

The Banner of Sovereign Grace Truth

A Periodical for Young and Old

IN THIS ISSUE...

*A Prodigal Church
Returning to Its God*

Grief for Sin

*The Practical Life of Faith
and Family Worship*



THE BANNER OF
SOVEREIGN GRACE TRUTH

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***“Satan promises the best, but pays with the worst;
he promises honor and pays with disgrace;
he promises pleasure and pays with pain;
he promises profit and pays with loss;
he promises life and pays with death.”***

—Thomas Brooks



Our Spiritual Identity

"...beloved of God, called to be saints."

—Romans 1:7

A correct understanding of their spiritual identity is especially important for the spiritual health of God's children. They must view themselves as God views them. The Apostle Paul defines the identity of the believer in Romans 1:7 in a succinct and profound manner. With theological precision, he formulates who God's children are and consequently what that calls them to be. These words represent a compact outline of how Paul structures most of his epistles, setting before us both the status and obligations of the believer.

In our text, he tells believers in Rome that they are the "beloved of God." What an extraordinary statement! Not too many years previous, these believers were as pagan as the population surrounding them. What Paul wrote of the Ephesians was also true of them: "Among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others" (Eph. 2:3). However, as a result of divine and sovereign intervention, they now belonged to those in whose hearts the love of God had been shed abroad (Rom. 5:5).

Why did God intervene in their lives—and why has God intervened in your life, dear believer? There is only one answer: it pleased God! From eternity, it pleased God to choose you in His only begotten Son, the eternally Beloved One of the Father, and He therefore loves you with an everlasting love (Jer. 31:3). This love has no beginning and no end; it is eternal, unwavering, and infinite! In fact, the Father has always viewed you in Christ and therefore loves you with the same love with which He loves His Son (John 17:23). What an astonishing truth indeed—even more so when we consider that, in order to make you the recipient of this love, the Father subjected His Son to the accursed cross of Calvary. There Jesus fully emptied the cup of God's wrath in your place in order that you could be the "beloved of God."

No wonder, then, that Paul adds that such a privilege calls us to be saints, or holy ones. How clearly this illustrates that God's sovereignty defines our responsibility! The fact that we are the beloved of God is to be attributed solely to the good pleasure of God. And, because of this utterly unmerited manifestation of God's

redeeming sovereignty in our lives, we have a sacred responsibility to live lives devoted fully to the Son of God who so graciously redeemed us.

How plainly our text sets before us that believers are redeemed in order to be a holy people unto the Lord! Later in this epistle, Paul tells us expressly that we have been predestinated to be conformed to the image of God's Son, the Holy One of God (Rom. 8:29). However, in this text, Paul not only implies that God has set us apart to become like His Son, but also that we are called to be saints—called to be holy ones. This is what the Christian ought to be prayerfully striving for: to honor the Christ for whose sake alone I am the beloved of God.

Christian, are you daily conscious of the fact that this is your calling? There is no better motivation to aim for the high calling of being holy ones than to meditate on the inexpressible wonder of being "beloved of God." How this should stimulate us to prayerfully aim to honor the Holy One of God, God's well-beloved Son, who gave Himself as a ransom for us! What a debt of gratitude we owe to such a Savior who died that we might live.

Dear reader, do you yearn to be a saint? That will always be the mark of the beloved of God. The true believer is someone in whom the truths of our text, God's sovereign love and man's call to holiness, are inseparable. A person who is loved by God will manifest a desire to love Him in return by living a life that honors His Son, the Living Word. Believers are a people who "hunger and thirst after righteousness." It is no wonder, then, that the beloved ones of God yearn for the day when they will finally be what they yearn to be and what they are called to be. How beautifully the apostle John expresses that desire: "We know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is" (1 John 3:2). Is that the yearning of your soul? Then also it will be true of you: "And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure" (1 John 3:3).

Rev. Bartel Elshout is pastor of the Heritage Reformed Congregation of Chilliwack, British Columbia.



EDITORIAL

Defeating Satan in Our Personal Lives (3)

Dr. Joel R. Beeke

Last issue we considered the second and third of five ways to defeat Satan in our personal lives: resolving to overcome the present, evil world by faith in Christ, and to resist the devil by fighting under the banner of Christ. This editorial contains the final two ways to defeat Satan: resolving to bear fruit for Christ's sake and not to be a tool of the tempter.

Resolve to bear fruit for Christ's sake

Jesus said, "By their fruits ye shall know them," meaning that believers are recognized by certain attitudes and actions. Jesus tells us in John 15 that genuine fruit only comes from being united with Christ and abiding in Him (v. 4). Whatever gifts or virtues you have, you cannot bear fruit apart from Christ. If you would bear fruit, cling to the true Vine, then trust Christ's energy in you to produce fruit. Forsake every sin that distracts you from abiding in Christ and saps your energy.

Philippians 1:11 says that God produces the fruits of righteousness in us so that He may be glorified. The fruits of righteousness include fruits of attitude and fruits of action. The fruits of attitude, according to Galatians 5:22-23, are love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, and temperance. These are not natural characteristics in us. Rather, they are spiritual characteristics of our Savior; they flow to believers from the Spirit's saving work. If the fruits of attitude are in our lives, the fruits of action will follow.

Note that the fruits of attitude do not develop individually but as a package. Paul speaks of "fruit" in the singular sense. We don't move from love to joy to peace; rather, the Holy Spirit works all of these fruits together in our lives as we abide in Christ.

The fruits of action also serve as offerings to God. Hebrews 13:15 describes a life of thankful praise: "By him [Christ] therefore let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips giving thanks to his name." Romans 15:28 speaks of helping those who are in need. Paul says that he would seal to the Gentiles "the fruit" given by the Romans. If a gift is offered to someone in need from a loving heart flowing out of the divine energy of the indwelling Christ, that is a fruit of action. So Paul says, "God loveth a cheerful giver" (2 Cor. 9:8). Colossians 1:10 refers to pure con-

duct as a fruit of action: "That ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work."

Satan is powerless when a Christian's life reveals true fruit. Even ungodly people are struck by godly attitudes and actions. The way you live either builds up God's kingdom or Satan's kingdom. A backsliding Christian can do much damage; a fruit-bearing, godly Christian can do much good.

A survey was taken recently of several thousand church attendees. In answer to the question, "What drew you to attend church the first time?" more than 90 percent said they were attracted to church by the godly attitude or action of an individual member of that church. If you profess Christianity, never forget that the world is watching you closely.

Fruit-bearing is rooted in the Holy Spirit's saving work in our souls, which, in turn, arouses in our minds a present-tense, total commitment to God. It then works outward in our words and actions through all of life (Phil. 2:12-13). It influences everything we are, do, think, speak, or plan. It impacts our loving, our hating, our silences, our sorrowing, and our rejoicing. It is inseparable from our recreation, our business, our friendships, and our relationships.

Fruit-bearing is a daily task. It involves our entire soul and our entire body. Fruit bearing is biblical piety put into action. John Calvin said our entire life "must be an exercise in piety." Exercising true piety is a lifetime commitment to live "through Christ to God-ward" (2 Cor. 3:4), to win our neighbors for Christ, and to break down the kingdom of Satan.

Are you cultivating the fruits of the Spirit in your life in gratitude to God and in dependence upon His Spirit? Do you diligently use the spiritual disciplines for this purpose? Are you genuinely concerned that every part of your life will show the fruit of holiness so

that others will want to have what you have? Do your talk and walk, your attitudes and actions, align with Scripture? Do your family and friends recognize that, despite your shortcomings, you are a sincere, fruit-bearing Christian?

