of God will experience the "great tribulation." "The Bible teaches… that suffering is inevitable for the believer. The Christian is never promised a care-free life but is in fact promised trials and affliction…. Every Christian is duly forewarned that trials are part and parcel of the Christian experience" (284). A bit later, he writes:

> Paul's teaching on persecution prompts a question about the church in our time: If being a Christian were made illegal by a hostile government, so that believers risked arrest by gathering for worship, how many of the people who fill evangelical churches today would still do so? There can be little doubt that the attendance in many churches… would plummet. Paul's teaching suggests that not all who profess Christ in times of ease will persevere under trials. He also asserts that those who do stand up for Christ despite suffering for the kingdom receive a testimony that they are saved and will inherit eternal life. In peaceful times, people come to church to make business contacts, find friends, obey family pressure, or just try it out (286) .

Two very significant chapters in the commentary are Chapter 27, "God's Righteous Judgment:

2 Thessalonians 1:5-8," a chapter on the final judgment, and Chapter 28, "The Biblical Doctrine of Hell: 2 Thessalonians 1:8-9." The chapter on the final judgment is, on the whole, well-done, treating every crucial aspect of this important purpose of Christ's second coming: what that judgment is; who will conduct the final judgment (the Lord Jesus "with his mighty angels, in flaming fire" (vv. 7b-8a); the reasons and purposes of the final judgment; and the final judgment as God's just retribution and vindication.

"The Biblical Doctrine of Hell" is a fine defense of the biblical and historically Reformed doctrine of hell. One result of the final judgment is that the unbelieving and ungodly "shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power" (2 Thess. 1:9). Phillips bemoans the fact that Reformed and Presbyterian ministers hardly ever mention hell in their sermons. He begins the chapter by relating a somewhat humorous, but in reality a very sad story.

> Some years ago, one of the royal princesses of England was departing from a cathedral service and spoke to the dean. 'Is it true, Dean,' she asked, 'that there is a place called hell?' The clergyman answered: 'Ma'am, our Lord and his Apostles taught so, the Creeds affirm so, and the Church believes so.' To this, the princess replied, 'Why, then, in God's name, do you not tell us so?" (293)

Undoubtedly the deafening silence concerning hell in Reformed and Presbyterian churches today is due in part to two closely related realities. The first is the widespread acceptance of the teaching of a love of God for all men and a desire of God to save all men, a desire that is expressed in the preaching of the gospel by means of the well-meant offer of the gospel. Closely related to this fact, is the increasing opposition to and silence regarding reprobation. With reprobation jettisoned and the well-meant gospel offer the message heard from most pulpits, there simply is no room for such a discordant note as the teaching of hell.

It is refreshing to read a clear, unembarrassed explanation of the doctrine of hell. Phillips rejects both the teaching of annihilationism (conditional immortality) and universalism (eventual salvation of every man). He makes clear that Scripture teaches the doctrine

of hell. "The problem with such a revision of the doctrine of hell is the standing testimony of the Holy Scriptures" (294). Hell, Phillips teaches, is a place of literal punishment, a place of punishment for sin, a place of conscious punishment, a place of bodily punishment, and a place of everlasting punishment. Hell's worst punishment is that those who are in hell are separated eternally from God. Phillips rightly calls attention to the urgency that the doctrine of hell adds to the preaching of the gospel. At stake is nothing less than one's eternal weal or woe!

One of the outstanding signs of Christ's second coming is the great apostasy. Phillips covers the great apostasy in Chapter 32, which is entitled "The Great Apostasy: 2 Thessalonians 2:3, 9-12." Verse 3 informs us that the day of Christ cannot come "except there come a falling away first." Verses 9-12 teach that God sends "strong delusion, that they should believe a lie" and that He does this for two main reasons. First, because they "believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness" (v. 12). And second, "because they received not the love of the truth." They neither loved nor believed the truth. And *therefore* God sends them strong delusion. Phillips correctly points out that the great apostasy is itself the judgment of God upon those who did not love or believe the truth. That underscores two things. First, that apostasy is itself a judgment of God. Phillips is to be commended for calling attention to this reality. He correctly points out Satan's work in apostasy, but also God's judgment not only "upon" apostasy, but "in" apostasy (343-5). That leads him to conclude the chapter with a timely call that Christians be lovers of truth (345-7).

Throughout his commentary, Phillips underscores the doctrine of sovereign predestination. There are many references to election in many different contexts. Chapter 3 is entitled, "Election and Its Effects: 1 Thessalonians 1:4-5." Not only does the chapter contain a definition of election, with explanation of the Greek word used in Scripture for election. But in the chapter Phillips also identifies and responds to the main objections that historically are lodged against election. And he points out the good effects of election on the preaching of the gospel, correctly pointing out that only election "gives us any hope of success as we evangelize" (29). He also points out the fruits of election, as they are expressed by

the apostle Paul in 1 Thessalonians 1:4-6, the outstanding fruit being (believing) reception of God's Word (32ff.). Frequently, Phillips quotes Calvin, and that is especially the case when he discusses election. Early in the commentary he cites Calvin and expresses his agreement with Calvin:

> God having chosen us before the world had its course, we must attribute the cause of our salvation to His free goodness; we must confess that He did not take us to be His children, for any deserts of our own; for we had nothing to recommend ourselves into His favor. Therefore, we must put the cause and fountain of our salvation in Him only, and ground ourselves upon it. (24)

Chapter 21 is another entire chapter devoted to the truth of election. The title of this chapter is "Destined for Salvation," and is based on 1 Thessalonians 5:9-11, where the apostle praises God because He "hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ." And in Chapter 34, entitled "To Obtain the Glory," based on 2 Thessalonians 2:13-15 the apostle says that "we are bound to give thanks always to God for you, brethren beloved of the Lord, because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth." Phillips goes on to teach that God did not choose believers, but that we believe as a fruit of election. This is a crucial distinction. It separated the Reformed and the Arminian at the time of the Synod of Dordt. And today it separates those who stand in the tradition of Dordt (and Westminster) from those who have departed from biblical and confessional orthodoxy.

> Opponents of election reply that God merely chose that whoever believes in Jesus will be saved. Or they argue that God did not choose any particular people before their faith, but only foresaw who would believe in Jesus and predestined that by believing they would be saved. The problem with these views is what the Bible actually says! Second Thessalonians 2:13 says not that God chose a principle of salvation but that "God chose you…to be saved." Election is of persons to salvation. Moreover, God did not choose the elect because he foresaw their faith, but simply because of his sovereign love for them. (361)

In 2 Thessalonian 2:13, the

apostle says that we have been chosen unto salvation "through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth." Here the apostle sets forth the means by which God carries out our election. This is crucial, in Phillips' judgment and demonstrates a critical aspect of the Reformed doctrine of election, that God has not only determined the end, but also the way to that end. He has not only determined salvation and who will be saved, but He has also sovereignly determined that those whom He has chosen to salvation will be saved "through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth." Just as God has sovereignly determined *who* will be saved, so has He determined *the way* in which they will be saved.

I offer three criticisms. First, Phillips should not give high praise to Dwight L. Moody, as he does at the beginning of Chapter 16. He begins this chapter by contrasting the accounts of two men who died in the same year. One was the atheist and enemy of Christianity, Colonel Robert G. Ingersoll. The other was Dwight L. Moody. The sharp contrasts in the accounts of their deaths indicates the radical difference between the child of God who dies in hope and the unbeliever who has no hope. I make no judgment of Dwight Moody's eternal destiny; not at all. But I do object to Phillips' praise of the man as "the great Christian evangelist." Moody was an enemy of Calvinism and of the Reformed faith. He detested the Reformed (biblical) doctrine of sovereign, double predestination. He taught a universal, resistible grace, in distinction from the sovereign, particular, efficacious grace of a sovereign God. Moody preached a Christ who was a miserable failure, a frustrated and ineffectual would-be Savior. And Moody was premillennial in his eschatology, one of the very errors Phillips is concerned to combat in his commentary. If Phillips desires to contrast the believer and the unbeliever in death, he could do better—much better—than Dwight L. Moody.

Secondly, Phillips embraces the theology of the well-meant gospel offer. On this rather disappointing note he ends his otherwise fine chapter on the final judgment. He writes:

> "Behold, I am coming soon," Jesus says, "bringing my recompense with me, to repay everyone for what he has done" (Rev. 22:12). He adds, inviting us all to accept the

> salvation that is still offered to everyone in the world: "Blessed are those who wash their robes, so that they may have the right to the tree of life and that they may enter the city by the gates" (v.14). (292)

Salvation is not an offer extended to all men, which they are invited to accept. But rather, the gospel is the call that comes to all men everywhere, commanding them to repent of their sins and believe in Jesus Christ, with the promise to all who do repent and believe (that is, the elect) that they will be saved.

And third, notwithstanding his courageous defense of election, Phillips is silent in his commentary on reprobation. This, too, is disappointing. It ought not to be. It ought not to be, first of all, because election implies reprobation—necessarily implies reprobation. The Reformed defense of election ought always to be accompanied by mention of and instruction in reprobation. Historically this has been demonstrated to be necessary because reprobation was eventually denied in those churches and denominations where there had been for some time silence about reprobation. And, secondly, there ought not to be this silence concerning reprobation in a commentary on 1 and 2 Thessalonians because the apostle Paul teaches reprobation by clear and necessary implication in these epistles. The apostle's word in 1 Thessalonians 5:9 that "God hath not appointed *us* to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ" clearly implies that there are others whom He has sovereignly "appointed unto wrath." And when he teaches in 2 Thessalonians 2:11 and 12, "For this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie: That they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness," what is this but reprobation and the outworking of reprobation. Silence regarding reprobation leads inevitably to the denial of reprobation. And denial of reprobation leads inevitably to the denial of election. This is the lesson of history and it is the judgment of God.

Notwithstanding these few criticisms, my overall evaluation of this commentary is positive and praiseworthy, as is my evaluation of the Reformed Exegetical Commentary series of which it is a part. Every preacher, professor, and seminary student, as well as interested layperson, ought to consider adding these commentaries to

their own reference library.

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***Faith Alone: The Doctrine of Justification*,** by Thomas Schreiner. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2015. Pp. 288. $19.99 (paper). [Reviewed by David Engelsma.]

In view of the impending 500th anniversary of the Reformation and with an eye on the contemporary repudiation of the Reformation's doctrine of justification by faith alone by the New Perspective on Paul (NPP), Fuller Seminary PhD and Southern Baptist theologian, Thomas R. Schreiner, has written this explanation and purported defense of the truth that is fundamental both to the Reformation and to the gospel of grace that the Reformation recovered and proclaimed: justification by faith alone (*sola fide*).

The author treats his subject in three main sections. The first is a study of the confession and development of the doctrine in the history of the New Testament church. The second is an exposition of the biblical doctrine, including the "forensic" nature of righteousness and the "role of good works in justification." The third section is mildly polemical, subjecting to critique the doctrine of justification as held by Rome and as taught today by N. T. Wright and the NPP.