Resolve not to be a tool of the tempter

Satan tempts us directly by speaking to our minds and working on our emotions, and he tempts us indirectly through another person such as a family member, friend, work associate, or stranger. The other person is usually an unbeliever, but as Paul tells us in Romans 14, that person can also be a believer who becomes a tool of Satan.

The motivation for tempting someone to sin may be to gratify the flesh. A person has some need or desire, and tempts someone else to help him satisfy it. Or a person wants to ease his own guilt by getting someone else involved in a sin. Whatever the motivation, Christians become most like the devil when they allow themselves to tempt others to sin.

Jesus pronounces a divine curse on those who tempt others to sin. He says in Matthew 18:6-7, "But whoso shall offend one of these little ones which believe in me, it were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and that he were drowned in the depth of the sea. Woe unto the world because of offenses! for it must needs be that offenses come; but woe to that man by whom the offence cometh!"

Earlier in Matthew 18, Jesus had just talked about how precious little children are, specifically young children in grace, or new converts. By extension, of course, all believers are children in their relationship to Christ. So Jesus is warning any believer or unbeliever about the seriousness of tempting a child of God to sin. He is saying that we then do what Satan does, and must expect to suffer the consequences of that act.

A millstone was used in Jesus' day to grind wheat into flour. The stone was about eighteen inches in diameter, and three or four inches thick. It had a hole in the center and a handle on the side. This thick stone would be placed on top of another stone. Women would then turn the handle or stick as they poured grain through the little hole to produce flour for their bread.

Another kind of grinding wheel was up to five feet in diameter and several feet thick. This wheel was so heavy that it had to be pulled by a donkey. Stone rolled upon stone, grinding away at the grain. Whether Jesus meant the smaller or larger stone isn't important. The point is that a person who willfully tempts a believer to sin would be better off having a rope attached to a millstone tied around his neck, then thrown in the sea to drown. The tempter would be better off dead than alive.

Jesus was justifiably extreme in his pronouncement against leading a believer astray. It is bad enough

to personally sin against God and to bear the penalty for that sin, but in tempting someone else to sin, the tempter becomes the propagator and catalyst of sin. Such a tempter is a danger to every believer. Just as a terrorist is a danger to our physical welfare, so a person who works for Satan is a danger to our spiritual welfare. God says that a tempter is better off dead than inciting others to fall into sin and wreck their lives.

Jesus goes on to say in verse 7, "Woe unto the world because of offences! for it must needs be that offences come; but woe to that man by whom the offence cometh!" The word *woe* warns of coming destruction. In Matthew 23, Jesus used that word seven times, pronouncing punishment by saying, "Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees." In Matthew 26, Jesus pronounced woe upon Judas Iscariot, who would betray Christ. Enticements to sin are inevitable, Jesus says, but woe to that person through whom temptation comes.

The woes of Jesus continue today. Woe to the husband who shows no love to his wife, thereby teaching his newly married son not to realize the importance of loving his young bride. Woe to the wife who fails to submit to her husband, showing her newly married daughter that it isn't important to support her young bridegroom as head of the family. Woe to the young man who takes a job to support his family by becoming a bartender, but whose actions entice others to sin through alcohol. Woe to the young lady who dresses seductively and raises sinful thoughts in a God-fearing young man.

You might object that you know people who tempt others to fall, but you don't see them suffering any "woes." They are getting along just fine. My friend, the only thing you know about someone else is what you see and hear. You often do not know what people are feeling. You do not know their struggles with pain and suffering. You do not know how tempting others to sin has wrecked their lives and families, divided their children, and caused their businesses to collapse. You do not know how the weight of that sin has burdened their hearts and obsessed their thoughts. You do not know whether they are getting along well or not.

The bottom line is this: do not in any way act as a tool of Satan by tempting someone to sin. You will pay dearly for it. Pray daily that you will never injure the name of your Savior. Beg forgiveness of God for any way in which you have unintentionally influenced others to stumble in their walk with God.

Dr. Joel R. Beeke is president and professor of Systematic Theology and Homiletics at Puritan Reformed Theological Seminary, and a pastor of the Heritage Netherlands Reformed Congregation of Grand Rapids, Michigan.

A Prodigal Church Returning to Its God

Read Nehemiah 9

What blessings he had had in the Father's house! Yet his heart had desired the ways of the world, and he had followed his heart. He had squandered his Father's blessings, until he was left empty and desolate in a land far away.



This sounds a lot like the prodigal son from Christ's parable, but I'm really referring to the nation of Israel as it is pictured in Nehemiah 9 (see vv. 36-37). Their hearts had gone after the idols of the nations around them. Now they were in bondage and trouble among these very nations.

Sadly, the church of our time is not that different. In most parts of the Western world, today's church has largely sold out to the "pig-farmers" of our culture. At one time, we were in the Father's house of biblical and evangelical truth. Now, however, we feed on the husks of entertainment and a "this-world" gospel—and are more empty than ever.

What is a church in the sty of 21st-century hedonistic paganism to do? What is a church to do when tethered to its culture's dictates and void of any true satisfaction? The answer is found in Nehemiah 9, where we see a prodigal church returning to its God.

The church in Nehemiah's day had lost all the good gifts she had received from the Lord. These gifts were consumed by others. The people acknowledged this when they declared: "Behold, we are servants this day, and for the land that thou gavest unto our fathers to eat the fruit thereof and the good thereof, behold, we are servants in it" (Neh. 9:36). Just as the prodigal son began to be in want, Israel found herself "in great distress" (Neh. 9:37), serving at the pleasure of others. She had joined herself to strangers, and now was at the mercy of foreign lords.

The church of Nehemiah's day was also similar to the prodigal as he returned to his father's house in rags, confessing his sins. In sackcloth, they "separated themselves from all strangers" and retraced their steps, back to the Father's house. They were drawn by the Father's

love, which they had begun to miss. As we survey the steps of Israel's return to the Lord, let's ask ourselves: What does the prodigal church today need to do?

1. We need to remember the Father's house.

The great thing about the prayer of Nehemiah 9 is the fact that the people began to speak about God's being, majesty, greatness, and faithfulness. Until now, the Jews had thought about themselves, the people around them, and their gods. They had given no thought to the Lord who had nurtured them and given them every provision that they had ever known. But in their own self-inflicted bondage, their minds began to go to the greatness and goodness of the God who brought them into being.

They prayed: "Thou, even thou, art LORD alone; thou hast made heaven, the heaven of heavens, with all their host, the earth, and all things that are therein, the seas, and all that is therein, and thou preservest them all; and the host of heaven worshippeth thee" (Neh. 9:6). The Jews pictured God's greatness and goodness, and how holy and happy God's servants, the angels of heaven, are.

To wean ourselves from the emptiness and filth of this world, we need to see the splendor, sanctity, and suitability of the Father's house. The principal lack in the church of our day is that we do not have a functioning doctrine of God—at least, not a biblical one. When we begin to reckon with who God really is, all our religious games come to a quick end, and we begin to realize who it is with whom we have to do. Dr. Martyn Lloyd Jones once said, "There is no doubt but that 99.9 percent of our troubles as Christians is that we are ignorant of God." We need to remember the Father's house.