The book's title and the mainly sound explanation of justification notwithstanding, *Faith Alone* is a weak and fatally flawed defense of the fundamental biblical doctrine of justification. Much of the positive explanation of justification is sound. Justification is a forensic act, a legal judgment, of God upon the in himself guilty, but believing, sinner. In justification, righteousness is imputed, or counted, to the believer. That

justification is by faith does not mean that the act of believing itself is the righteousness of the believing sinner. But "it seems more likely…that faith justifies because it unites believers to the crucified and risen Lord" (186). Justification is by "faith alone," and not by works of the law. Further, "works of the law" in Scripture does not refer merely to the ceremonial laws of the Old Testament, as Rome argues, but to all works performed in obedience to the "entire law" (111).

The book's flaw—its *fatal* flaw—is, first, the weakness with which the author sets forth and defends the truth of justification by faith alone against the numerous, aggressive adversaries of this fundamental doctrine of the Christian faith. Nothing about justification by faith alone is ever definitely, unquestionably, and absolutely true. Everything is "likely" or "seemingly" or "probably" true. Such is the essential importance of justification by faith alone for the saving office and ministry of Jesus Christ that the author's weak assertion that justification by faith alone is "likely" true amounts to the dubious confession that Jesus is "likely" the only Savior.

In a preceding paragraph of this review, I have already quoted one such weak statement by Schreiner: against the heretical declaration that the sinner's own act of believing is his righteousness with God, "it *seems more likely*… that faith justifies because it unites believers to the crucified and risen Lord" (186; emphasis added). Such hesitant statements are the rule, not the exception, thus opening up the doctrine of justification to the determined assaults upon it by its implacable adversaries, beginning with the Roman Catholic Church. "In looking at how Paul understands justification, we saw that the verb 'justify'…is *almost certainly forensic*" (169; emphasis added). "*Almost* certainly," but not *absolutely* certainly! Against contemporary teachers who explain the phrase, "the righteousness of God," in Paul as meaning God's faithfulness rather than the right standing with God that God imputes to the believing sinner, as Luther taught and as the Reformed creeds confess, Schreiner proposes that the view of Luther, the Reformation, and the Reformed creeds is "probable": "such a conclusion [that the righteousness of God "denotes right standing with God"] is *probable*" (170; emphasis added). "Arguments *suggest* that it [the righteousness of God in justification]

should be interpreted in this way," that is, as the perfect obedience of Christ that is imputed to the believing sinner (172; emphasis added). The biblical teaching does not definitely *establish, beyond all doubt and question,* but merely *suggests* this crucial element in the doctrine of justification. "Again, it *seems most likely* that the expression 'righteousness of God'…denotes the gift God gives his people" (173; emphasis added). Not perfectly clearly and definitely, beyond any shadow of a doubt, so that the believing sinner struggling with the guilt of his sins and tempted by the devil can and will trust the gospel of justification by faith alone to the saving of his soul, but "*seems most likely*," which delivers the sinner over to doubt, the deadly foe of the trust and confidence of faith and, therefore, also of justification.

These instances of uncertainty are frequent in the exposition, indeed, characteristic of the purported defense of justification.

A second weakness of the book is its compromising explanation of James 2. James 2 teaches that, like Abraham and Rahab, believers are "justified by works," and "not by faith only." The enemies of justification by faith alone, and thus of salvation by grace alone, beginning with the Roman Catholic Church in the 16th century, have always appealed to James 2 in defense of their doctrine that the forgiveness of sins depends upon one's own good works and that one's legal standing before God the Judge, upon which salvation depends, is determined at least in part by his own obedience to the law. The Reformers, particularly John Calvin, explained that James 2 itself makes plain that justification in the passage refers to the "proof" that Abraham gave of his justification by his works. Explaining James 2:21, Calvin wrote:

> James does not speak here of the cause of justification, or of the manner how men obtain righteousness…but his object was only to shew that good works are always connected with faith; and, therefore, since he declares that Abraham was *justified by works*, he is speaking of the proof he gave of his justification…. When Paul says that we are justified by faith, he means no other thing than that by faith we are counted righteous before God. But James has quite another thing in view, even to shew that he who professes that he has faith, must prove

> the reality of his faith by his works…. Paul means by it [justification] the gratuitous imputation of righteousness before the tribunal of God; and James, the manifestation of righteousness by the conduct, and that before men, as we may gather from the preceding words, 'Shew to me thy faith,' etc." (John Calvin, *Commentaries on the Catholic Epistles*, tr. John Owen, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1948, 314, 315).

Schreiner rejects this explanation of James 2: "it isn't convincing" (205). According to Schreiner, "justify" in James 2 has "the same meaning that we find in Paul (i.e., 'declare righteous')" (205). Despite Schreiner's subsequent confused and confusing efforts to retain some semblance of the confession of justification (as a forensic declaration) by faith alone, in view of this explanation of justification in James 2 Schreiner's theology is that justification as the forensic act of God—the declaration of righteousness a divine judgment upon the believing sinner—is partly by the sinner's own good works, just as Rome has always contended. The implication of Schreiner's theology of justification is that Scripture contradicts itself, inasmuch as Romans 3-5 and the epistle to the Galatians clearly teach that justification as the forensic declaration of God the Judge is by faith alone, without the good works of the believing sinner. "A man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law" (Rom. 3:28). "But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness" (Rom. 4:5).