2. We need to recall the Father's heart.

Why does Nehemiah 9 go on at length about the past? A survey of the past will show the Lord's undeserved kindness and faithfulness. It was He who had remembered His promise and covenant. He had performed the mercy promised to their forefathers. Time after time, He demonstrated love and faithfulness when there was nothing in His people to deserve such dealings. The prayer openly confesses this to the glory of God: "Thou didst divide the sea...thou leddest them...thou camest down...and spakest...and gavest...and madest known...and commandedst...and gave them bread from heaven for their hunger...and broughtest forth water...and promisedst them" (Neh. 9:11-15). In their current bondage, the people recalled the Father's heart.

We should do the same. Why hasn't the Lord simply eliminated the church from the scene of human history and wiped it from the face of the earth? Why did He give His church the Reformation and Great Awakening, the revivals and blessings she has enjoyed? Let us confess with the Jews: "Nevertheless for thy great mercies' sake thou didst not utterly consume them, nor forsake them; for thou art a gracious and merciful God" (Neh. 9:31). If we had such a humbling view of the Father's heart, there would be hope for us.

3. We need to vindicate the Father's right.

In Christ's parable, the prodigal son freely admitted that he had forfeited the status of a son: "I am no more worthy to be called thy son" (Luke 15:21). Because of his sin, he justly deserved never to be accepted again, and he acknowledged this honestly and forthrightly before his father. In other words, he vindicated the father's right. In Nehemiah 9, the Jews also vindicated the justice of God. "Thou hast done right," they confessed (Neh. 9:33). By our departure from God's truth and ordinances, we too have sinned away all right of being accepted again as the chosen generation and the holy nation that God has appointed us to be. We need to acknowledge this honestly and readily. In God's quarrel with us, we need to stand up at His bar and say, "Thou art just in all that is brought upon us; for thou hast done right" (Neh. 9:33). The malaise that Western Protestantism finds itself in is solely brought on by the church itself. True, God has given us up to our own devices; yet, He has done so justly, because we have done wickedly. In returning to God, we need to confess our wrong and vindicate the Father's right.

4. We need to plead the Father's grace.

Lastly, we need the beggar's plea. You'll remember the prodigal's cry to his father. He acknowledged his sin, but he also uttered a plea for acceptance in the father's house. For the prodigal, this was mixed with a measure of the spirit of bondage and servile fear, "Make me one

of thy hired servants." His mind showed the confusion many a returning sinner knows. Yet his speech betrayed him, when he called out: "Father" (Luke 15:21). This was a plea for acceptance again.

It is no different with the pleas of the prodigal church: "Now therefore, our God...who keepeth covenant and mercy...let not all the trouble seem little before thee" (Neh. 9:32). Notice how they say: "Our God." They have some sense that, for the sake of another (surely not themselves), He can be "their God."

The troubled church today should be earnestly beseeching the covenant-keeping God to remember mercy for His name's sake. Returning to Him, let us plead for grace: "Our God...let not all the trouble seem little before thee."

Questions:

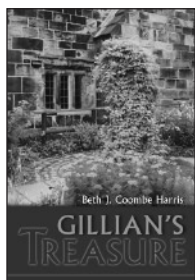
1. What are the similarities and differences between the repentance of a returning sinner and the repentance of a returning church?
2. How is today's church in bondage, and how has that happened? Doesn't the world promise freedom?
3. What does it mean practically to vindicate God? Why is this important? What must we say if a person cannot bring himself to confess the justice of the Lord?
4. Find the petition in this prayer. Why is it so short compared to such a long prayer? Is this evidence of an imbalance, or is there something more than meets the eye?
5. What does it look like today practically when a prodigal church returns? Can you think of a New Testament example of a church returning (compare 2 Cor. 7, James 4, or Rev. 2-3)?
6. Discuss the implications of Dr. Lloyd-Jones's statement quoted above.

Dr. Gerald M. Bilkes is Professor of Old and New Testament at Puritan Reformed Theological Seminary and an elder of the Free Reformed Church of Grand Rapids, Michigan.



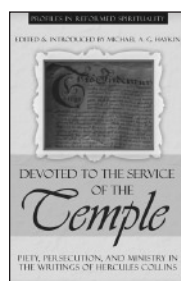
NEW RHB BOOKS

Harris, Beth J. Coombe. *Gillian's Treasure: A Story of Trials and Triumphs in the Days of Queen Mary.* \$16.00/12.00p (RHB, 236 pages).



Gillian's Treasure portrays the trials and triumphs experienced by Christians in England during the turbulent reign of Queen Mary. Building on the historical account of the life and death of Richard Woodman, Beth J. Coombe Harris depicts the story of persecution for 16th century Protestants through the young Gillian Ballard. Readers are afforded

a glimpse of Reformation history and how the Lord helps His people to stand firm in the face of severe difficulty. See what became Gillian's greatest treasure and how she was willing to suffer to keep it.

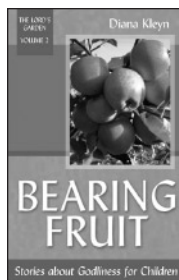


Haykin, Michael A. G. and Steve Weaver (eds.) *"Devoted to the Service of the Temple": Piety, Persecution, and Ministry in the Writings of Hercules Collins.* \$10.00/7.50p (RHB, 150 pages)

While largely forgotten in modern times, Hercules Collins (1646/7-1702) was highly influential among the late 17th and early 18th century Calvinistic Baptists of London. In *"Devoted to the Service of the Temple,"*

Michael A. G. Haykin and Steve Weaver introduce us to the vibrant spirituality of this colossal figure. Through a biographical sketch and 33 sample selections collected from Collins's writings, they remind us how God often uses suffering to intensify zeal in His people and dedication to His church.

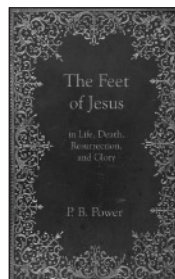
Kleyn, Diana. *Bearing Fruit: Stories about Godliness for Children.* \$8.00/6.00p (RHB, 160 pages)



Just like trees and plants bear fruit, so must the Christian bear spiritual fruit. Some plants and trees are meant to have only branches or stems, and leaves, and no useful fruit. But there are others that produce edible fruit: apple trees, tomato plants, blueberry bushes, etc. Through the work of the Holy Spirit in a believer's heart, Christians begin to produce the fruit of the Spirit. This means that a Christian shows by his lifestyle that he walks in the ways of the Lord. As you can tell an apple tree because of the tasty apples it carries on its branches, Christians should be recognized

by having a godly character. Children, read these stories and see the importance of bearing the fruit of godliness.

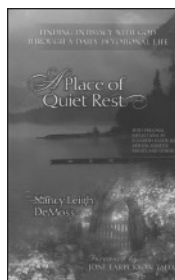
Power, P. B. *The Feet of Jesus in Life, Death, Resurrection, and Glory.* \$20.00/15.00p (RHB, 332 pages)



The Feet of Jesus is a virtual manual of spiritual growth; it pulsates with Christ-glorifying insight, spiritual comfort, and practical guidance. Here, P. B. Power compellingly analyzes several Bible texts that mention Jesus' feet. Because the feet of Jesus passed through the valley of the shadow of death and came out triumphant, those who fall at the feet of Jesus can be assured of His sympathy and rest in His all-sufficient care. Power's book unveils as do few

others the inestimable value of Jesus and His work both in His humiliation and exaltation. Ask yourself, at whose feet could we possibly fall that would supply such sustaining strength? If you would grow in the grace and knowledge of Christ Jesus, pray for Mary's portion to sit at the feet of Jesus as you read this book.