In the midst of his desperate and confusing attempt to salvage the gospel truth of justification by faith alone from the wreckage of his explanation that justification in James 2 has the same forensic, declaratory meaning that it has in Romans 3-5, Schreiner does not shrink from stating that James teaches that "Abraham and Rahab were declared to be in the right by their works" (206). He makes plain that he means "declared to be in the right *before God the judge*."

If this is a defense of the Reformation's doctrine of justification, may God deliver His church from such defenses.

Yet a third, fatal weakness of Schreiner's purported defense of the Reformation's doctrine of justification against its modern opponents is his appalling tolerance, and even high praise, of the heretics who are assailing the

doctrine with might and main. The contemporary "challenger" to the truth of faith alone upon whose theology Schreiner concentrates is N. T. Wright. The reader of this review who is not acquainted with the contemporary controversy over justification should know that N. T. Wright is an open, bold adversary of the biblical, Reformation, and creedal doctrine of justification by faith alone. He should know also that Wright presents himself as an evangelical scholar, and is, therefore, very influential in evangelical, Reformed, and Presbyterian circles, both by his numerous writings and by his lectures and conferences. Wright is a leading proponent of the theology that is known as the New Perspective on Paul (NPP). This new perspective amounts to a denial of justification by faith alone as confessed by the Reformation and by the Reformed creeds.

Schreiner cannot praise Wright highly enough. "His books on Paul and Jesus are full of learning and wisdom and are written from an evangelical standpoint. Many have understood the Scriptures in a deeper and more profound way because of his scholarship" (239). Schreiner is "thankful for his [Wright's] work and stand[s] in debt to his scholarship" (240). Schreiner is even "grateful to Wright…for raising fresh questions about justification" (244).

The Reformed, indeed Christian, believer, who with Luther, Calvin, and the Reformed confessions regards justification by faith alone as the cornerstone of the gospel and the centerpiece of gracious salvation, cannot find himself in all this extolling of the heretic. Rather, with the apostle he declares the heartfelt desire that N. T. Wright be "cut off," who troubles the church with his false gospel of justification by works (Gal. 5:12).

Schreiner's enthusiasm for the false teacher is explained by the mildness of the criticism he finally levels against Wright. Wright's corruption of the truth of justification is merely that "his theology of justification veers off course at certain junctures" (243). Wright's doctrine of justification merely "stands in need of correction" (244).

Indicating that Schreiner's culpable reserve in condemning Wright's denial of justification by faith alone is due to Schreiner's own erroneous understanding of the doctrine is his commendation of Wright for seeing "God's wrath as propitiated in Jesus' death"

(242). The truth is that Wright does *not* teach that Jesus' death propitiated God's justice in the stead of sinners who deserved the wrath of God. Wright rejects substitutionary atonement. Why Schreiner can be soft on Wright and where Schreiner himself stands in the matter of the doctrine of justification, Schreiner makes plain when he *approves* Wright's doctrine that "Paul does teach that good works are necessary for justification and for salvation, and Wright rightly says that those texts are not just about rewards" (242, 243).

Incredibly, on the part of one who presents himself as defending the Reformation's doctrine of justification by faith alone, in its life-and-death struggle with the Roman Catholic Church over this fundamental issue of the gospel of grace, Schreiner proposes that Wright "would be even more helpful if he avoided the word 'basis' in speaking of the necessity of works" (243). Teaching that good works are the basis of justification is not as "helpful" as teaching simply the "necessity of works" for justification!

One asks in amazement, "How 'helpful' is the apostle Paul in Romans 3-5 and in the book of Galatians in ruling out our own good works altogether in the matter of justification?"

Lest anyone yet fail to notice that it is all over with justification by faith alone in the sphere of so-called "evangelicalism," Schreiner has John Piper write the glowing foreword to the book. Rightly, Piper sums up Schreiner's book as proclaiming that a sinner is "*right with God* by faith alone, not *attain heaven* by faith alone" (11; emphasis is Piper's). With this theology, Piper, of course, is in full agreement.

What a theology!

One can be right with God (by faith), but not "attain" heaven, that is, one can be right with God and yet be damned in hell. Being right with God *with the suffering and lifelong obedience of Jesus Christ* imputed to the sinner's account by faith is not enough to "attain" heaven. Evidently, to attain heaven one must add to the obedience of Christ his own good works, because "there are other conditions for attaining heaven" (Piper, 11).

What assurance then does the believer have by his faith in Jesus Christ? For all that he is "right with God," hell and damnation loom threateningly. All depends on his own fulfillment of further "conditions"—his own imperfect

obedience and his own "defiled" works (see the Heidelberg Catechism, Q. 62).

With friends like Schreiner (and John Piper), the truth of justification needs no enemies.

That the gospel of justification by faith alone can be thus gutted by an evangelical theologian like Schreiner, and that the gutting can be praised by the galaxy of reputedly Calvinistic theologians on the book's back cover, are signs to the believers that we are now deep in the great falling away that presages the return of the Son of man, the great Judge, who will justify elect believers in the final judgment by faith alone, without works.

"*Without* works"! ●

***Luther on the Christian Life: Cross and Freedom,*** by Carl R. Trueman. Wheaton: Crossway, 2015. Pp. 214, $17.99 (paper). [Reviewed by Justin Smidstra.]

An excellent book has come off the Crossway presses last year. *Luther: On the Christian Life* by Carl Truman is a title worth buying and reading. There are numerous books about Martin Luther available today. Many are too large and imposing for the average reader. Truman balances brevity with depth of content. The eight chapters are of a manageable size for an evening's read and the material treated in each is digestible in one sitting. In addition, Truman writes with his characteristic wit, which makes the chapters enjoyable to read.