OTHER NEW BOOKS



DeMoss, Nancy Leigh. *A Place of Quiet Rest.* \$15.00/11.00p (Moody, 267 pages)

The God of the universe created us for fellowship with Himself. We realize this and long for that personal intimacy with God, but it often seems so out of reach. Nancy Leigh DeMoss sheds light on the process of coming to know God intimately. In *A Place of Quiet Rest*, Nancy shares from her heart and life how a daily devotional time can

strengthen your relationship with Christ. She addresses the common frustrations and pitfalls that most of us encounter in our devotional life, and makes practical suggestions for overcoming them.

Jenkyn, William. *An Exposition upon the Epistle of Jude.* \$50.00/35.00 (Solid Ground, 380 pages)

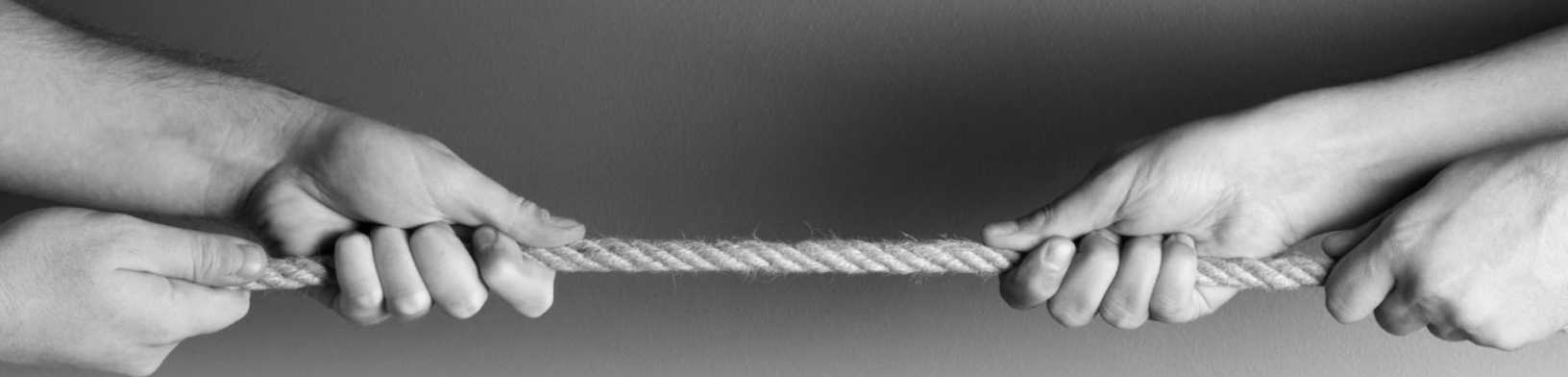
Jenkyn's Exposition upon the Epistle of Jude remains unsurpassed today. It powerfully exhibits Jenkyn's piety and learning. Spurgeon says of it: "Earnest and popular, but very full, and profoundly learned." So greatly was it accepted that for some time Thomas Manton regarded his own publication on Jude as unnecessary.

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PRACTICAL CHRISTIANITY

THE LORD'S SUPPER (10)

Rev. Arie Elshout



Always Much Strife? (1)

Being spiritually exercised by the Lord's Supper and partaking of the Lord's table are often accompanied by much strife. A young man, after hearing discussions about such strife, recently asked me, "Must there always be so much strife? Who would be jealous of this?"

I responded that it is not true that partaking of the Lord's Supper is *always* accompanied by much strife. The Lord knows precisely what someone can bear and what we each need. He will not try us above and beyond what we are able to handle. It often *appears* that our trials do exceed our strength to endure them, but He will give us a cross in proportion to our strength and strength in proportion to our cross.

Why then is there so much strife? It is the full intent of Satan and his cohorts—the powers of the air and the carnal lusts of the flesh (even within us)—to keep those for whom the Lord instituted His Supper from partaking of His table.

The Lord is pleased at times to permit temptations and bad influences without and within to assault His people. He will determine both the measure and the time. He may permit His people to experience such a measure of strife that, experiencing their tremendous helplessness and dependency, they will truly need the Lord. He does so in order that they would adore and thank Him in a more heartfelt manner for His wonderful help and assistance. Without strife, there will be no victory *through* Him; without victory, there will be no crown *from* Him; and without that crown, there will also be no glorying *in* Him for receiving that crown.

Thus, all things are of Him, through Him, and unto Him (Rom. 11:36), and all things must "work together for good to them that love God and are the called according to his purpose" (Rom. 8:28).

Understandably, we do not relish strife. Even those

who can echo the poet of Psalm 119—that "it is good for me to have been afflicted.... I know...that thou in faithfulness hast afflicted me...that I might learn thy statutes" (vv. 71-75)—will shrink from new trials. They know firsthand that, in order to experience God's grace, help, and assistance, we have to encounter circumstances in which we need such grace, help, and assistance.

Yet, was not even the Lord Jesus Himself troubled when the hour of His final and deepest suffering in soul and body came (John 12:27-29)? Was He not troubled in spirit when the moment arrived when He would be betrayed (John 13:21)? He knew that this betrayal would take place, for it had already been prophesied by David (Ps. 41). Willingly, He agreed to suffer anything to accomplish God's good pleasure—He had agreed to die on the cross. And yet, when the climax of all this approached, He was greatly affected. He was troubled and filled with a sense of dread, all without sinning. He therefore turned to His heavenly Father in prayer, seeking His help and assistance, doing so in many a night, both in Jerusalem (John 12:27) and in Gethsemane (Luke 22:39-45). If even the sinless One at times dreaded His approaching suffering, how much more frequently will that be the case with us!

The wonder of God's regenerating grace is that a believer not only begins to delight in the recompense of the reward, but also in the way that leads to this reward. We read of Moses that he chose "rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season; esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt: for he had respect unto the recompense of the reward" (Heb. 11:25-26). By nature, strife is not appealing to anyone. At best, people will desire the crown but not the cross. Yet, no one will wear a crown of glory who has not been

a bearer of the cross of Christ in some measure. Did not all those who are before the throne come out of great tribulation, having washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb (Rev. 7:14)? Is it not written that God's children must enter into the kingdom of God through much tribulation (Acts 14:22)? None of us would be inclined to choose the way of tribulation and strife. However, what is impossible for our corrupt nature is possible by God's grace and power. He makes salvation (the recompense of the reward) so desirable that our wills are inclined to whatever God calls us to do in order to become a partaker of His salvation, no matter what this may entail. We read therefore that "godly sorrow worketh repentance to salvation not to be repented of" (2 Cor. 7:10). It is understandable that no one will be jealous of the strife of God's people. However, without such strife, there would be no experiences of God's salvation of which someone can be jealous indeed. The one is inseparably connected to the other.

Granted, not all of God's children experience strife in an equal measure. There are those who enter into the kingdom of heaven without having known much strife. God alone can determine in what measure one must strive to enter into the narrow gate. No one should question his spiritual state due to having experienced either much or little strife. Instead, everyone should examine himself whether he knows something of fighting the good fight fought by all who are saved.

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In this context, I wish to repeat what I have stated earlier: never measure yourself and others by the extraordinary circumstances of someone else's life. Such comparisons bring about unnecessary anxiety. The extraordinary is not the mark of genuine experience, but rather, that which is according to Holy Scripture in all its simplicity. No one ought to wish for the same measure of strife as another believer may have experienced. Rather, everyone should long for the ministry of God's Spirit in order that he might be, and continue to be, desirous to fear the Lord.

*Who is he that fears Jehovah,
Walking with Him day by day?
God will lead him safely onward,
Guide him in the chosen way.*

—Psalter 415:6

Therefore, desire neither misery nor despondency, but rather, clarity and integrity.¹

They who fear the Lord must see to it that they do

not speak only about their strife, but also about the experience of God's mercy, particularly in the presence of small children, young people, and beginners in grace. Be on guard against fostering the notion that the service of the Lord only consists of misery and strife. An experienced child of God, long since deceased, once said to her friend, "My misery I tell to the Lord, but to people I speak about how good the Lord is for sinful people."

When someone experiences much strife, it can be very good and beneficial to point out to them from Scripture, and possibly from one's own experience, that this is not a strange matter; but we must learn when and to whom to say it. What is good for one person may be detrimental to another.

1. This is the translation of the Dutch adage: "Sta niet naar naarheid of zwaarheid, maar naar klaarheid en waarheid."

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"The Internals of Religion"

Surely there are no superfluities in the internals of religion. In the outward part too much may indeed be done. In some respects one may be "righteous overmuch"; that is, in either a self-willed, superstitious way, or else in such an unseasonable or prolonged performance of religious duties, as to tire out a tempted soul, and run the Christian off his legs. But of inward graces, sanctified knowledge, and real holiness, there can never be an excess.

Let us study to increase and abound more and more in knowledge, faith, love, humility, experience; as Paul pressed forward, if by any means he might attain to the resurrection of the dead, forgetting what was behind, and reaching forth to what was before. Moses's ark had staves for removing further—Jacob's ladder had rounds for ascending higher; so Christians must sing the song of degrees in this world, and should seek to be renewed day by day. We must not be satisfied with present attainments, but work hard to increase them to a treasure. We must strive both for fullness of grace and fullness of joy.

I have never read or heard of any that had too much grace, or so much as they desired. All have bewailed their defects, living and dying; and the best men have been most covetous of divine things, young and old. Now, who or what are you? Are you wise enough, good enough? Are you afraid of being too like God, or having too much of God in and with your soul? Are you loath to get too ready for, or too readily into, heaven?

Alas, alas! You may well call your state in question, if you say, you have grace enough, or are good enough. It is as natural for a living saint to call for grace as for a living child to cry for food. Insatiable desire after grace, is a clear test of the reality of grace. Oh shame thyself, then, for thy neglect, and humble thy soul for thy non-proficiency!

—Oliver Heywood

The Practical Life of Faith and Family Worship

The following article is the summary of an interview conducted by a Dutch periodical in anticipation of the BSGT editor's July itinerary in the Netherlands. The interviewer writes that the editors of the Dutch periodical "asked me to write an article about your books which are published in the Dutch language, especially about the practical life of faith and family worship." We hope that North American readers will be interested in the questions from a Dutch perspective as well as the answers given.

1. What is the importance of family worship? Is such a Puritan way of seeking God outdated in our time? Sometimes we hear of such gatherings in Evangelical circles. What is the difference between those meetings and gatherings held from a more Reformed perspective?

Family worship is critical for every sphere of life. As goes the home, so goes the church and so goes the nation. Family worship is not the only factor in how the home goes, but it is certainly the most important and it lies at the center of the home. The importance of family prayer and conversations about the eternal truths of God cannot be overestimated. Family worship promotes family harmony in times of affliction, greater knowledge of the Scriptures, and, with the Spirit's blessing, growth in genuine Christianity. It nurtures wisdom in how to face life, openness to speaking about meaningful questions, and a closer relationship between parents and children. I can say without hesitation that the most important part of my day is our family worship time, when I strive, albeit with shortcomings, to provide instruction in the



Word of God, prayer to the throne of God, and singing to the praise of God in our own family.

In the United States, Christians, both Reformed and Evangelical, tend to agree on the importance of family worship. Even the "para-church" ministries encourage daily Bible reading and prayer, at least on an individual basis.

If there is a difference on the part of Reformed Christians, it is our insistence on the duty of heads of families to conduct such exercises in the home as an outworking of our covenant responsibility as parents to our children. However, the rise of the homeschool movement (parents educating children at home rather than sending them to a day school) has nurtured the same conviction on the part of many non-Reformed Evangelicals.

But both Reformed and Evangelical Christians struggle to maintain such family worship amid the modern lifestyle that keeps family members away from home for so much of the day—for work, shopping, recreations of all kinds, and even church-sponsored activities. Too many families fail to share even one meal in common on a weekday. More value must be placed on maintaining family worship. Until we learn to say "no" to some of our outside activities, family worship will continue to suffer neglect in many homes. The family must unite to pray together and study the Scriptures together.

2. You write a lot about the important issues of faith and conversion. Can you tell me more the relevance of it for the dialogue between Reformed and Evangelical people? What is for you the main difference between Reformed and Evangelical people regarding faith and coming to faith?

There continue to be significant differences of emphases between Reformed and Evangelical Christians on these topics. Reformed Christianity historically has regarded conversion as a process that unfolds over time, in which coming to faith and a personal conversion experience are only parts of the process. This is not to say that there are not additional important moments or experiences in that process, but these all take place in the context of an on-going and thorough operation of the Holy Spirit, working with the Word.

Evangelicals often mistakenly understand conversion as a single event in a person's experience, brought about by the individual's own decision or act of receiving

Christ as Savior, and call this being born again. Reformed Christians do not deny the possibility of sudden conversions, but we do not treat this as the norm nor bind the Holy Spirit to work in this way. Sudden conversions are the norm for Evangelicals. At times elaborate means are devised and used to produce them on an individual basis (“personal evangelism”) and even in large numbers (“mass evangelism”).

3. What is the relevance of the experimental side of faith? Can Evangelicals learn from the Puritans?

Because experimental faith has to do with the process of conversion, it is a great help both in understanding the process itself and in determining just where an individual person may be in that process. It also helps emphasize the fact that conversion involves a daily encounter with God through His Word and providence and is not limited to a one-time experience. Experimental faith helps explain, in terms of biblical truth, how matters do go (Rom. 7:14-25) and how they ought to go (Rom. 8) in the Christian life. Such faith applies to all the experience of the believer—as an individual and in all of his relationships in the family, church, and the world (Col. 2:6-7).

Evangelicals are often troubled by the results of their “personal” and “mass” evangelism. So many who are said to have been born again by such means quickly fall away, or else manifest very little change in their manner of life afterwards. Erroll Hulse, who worked in Billy Graham’s organization for some time, later wrote in his *Billy Graham: The Pastor’s Dilemma* that fewer than 5% of those who came forward in mass evangelism showed any measurable difference in their lives even a few months later. On the other hand, through the hard work of “plain preaching” and faithful catechetical teaching, Richard Baxter could say near the end of his ministry in Kidderminster that, of the six hundred converts brought to faith under his preaching, he could not name one that had backslidden from faith into the world! As I concluded in my book, *Puritan Evangelism*, “How vastly different was that result compared to the results of today’s evangelists who press for mass conversions, then turn over the hard work of follow-up to others!”