What is the aim of this book? As the title indicates, this book is part of a series which offers the perspectives on the Christian life held by prominent churchmen of the past. Truman's installment in the series deals with Martin Luther's view of the Christian life. As Reformed Christians our roots are deeply ingrained in the soil of the "Lutheran" Reformation as well as the "Calvinist" Reformation. We rightly consider Luther one of the fathers of our churches as well. Therefore, we are very interested in what Luther has to say about living the Christian life. Although Luther wrote long ago during the late Middle Ages in a society quite different from our own, his instruction is as relevant as ever. His practical wisdom and his spiritual insights, drawn from a deep understanding of the Scrip-

tures and his own experience of the Christian life, are timeless. The eight chapters of this book offer an opportunity for edification by way of engaging the reader with the thought of this great saint and doctor of the church of the past. By listening to Luther and searching out his profound Christ-centered thought we surely can grow in our understanding of the gospel and our own Christian lives.

This review will briefly summarize the main points of each chapter and highlight some of Truman's insights into Luther's rich thought on the Christian life. In the opening chapter Truman provides a brief retelling of Luther's own Christian life and the important events which shaped him into the great Reformer, pastor, and theologian. Whether one is looking to learn more about Luther or already well acquainted with the great reformer's life, one will surely find Truman's historical sketch to be both enjoyable and profitable. There are two things I found especially helpful about Truman's approach. First, instead of abstracting Luther from his historical circumstances, Truman endeavors to present Luther to the reader in his own context and historical situation. This helps us understand why Luther did the things he did and thought the way he thought. In this way the author illuminates how God used the events of Luther's own Christian life to shape his understanding of the gospel and how it is to be lived. Luther was a man who knew the gospel of grace by experience. His own struggle with sin and the torturous question of how one can become righteous before God was the means God used to lead Luther to study the Scriptures and recover the great doctrine of justification by faith. Although Luther became a doctor of theology the gospel was never a mere matter of the intellect for him. Luther lived his theology. He is an example to the generations that follow him. Second, Truman presents Luther to the reader as a real man of flesh and blood. On the pages of this book we not only find Luther the bold reformer and devoted servant of God; we also find Luther the man, with all his flaws and shortcomings. This makes Truman's sketch of Luther's life relatable. Luther was one of us. He struggled with the same temptations and sins that we face. Luther was a man who was weak and a sinner, yet used by God to accomplish things that no man could ever accomplish by himself. Without

a doubt God gave unequalled gifts to Luther. He stands among the greatest men of church history. And yet for all that, the reformer of Wittenberg was a real man like us. His conspicuous humanity, with all its intricacies and contradictions, is in part what makes him so lovable to his heirs.

In the second chapter of *Luther on the Christian Life* Truman explains Luther's important theological development at the Heidelberg Disputation. This disputation took place early in Luther's career as a reformer. The significance of this event lies in the fact that it gives us a glimpse of Luther's thought as it was in the process of maturing. Much of the theology of the Reformation can be found in seed form in Luther's Heidelberg theses. To help us understand this event, Truman provides a little historical background. In April of 1517 Luther was given opportunity to present his theology at a convention of the Augustinian order held at Heidelberg. Luther's presentation was carried out in the form of a disputation. The disputation was a common method employed in the middle ages to address questions of theology and philosophy. In this format a number of theses were defended and an opponent was appointed to argue against the theses presented. At the Heidelberg Disputation one of Luther's colleagues, a fellow Augustinian monk by the name of Leonhard Beier defended the theological points Luther had prepared for the disputation. These theological points covered a variety of theological and philosophical questions but centered on Luther's distinction between the "theologian of glory" and the "theologian of the cross." We do not use these terms today. Likely many readers have never heard of them before. For our benefit, Truman devotes the second chapter to explaining this important distinction in Luther's theology.

The first thing we need to understand is to whom exactly Luther is referring when he speaks of these theologians. "Theologian of glory" and "theologian of the cross" are titles that Luther used to describe two different groups of Christians who had two very different approaches to the Christian life. These terms do not refer to any particular individuals, rather Luther uses them to characterize, compare, and contrast his biblical view of the Christian life with the common unbiblical view prevalent in his day. How do Christians think about God? How do they

conceive of their relationship to God? How do human works relate to God's grace? Such basic questions the theologian of glory and the theologian of the cross answer very differently. The theologian of glory thinks about God by looking at *appearances*, that is, by looking at the way things work in the world. The theologian of glory looks at the way humans relate to one another and on that basis draws conclusions about how humans relate to God. For example, when approaching the question of how we become righteous before God, the theologian of glory reasons that just as people are rewarded for doing good deeds in human society so too God rewards Christians with eternal life for their good works so long as they do the good they are capable of doing to the best of their ability. Merit operates within the realm of human relationships. Therefore it is inferred to operate in the divine-human relationship too.