Concerned Evangelicals could learn much from the Puritans that would account for these disappointing results and, even more, on how better to preach the gospel for true conversion of life. In a recent address I gave at the Ligonier Conference in Florida, I offered nine reasons why everyone should read the Puritans—reasons which, if Evangelicals imbibed them, could give much more depth in and fruit from their work:

1. Puritan writings help you shape your life by Scripture.
2. Puritan writings show you how to integrate biblical doctrine into daily life.

3. Puritan writings show you how to exalt Christ and see His beauty.
4. Puritan writings highlight the Trinitarian character of theology.
5. Puritan writings show you how to handle trials.
6. Puritan writings explain true spirituality.
7. Puritan writings show you how to live by holistic faith.
8. Puritan writings teach you the importance and primacy of preaching.
9. Puritan writings show you how to live in two worlds—this world and the unseen world to come.

4. In the Charismatic Movement there is a strong emphasis on the gifts of the Spirit and religious experience. What is the difference between the Reformed view and the Evangelical-Charismatic view on experience and the importance of the work of the Spirit?

The Reformed faith is deeply concerned with the work of the Spirit in many areas, including creation, the world at large, redemption, the conversion of sinners, the sanctification of believers, and the building up of Christ’s church and the kingdom of God. For this reason, our father in the faith, John Calvin, has been called “the theologian of the Holy Spirit.”

Evangelicals and Charismatics have been far more narrowly focused on the gifts of the Spirit and their relationship to personal sanctification. As far back as John Wesley, Evangelicals have looked for some critical experience, attributed to the Holy Spirit, which would provide instant access to “perfection in love,” “entire sanctification,” “the victorious life,” or some other “higher ground” of Christian experience. Charismatics have insisted that the most important such experience is the baptism with the Holy Ghost, accompanied by the “sign gift” of speaking in tongues.

Astonishingly, both groups say that it is possible to become a Christian without any baptizing work of the Holy Spirit, or to live as a Christian without being filled with the Spirit. So they have spoken of a “second blessing” or at least something more to be added to personal faith in Christ as Savior. Charismatics describe their teaching as “full gospel” over against the “limited” gospel preached in non-Charismatic churches.

The cultivation of a spiritual life has been addressed in different ways by different Christian traditions. Roman Catholicism has offered a spirituality of ritualism and sacramental administration, and, alternatively, the disciplines of monastic life and the pursuits of mysticism; the Wesleyan Methodist tradition, the Holiness movement, and, more recently, Pentecostalism and the Charismatic movement have offered a spirituality with

less ceremonial or intellectual content and a great deal more emotion and subjectivism.

The problem with much spirituality today—including various Charismatic forms—is that it is not closely moored to Scripture and degenerates too often into unbiblical mysticism. In contrast, Reformed Christianity has followed a path of its own, largely determined by its concern to test all things by Scripture and to develop a spiritual life shaped by Scripture’s teachings and directives, which, in turn, is buttressed by biblical

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doctrinal standards. Reformed spirituality is the outworking of the conviction that “all scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness” (2 Tim. 3:16). In dependence on the Holy Spirit, it aims to achieve what John Murray called “intelligent piety,” wedding scripturally doctrinal knowledge, and heartfelt piety. Of the preachers, scholars, and writers who fostered this kind of biblical spirituality, none have excelled the Puritans of England and their contemporaries in Scotland and the Netherlands. Their legacy excels in basing all spirituality, experience, and affections on the Bible and supporting confessional standards.

The dual emphasis of nurturing both the mind and the soul is sorely needed today. On the one hand, we confront the problem of dry Reformed orthodoxy, which has correct doctrinal teaching but lacks vibrant, godly living. The result is that people bow before the doctrine of God without a vital, spiritual union with the God of doctrine. On the other hand, Pentecostal and Charismatic Christianity offers emotionalism in protest against a formal, lifeless Christianity, but it is not rooted solidly in Scripture. The result is that people bow before human feeling rather than before the Triune God.

Because doctrine has been neglected for so long, today’s Reformed Christians have much to re-discover about their own faith and its emphasis on the work of the Holy Spirit in the believer, in the church, and in the world. It is a shame to cede this ground to Pentecostalism as though we had nothing to say about it. My personal passion and goal in life is, by the Spirit’s grace, to spread solid biblical, Reformed, confessional, experiential truth throughout the world by means of preaching, conferences, literature, and training men for the ministry.

Though Evangelicals agree with most of what the

Reformers taught, they do not have the kind of solid confessional base that the Reformed possess. This makes Evangelicals more susceptible to being swayed by every wind of doctrine. Reformed Christians need to lovingly guide Evangelicals to a firmer confessional base.

5. Is the practical side of faith something which is honored more by Evangelical than by Reformed people?

In the United States, Evangelicals have alternated between being exclusively concerned with personal salvation and making periodic forays into the realm of politics and social reform. At the moment, they seem to be caught up mainly in a campaign to deny civil rights to gay people and, in particular, to prevent the extension of the rights and privileges of civil marriage to homosexuals. In other words, they are issue-oriented and lack a larger or comprehensive program for the renewal of society. As a result, politicians and political parties exploit Evangelicals, using these “hot-button” issues to spur Evangelicals to vote in large numbers for particular candidates without any intention of furthering the social reforms these earnest Christian voters desire.

Reformed Christians share many of the same concerns, and sometimes participate in particular fights, but we try to maintain a larger perspective—to consider the coming of God’s kingdom and what that implies for the lives of citizens and nations. Reformed Christians have always stressed the importance of applying the teachings of our biblical faith to our daily lives at home, at work, in school, and at play. Calvinism’s “work ethic” is world famous; we need to give more thought to what we do with the leisure time and recreations afforded by modern life.

Reformed Christians also stress the practical implications of the Ten Commandments for all of life. Sadly, many Evangelicals are antinomians who reject the Law of God. They say its rule passed away with the old dispensation, so they have no fixed biblical ethic or standard. They speak in general terms about “family values” and “our Judeo-Christian heritage,” but these expressions have no definite content and can be reshaped or reinterpreted as the issues and battles of the moment change.

In most conservative Reformed churches in the United States, comparatively little attention has been paid to practical Christian living, at least in the past. Preachers seemed to assume that such matters would be learned at home, by imitation of parental example if in no other, more intentional way. That is changing today, and Reformed believers are pressing for the change. More and more people in Reformed churches have no background in the faith, and many who do have the background are questioning the effectiveness of leaving much of practical Christianity to be learned in some way other than by instruction from the pulpit. ❖

Grief for Sin

Sometimes we handle others' failures as badly as our own. How successfully do you handle the sins of others? Observation suggests that the Christian family too often reacts with either hot indignation or cold indifference, without a proper sense of biblical responsibility.

Sometimes we seem as bad at handling others' failures as we are at overcoming our own. No doubt these two things are related. Yet, given the nature of the gospel, would we not expect that the church should be vastly different from the world on this point?

Scripture gives several principles which should govern our response to the sins of others.

1. *Grief.* A life has been marred. Christ's name has been shamed. Perhaps others' lives have been invaded by the consequences of sin. Things can never be quite the same again. Hearts will have been hardened, making repentance the more difficult. Knowing this, we will weep with those who weep.

2. *Realism.* Conversion does not deliver the saints from the presence of sin. We may have died to sin, but sin has not yet died out in us. The regenerate man is only in the process of being healed. Sin dwells in him still.

This does not excuse the believer's sin, but it underlines that it is possible for Christians still to sin. Scripture encourages us that there will be no fatalities, but warns us that we can still be critically wounded.

The strong-stomached authors of the Westminster Confession caught this balance when they wrote that "sanctification is throughout in the whole man; yet imperfect in this life, there abiding still some remnants of corruption in every part, whence ariseth a continual and irreconcilable war.... In which war, although the remaining corruption, for a time, may prevail; yet, through the continual supply of strength from the sanctifying Spirit of Christ, the regenerate part doth overcome" (XIV, ii, iii).

Such knowledge does not protect us from grief over others' sins, but it does help us to see that a single wound is not the end of the war, and thus preserves us from despair of ourselves or others.

3. *Self-examination.* We too are frail; we too may fall. Our sins may not have produced the same public consequences as those of our brethren, but may be no less horrible. We may have been spared the combination of sinful desire, the pressure of temptation, and the opportunity to act that has brought another to fall. Only those who know that they too are "compassed with infirmity"

will be able to "have compassion on the ignorant, and on them that are out of the way" (Heb. 5:2).

4. *Mutual confession.* We are to confess our sins to each other, and to pray for one another (James 5:16). Why? Because mutual confession breaks the grip of Satan over the guilty heart.

Satan's paralyzing stranglehold depends on our acceptance of his winsome lies: 1) no other Christian could have sinned as you did; 2) no other Christian will accept you and love you now, so you must disguise your sin by any means you can. But in mutual confession, we discover and overcome his lies and break the blackmailing grip that Satan has gained over us. It brings us back into the fellowship from which we have withdrawn out of guilt and a fear of discovery.

5. *Forgiveness and reconciliation.* Those whom Christ welcomes we must welcome. He grants forgiveness in order that there may be amendment of life. We dare not reverse that gospel pattern by demanding rigorous rehabilitation before we extend forgiveness and reconciliation.

6. *New discipline.* Brothers and sisters who sin are to be restored gently (Gal. 6:1). There is a twofold emphasis here, on discipline and grace. Those who have failed need to drink long and deeply from the fountain of grace, learning again and again that we are not justified by our sanctification but by God's grace. They will need to be protected from Satan's efforts to overwhelm and cripple them with guilt, or to drive them to a sense of despair.

Moreover, they have sinned, as we ourselves have, and together we must help them to remodel and rebuild their Christian lives and testimony. The foundations must be strengthened, the ruins must be reconstructed.

It appears from our Lord's teaching that all this may normally be accomplished informally by fellow Christians, long before it becomes necessary for formal discipline to be inaugurated. Such discipline is for the intractable only (Matt. 18:15-17).

We must remember that the New Testament church contained one who, after his regeneration, denied Christ with blasphemies. Christ prays for those whom Satan seeks to sift like wheat. He loves them still.

Who knows to what usefulness a brother or sister may be restored by those who have learned how to handle the sins of others as well as their own?

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The Emerging Church and the Way of Cain

"Woe unto them! For they have gone in the way of Cain." —Jude 11

The deceitfulness of the human heart is a truth recorded in Scripture and borne out in daily life. Believers discover it increasingly in their own lives as well as around them. One of the ways this deceitfulness shows itself is the love for the lie, especially the lie that we ourselves can determine how to serve God.

This lie has been promoted since the father of lies uttered it in the garden. It has had its countless followers, from Cain, Balaam, and Korah to the apostates in the Epistle of Jude.

Experimenting with Christianity

A century ago, it was popular to say you were "religious," but not "spiritual." That meant that you did not take your Christian belief to the extreme, but you tried to live a religious life. Now, people like to say the opposite: "We are spiritual," they say, "but not religious."¹ What they mean is that they feel themselves connected to the spiritual realm, but they don't want to align themselves with any traditional institution or form of worship, and certainly not one that claims to be the only right and true one.

As part of this development, people have begun to talk about the "Emerging or Emergent Church." In his very helpful book, Don Carson makes clear that the Emerging Church sees itself as the shape of the church to come, because a new culture is emerging.² It is a reaction, first of all, to what it thinks of as the traditional church, with its creeds and its emphasis on truth. Secondly, it is a reaction to the seeker-sensitive church, which especially targeted baby boomers. In fact, many of the leaders of the Emerging Church come out of the seeker-sensitive movement, and see themselves targeting the generation under 30. They reject "linear" thinking, such as adherence to confessions, and instead emphasize experience and other such modes (emotion, aesthetics). They emphasize inclusion rather than exclusion. While they see other churches emphasizing "believing in order to belong," their frequent phrase is "you belong in order to believe." They promote a coming to faith "by osmosis." There is an emphasis on authenticity rather than absolutes. They do not fence the Lord's table, for that would be exclusionary.

In this experience of "belonging," people might actually come to faith. They stress narrative and commu-

nity. Sometimes they link up with other movements such as "openness of God"-thinking, anti-consumerism, the theology for the oppressed, the New Perspective on Paul, etc. In terms of its beliefs, there is wide diversity. In terms of its methods, there is broad commonality.

A New Kind of Christian

The Emerging Church movement, or conversation (as some call it), began to take off around 2001, inspired largely by a book, *A New Kind of Christian*, by Brian McLaren. It promotes itself as a "spiritual renewal for those who thought they had given up on church," and documents the spiritual journey taken by two fictional characters (Dan Poole, a disillusioned evangelical pastor, and Neo, a high school science teacher) as they move from modern to postmodern approaches to Christianity. With Neo's help, Dan begins to discover that the form of Christianity that he previously adhered to was too deeply rooted in the era of modernity to survive the present cultural changes. Since then, the movement has proliferated through books, and more so through conferences and the Internet. The main representatives are Brian McLaren, Dan Kimball, and Andy Crouch.

Post-Modernism

According to Kimball, "modernity dates from around 1500-2000" and "held to a single, universal worldview and moral standard, a belief that all knowledge is good and certain, truth is absolute, individualism is valued, and thinking, learning, and beliefs should be determined systematically and logically."³ Postmodernism, by contrast, "holds there is no single universal worldview. All truth is not absolute, community is valued over individualism, and thinking, learning, and beliefs can be determined nonlinearly."

According to Carson, the leaders of the Emerging Church movement have a facile grasp of postmodernism in its philosophical form. They have little understanding of how it relates to modernism, and especially how it is a form of modernism. Moreover, Carson argues, though the church has in many quarters fallen prey to modernism, the embrace of the absolute is not a modern concern alone. Propositional thinking is not something that emerged with "modernity," but can be found

throughout the Bible and down through the whole history of the church.⁴

Reformation or Reformulation?

Probably the most important emphasis of the Emerging Church is on “reading our times” or “reading our culture.” Here is where they show their seeker-sensitive background. They have basically detected that the seeker-sensitive model does not appeal to the younger generation. Why is that? “Well,” the Emerging Church says, “It is because the younger generation is essentially post-modern, while the seeker-sensitive churches were modern. The post-moderns want to question tradition. The modern embrace it.”

Often they claim the badge of “reforming.” In his book, *Generous Orthodoxy*, Brian McLaren claims to be, among other things, Reformed. What this means, however, is that the church must be always reforming, and reforming as our culture is developing. He has also adjusted the Five Points of Calvinism in a revealing way: Triune Love; Unselfish Election; Limitless Reconciliation; Inspiring Grace; Passionate, Persistent Saints. These may be catchy phrases, but do not at all delineate the gospel in a biblical and Reformed manner. It is telling that total depravity is absent. When sin is not sin, grace can never be grace either; this is no Reformation, but mere *Reformulation*.