On the other hand, the theologian of the cross looks beyond appearances to the inward and true reality revealed in the Gospel. He looks at everything from the perspective of God's revelation and the mystery of the cross. This is important for Luther's understanding of sin and righteousness. The theologian of glory confuses outward righteousness with true righteousness. The theologian of glory thinks that he is righteous because he has done good works for God to the best of his ability. Such a man does not understand the depth of his sin or what true righteousness is. He underestimates his sin and overestimates his own works. On the contrary, the theologian of the cross understands that he is a sinner and that all his good works contribute nothing to his salvation. This knowledge of his own sin drives the theologian of the cross to Christ and His cross. In Christ he seeks all of his righteousness. In Christ alone he trusts; not in works, not in merit, in the cross of Christ alone. Thus Christ's cross and the truth of justification by faith alone accomplished by the cross is the lens through which the theologian of the cross looks at all of life. The theologian of the cross sees God's love in an entirely new light. Rather than trying to court God's love by doing good works, the theologian of the cross knows that God does not set His love upon a people that are attractive in and of themselves. Rather, God's love makes His people lovely. God seeks out sinners who are of themselves repulsive and sets His

love upon them, powerfully and efficaciously transforming them into beautiful and holy saints. God's people then and only then respond to God's love by doing good works as an expression of their gratitude. Therein lies the source of Christian's good works. The true good works of the Christian life are works, which are the thankful deeds of the beloved, not the meritorious acts of those seeking to court divine favor. For Luther, to live the Christian life means, at its heart, to live one's life fully out of the power of the cross. Such is true Christian devotion.

Chapter three concerns Luther's theology of the Word of God and the preaching of that Word. Luther's theology of the Word of God is integrally connected with His Christ-focused understanding of the Christian faith and life. In Christ alone we find a gracious and merciful God. In Christ alone we find forgiveness of our sins. From Christ alone we receive everlasting life. This leads to the question: where then can we find Christ today seeing that He is no longer physically present but has ascended into heaven? Luther's answer is this: Christ is found in the preached Word of God and the sacraments in the context of the instituted church. Due to the fact that Christ is present with His people primarily through the preached Word of God, it follows that the Word must occupy a central place in the life of every Christian. Thus it is that Luther placed the utmost emphasis on the necessity of the preaching of the gospel for the Christian life. Without the preaching of the Word of God, the Christian's spiritual life will be sapped. He or she will become spiritually malnourished and waste away. It can be said without exaggeration that to be removed from the preaching of the gospel is to be removed from Christ's presence.

Truman brings to light many of Luther's insights into the function of God's Word in the Christian life. The gospel as it is preached in the church lays the foundation of Christian piety and then builds upon it. Luther's point here about preaching stems from his understanding of the Word of God. Luther believed that the whole world and everything in it is entirely dependent upon the Word of God. When God speaks, His word creatively determines reality. Thus in the beginning God spoke the world into existence and by His continued speech He upholds and maintains the world. God is the great architect and artisan whose Word is the tool

by which He has created and continues to uphold all things. The same is true of spiritual lives of God's people. God employs His Word as the means by which He creates faith in the hearts of His people. And thereafter by means of the same Word God nurtures and feeds that faith, increasing it to final perfection. For the Christian to have a vibrant spiritual life, he or she must daily and weekly feast upon the Word of God.

In this connection, Luther emphasized the importance of the church. The church is the place where God speaks and where believers can hear the Word, proclaimed by the very voice of Christ through the mouths of His ministers. As important as the personal reading of God's Word surely is, it is no substitute for the preaching of the gospel. That is why Luther, and we as well, identify the preaching of the Word as the chief means of grace. Without the Word faith cannot flourish. But wherever it is faithfully preached faith cannot fail to spring up and blossom. Such is the power of the Word of God. Ordinarily it is only in the church, in the gathered congregation on the Lord's Day, that the preaching of the gospel can be heard. That is why Luther pressed so hard for weekly preaching in the language of the people. He saw that the best way to rejuvenate a spiritually languishing people was to expose them constantly to the Word of God.

Reformed Christians will find this chapter especially stimulating. Our tradition places great emphasis on the preaching of the gospel and the sacred duty of every Christian to place himself or herself under that preaching. Luther's view of the Word of God and of the Word preached is ours as well. Let his wise counsel remind us not to neglect that which is most needful for our Christian lives.

In chapter four Truman treats Luther's perspective on the liturgy of the Christian life, a topic which is sadly quite foreign to American Evangelicalism. Truman remarks,

> if the Christian life is, for Luther, rooted in the corporate gathering of the church, especially in the preaching of the Word to the congregation, the liturgy is also vitally important. This is one area of Luther's thinking that many modern evangelicals find somewhat alien. Evangelicalism has developed under the influences of revivalism, Pentecostalism, and the megachurch movement, none of which have tended to be

particularly self-conscious in their liturgical reflection (99).

Liturgy refers to the worship of the church and the elements which make up the church's worship. As Truman has made clear in the previous chapters, Luther identified the core of the Christian life as the worship of God in the church. It follows therefore that he would put much stock in the liturgy of the church. Truman charts the development of Luther's view of worship and how that impacted his reform of the church's liturgy. Luther's theology of the Word and his understanding of justification by faith alone demanded that the liturgy of the church of his day be reoriented. In the middle ages the church's liturgy was focused on the sacraments, especially the Lord's Supper. While the sacraments are very important and ought to receive due attention in worship, medieval theology had so exalted the sacraments that they completely superseded the Word preached. The preaching was allowed to fade away. Luther's theology demanded a reversal of emphases, the Word and the Word preached taking the prominent position and the sacraments, though crucially important for the Christian life, taking a secondary position. Luther believed that the worship of the church was primarily God's action not man's. Although God's people bring to God their "sacrifice of praise," their activity is subordinate to God's activity. Luther especially viewed worship as God's gracious speaking to His people by His almighty Word. The activity of God's people is their response to that speech of God with worship and reverent awe. The worship of the medieval church had become very *priestly* in its outlook. Worship was seen as sacrifice. Luther reversed these emphases by restoring the Word preached to the center of Christian worship. We as sinners cannot initiate anything. We cannot come to God by ourselves or through the service of our own works. Rather, God in His grace must first come to us and draw us to Himself. Only then can we respond and offer to God our worship and adoration. In the church's worship God meets us and teaches us, and we respond with praise and thanks. That basic understanding of God's sovereignty and grace undergirded Luther's theology of worship. Given the nature of Christian worship, the church's liturgy must not be haphazard or thrown together without due thought. The form must match the dignity of the content.

In chapter five, appropriate-

ly titled "Living by the Word" Truman moves from Luther's understanding of the worship of the church to his view of the day-to-day Christian life. The preceding chapters were concerned more with the theological foundations of Luther's view of the Christian life. At this point Truman turns to look more closely at how Luther's understanding of the Christian life is carried out in the "normal" daily life of the ordinary Christian. Truman has already highlighted the fact that Luther's view of the Christian life is *ecclesiastical,* that is, the church is front and center in the Christian life. The church is the hub. The main exercise of Christian devotion is the worship of God from Sabbath to Sabbath. The main way the Christian "lives by the Word" is by regularly sitting under the preaching of the gospel. The official preaching is God's ordained means of grace, not one's small group discussions. The personal Christian life flows out of the corporate Christian life which the individual believer shares with his or her fellow saints in the church. Luther's insistence on the centrality of the Word carries over into the private devotions of the Christian. The work of God is always tied to the Word. Therefore Luther leaves absolutely no room for private revelations from God. All kinds of charismatic fancy and the oft-spoken phrase about "being moved by the Spirit" are contrary to Luther's view of the Christian life. That being said, Luther certainly recognized the importance of the Christian's private devotional life. In particular, Luther drew his teaching in this area from the psalms. In the Psalms he saw the entirety of Christian experience set forth in the most spiritual and dignified language. The Psalms are the prayer book of the church. They are also the prayer book for the Christian life. To be spiritually healthy, the Christian must be constant in prayer. There are few better ways to that than by immersing oneself in the Psalter. Finally, one of the striking aspects of Luther's view of the Christian life that Truman highlights is how *routine* it is. Today too many Christians are obsessed with the extraordinary and the novel. That which is routine, regular, and ordinary is despised and even called "false" piety. The Christian life is recast in terms of social and political activism. There must be revival! There must be impressive results! We find nothing of these contemporary emphases

in Luther's view of the Christian life. The Christian life is, for the most part, really quite ordinary. It is marked by the regular use of the means of grace, the regular discipline of prayer, the regular worship of the assembled church. These things, done from the heart, are in Luther's view, the chief exercises of the Christian life.

Chapter six focuses more closely on Luther's high view of baptism and the Lord's Supper. For Luther the Christian life was "saturated" with the sacraments. Both baptism and holy communion present the believer with the promises of God, and by the believer's use of the sacraments God actually imparts to the Christian the Christ signified thereby. In other words, the Christian participates in Christ and His benefits by means of the sacraments instituted by Christ.

Luther taught that baptism was a powerful tool in the hands of God through which sin was put to death and new life imparted. In baptism, the Christian dies to self and rises again with Christ. By means of the sacrament, the baptized child is engrafted into the church. Baptism, therefore, has objective force. It is not a bare symbolic action. Many evangelicals (especially those with a baptistic bent) who have an impoverished view of baptism, may find Luther's sacramental realism disturbing. Although Luther did at times attribute too much to the sacrament, he did not think that baptism worked automatically. Baptism is only effective because God is the one who uses it. Baptism is a means of grace. Just as a tool is useless unless in the hand of a skilled workman, so too baptism is of no benefit to the Christian unless God uses it to communicate His blessings to the Christian. The Reformed tradition is in basic agreement with Luther. Although we reject that the sprinkling of water has any cleansing power inherent in itself, we maintain with Luther that God uses the sacrament as a means to accomplish the very thing which baptism signifies: the washing away of our sins in the blood of Christ.

Baptism is a sacrament with lasting benefit for the Christian life. Luther did not consider baptism to be a "one time" event with little lasting impact on the life of the believer. Even though most Christians, baptized as infants, cannot remember their baptism, baptism nevertheless is a wellspring of blessings that

Christians enjoy throughout the whole of life. God gives each of His elect people a promise at their baptism—the promise that He will wash away their sins, forgive them, and grant them the immortal life of His own dear Son Jesus Christ. The sure promise of God is the substance of the sacrament. This sure promise, made visible in the sacrament of baptism, afford the believer great comfort. And it is that comfort that makes baptism so significant for the Christian life. Where does the Christian find comfort in this difficult life? Not by looking back to some extraordinary conversion experience. Most Christians do not have such experiences. The Christian finds comfort in his or her baptism. The Christian says "I am baptized into Christ! I have the promise of God that my sins are washed and I am forgiven! I shall never be confounded, now, in the future, and into eternity!" The sacrament of baptism bids us to look outside ourselves for comfort. It bids us to find assurance in the objective work that God has done for us, not in personal religious experiences.

The sacrament of holy communion holds a place of prominence in Luther's thinking and is one of the most important activities of the Christian life, second only to hearing the preaching of the Word. The Lord's Supper is food for the Christian's faith, food that nourishes and strengthens faith and enables the believer to fight effectively against his sinful flesh, the devil, and the world. Thus Luther insisted that the Christian should partake of the sacrament frequently. It is a tremendous aid to his Christian walk!

Truman points out that one of the chief things that must be recognized when approaching Luther's understanding of the holy supper is that the sacrament cannot be divorced from the Word. The Supper and the Word are wed. As Truman says, for Luther the Lord's Supper is "first and foremost a linguistic event, constituted by the words of institution." Like baptism, the Lord's Supper is a powerful means of grace, and its power comes from the Word as it is understood by faith. It is not simply a memorial feast that stimulates the Christian to contemplate Christ's passion and reflect upon the forgiveness of sins he has obtained through Christ's death. The words of institution set God's promise of the forgiveness of sins before the Christian's eyes of faith and

makes that promise real and present to the believer. The Christian who partakes of the sacrament believes the words of institution and by faith lays hold of the promise exhibited by the bread and wine. By faith the Christian partakes of Christ as he partakes of the bread and wine. It is here that Luther went too far, asserting that Christ is physically present in the elements of the Supper. The Reformed have maintained that Christ is truly present in sacrament, but that His presence is spiritual not physical. Despite this difference, the heart of Luther's teaching on the sacraments and their importance is in accord with the Reformed tradition. The Supper is a real means of grace. By use of it, the believer truly partakes of Jesus Christ and is built up in in faith, hope, and love.

Truman also notes the role that the Lord's Supper plays in the Christian's assurance of salvation. This was a very important aspect of the sacrament in Luther's estimation. Like baptism, the Lord's Supper is a great comfort to the Christian. The Holy Supper attests to the Christian that Christ did indeed die for him to pay for his sins and that therefore his sins are indeed forgiven. The believer should not be afraid to approach the Lord's Table and partake of communion. God gave this sacrament to sinners as an aid in their lives of faith. The Christian does not come to the table because he is righteous in himself, but because he needs strengthening from the outside himself. For this reason, Luther directs the Christian who is burdened with fear, despair, and the cares of this life to run to the Table and to find comfort in Christ's crucified body and shed blood. The Lord's Supper is no small help, as Luther himself said: "the immeasurable grace and mercy of God are given us in this Sacrament to the end that we might put from us all misery and tribulation…" (146).

In chapter seven, Truman deals with Luther's view of righteousness in the Christian life. This question is one of the most important questions for the Christian life. How is one righteous before God? What is the Christian's righteousness? Basic to Luther's understanding of righteousness is the distinction between alien and proper righteousness. Alien righteousness is the perfect righteousness of Jesus Christ. It is called *alien* because it is not the believer's own righteousness; it is Christ's. God gives this righteousness of Christ to the

believer by imputation so that the believer is judged innocent, as it were, it God's court. Proper righteousness is the righteousness that becomes manifest in the believer's life as a result of the believer's Spirit-empowered efforts to mortify the old man and do good works to the glory of God. In other words, it is the fruit of sanctification. Both kinds of righteousness are necessary for the Christian life.

The significant question for the Christian life is how these two kinds of righteousness are related. Luther's view is that Christ's alien righteousness comes first. If he is to live well, the Christian must know that he is righteous in the sight of God. Recognition of Christ's alien righteousness reckoned to the sinner is the antidote both for despair and for works righteousness. The believer who knows that he is clothed in Christ's own perfect righteousness will not fear for his salvation when he beholds his own imperfection. Likewise, the believer will not strive to make himself righteous in God's eyes by performing good works. He already understands that God has declared him righteous, and that nothing can be added to the righteousness of Christ. This understanding allows the Christian to live with assurance and to direct his life of good works toward its proper goal: not earning salvation, but showing gratitude for salvation freely given. That is where proper righteousness fits. Living in the assurance of Christ's righteousness, the Christian labors in love for God to do good works and keep God's commandments. Luther did not think that holiness in the Christian life could be reduced to the Christian's ever-increasing sense of dependence upon Christ's imputed righteousness. No, in the Christian life there is a genuine beginning of true holiness. The Christian makes progress in holiness as the Spirit sanctifies him. In this present life the Christian is always at once both righteous and a sinner.

In the last chapter the book, Truman looks at Luther's theology of vocation and family life. Luther's thought on these areas of the Christian life was truly groundbreaking. Luther's understanding of vocation was groundbreaking because he denied the accepted opinion of his day that there were spiritually higher and lower callings. In Luther's view every calling that accords with God's law and is beneficial to so-

ciety is legitimate for a Christian and therefore can be performed to the glory of God. The idea that certain vocations are more holy and spiritual while others are secular and therefore less spiritual was a part of the medieval system of works righteousness against which Luther responded vehemently. All earthly vocations, from the grandest to the humblest, are equal. What matters is how the Christian lives in whatever calling the Lord has given him. A Christian can serve the Lord as a farmer, a businessman, a magistrate, or a minister when he carries out that calling by faith and out of love for God and the neighbor. Luther's understanding of vocation ennobles even the most mundane and menial tasks with spiritual meaning and dignity.

Truman also discusses Luther's view of marriage in this chapter. Luther had always held marriage in high esteem. Even during his days in the monastery he had high praise for the love of marriage and the place of the Christian family. With the Reformation's rejection of clerical celibacy Luther was able to experience what before he had only been able to reflect on theologically; and his respect for marriage only grew after his own marriage to Catherine von Bora. Luther regarded marriage as one of the highest expressions of Christian love. And more than that, he regarded the marriage state as a state most holy and proper for the majority of Christians. It was the foundation of fellowship and family, good and blessed by God. Luther honored this institution of God both in his theology and in the way he lived with his beloved wife. For that we can be thankful, for the good doctor contributed much to the restoration of the proper view of marriage to the church, not only by his teaching, but also by the power of his own example.

We hope that the brief summary of this book offered here will encourage others to read it. Truman's book is well worth reading and will make a worthy addition to anyone's library. This reviewer highly recommends *Luther on the Christian Life*. ●

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