Worship

In *Soul Tsunami: Sink or Swim in New Millenium Culture*, Leonard Sweet says, “Postmoderns want a God they can feel, taste, touch, hear and smell—a full sensory immersion in the divine.”⁵ As a result, the Emerging Church has vigorously sought to move the prevailing patterns of Christian worship in a more experience-based direction. This has been encapsulated in Sweet’s own catchy acronym: EPIC—(E)xperiential, (P)articipatory, (I)mage-driven, and (C)onnected.⁶ Thus, there is a return to liturgical traditions, especially the performative, dramatic, and ritualistic.

A local congregation in Grand Rapids that embodies the emerging emphases writes this on their website: “From songs to readings to silent meditation, through ancient hymns or rock and roll or—dare I even say it—country music, we want to connect with God in as many different ways as there are different people and different sides of the Almighty. We’re barely scratching the surface. But we believe that God is actively redeeming and healing this planet, and he has invited everyone of us to join him in this revolution.”⁷ It is clear that the Reformed principle of Word-regulated and simple worship is the opposite of what the Emerging Church is about.

Two Spiritualities

Despite what its representatives claim, the Emerging Church has not left the Enlightenment behind. David

Wells notes that this spiritual revolution is in fundamental harmony and continuity with the Enlightenment, not in conflict with it. It is the autonomous self-determining how a person ought to feel, think, and live. Sin is not understood vertically but horizontally. We do not conceive of sin as guilt, but rather as shame. We understand it in relational terms, and thus our view of salvation is also correspondingly relational. We basically conceive of salvation as “therapy,” and engage in “therapeutic pragmatism.”

Because man was created in the image of God, it is not strange that people would crave spirituality. This is true especially in our society where we have everything to live with, but nothing to live for.⁸ That man mixes his own recipe for spirituality, however, is part of the problem.

Throughout Scripture, we see two kinds of spiritualities—the true and the false. From the story of Cain and Abel’s offerings on, the whole Bible contrasts man-made religion with the divinely revealed religion. What was Elijah doing on Mount Carmel? He unmasked the vanity and wickedness of a self-made spirituality. What were the prophets doing when they called the people away from their vain oblations? What did Christ do when he railed on the Pharisees praying on the street-corners? What did Paul do when he unmasked the Galatian heresy? Throughout the Bible, God draws a line through all of man’s self-produced spirituality and writes over it all: vain and condemnable.

May God save us and our children from going down the path made by the Emerging Church—to any degree. The Emerging Church will come and go; until Christ’s return, other similar movements will come and dress up the same error in different garb. We should not be ignorant of this (2 Peter 2), but contend earnestly for the true faith (Jude 3). The only real protection against false spirituality and religion is the true. May we arm ourselves with the Berean spirit and especially know and retain the biblical spirituality of Abel, who “obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts” (Heb. 11:4).

- 1 David Wells, *Above all Earthly Pow’rs* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005), 127-128. I want to thank Mark Raines and Maarten Kuivenhoven, both students at PRTS, for their papers on the subject, which helped me gain clarity on what is at stake in the Emerging Movement.
- 2 D. A. Carson, *Becoming Conversant with the Emerging Church* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2005).
- 3 Dan Kimball, *The Emerging Church* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2003), 57-58.
- 4 Carson, *Conversant with the Emerging Church*, chapters 4-5.
- 5 Leonard Sweet, *Soul Tsunami: Sink or Swim in New Millenium Culture* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1999).
- 6 Leonard Sweet, *Postmodern Pilgrims* (Nashville: Broadman and Holman, 2000), xxi.
- 7 <http://www.mhbcmi.org/about/history.php>, accessed October 9, 2006.
- 8 I am indebted to Rev. Maurice Roberts for this thought, which I heard him say in a lecture at PRTS.



The Teachable Parent and Teacher

"I will instruct thee and teach thee in the way which thou shalt go: I will guide thee with mine eye. Be ye not as the horse, or as a mule, which have no understanding: whose mouth must be held in with bit and bridle, lest they come near unto thee." —Psalm 32:8-9

CHRISTIAN EDUCATION

James W. Beeke

The "I" in our text refers to God. The all-knowing, wise, and almighty Lord of lords is speaking. The "thee" in these verses of Psalm 32 refers to David, after he owned and confessed his sin to the Lord. The "thee" also addresses each of us, including parents and teachers, when we confess our shortcomings and sin. And who is without sin that needs to be confessed?

A believer is often referred to as "a child of God." Why? Certainly one aspect of a true Christian's spiritual child-likeness is that he is teachable. A young child is willing to learn. A little child watches and listens to his parents and learns from them. A child believes and trusts what his parents tell him with unquestioning confidence, and acts upon this knowledge.

A characteristic mark of teachable people is the desire to sit at the Master's feet. They want to listen and are open to being taught. They trust and act on this knowledge.

"And I will guide thee with mine eye." God will not only teach, but He will also watch over confessing and repenting sinners, like David. He will watch over them like a good shepherd watches over his sheep. If the first part of our text implies child-like behavior (to be instructed and taught), then this second part speaks of servant-like action (to be guided). As parents or teachers, how critical it is that we look to the Master for guidance, as ready servants look to the eyes and hands of their master, to immediately obey his command.

Parents, are your ears open to the Word of God? Teachers, are your eyes focused upon the God of the Word? If so, what a wonderful comfort to know that this omniscient and almighty God will instruct and guide us! We do not need to parent or teach alone, limited by our finite knowledge and ability.

The opposite spirit is pictured in our verse as a stubborn horse or mule. This portrays a person, parent, or teacher who does not listen to or focus on the Lord and His Word of instruction and guidance. Their ears are only open to their own words. Their eyes are focused on their own actions. Such are unteachable. They stubbornly hold to their own way of handling matters; they see no need for listening or looking to the Lord. They think that they can handle things themselves.

The unteachable teacher thinks that he immediately "knows" what to think about a particular situation. The unteachable parent "knows" what to say and is quick to say it. The unteachable teacher "knows" what to do and promptly does it. This demonstrates self-reliance, but not child-like reliance on God. In other words, his faith is in himself, not in God.

The teachable teacher, by contrast, trusts God, not self. Such a teacher's disposition represents that of a student—a willing and engaged learner. He readily goes to the Master for help. "O Lord, help me! Teach me. Show me how best to approach this student who said such rebellious words. I do not know what to do, Lord, but Thou knowest. Fill me with a wise, firm, and yet gracious spirit. Do not allow me to handle this matter in my own way. Help me to think Thy thoughts, speak Thy words, and act in a way that would reflect Thee."

This does not mean that a child-like parent or student-like teacher will not respond firmly and decisively. Think of David facing Goliath, Elijah at Mount Carmel, or Daniel's decision to pray as he did before, despite King Darius's new law. To the contrary, knowing that I am acting according to God's will and Word provides strength and courage to confront and deal with difficult situations and problems. This Word-based, prayerful, and reflective confidence differs greatly from the self-based, self-trusting, and spontaneous boldness of one whose trust is in his or her own abilities and skills.

The more we learn in the Master's school, the more we understand how little we know. Greater learning produces more humility. Therefore, the more we learn, the more teachable we become. The most advanced Christians are those who are the most teachable, the most child-like. They are the ones who most closely resemble their Master, their dear Lord Jesus Christ. Why? Because they spend the most time at His feet, being taught by Him. Their ears are open to hear their Savior's Word, and their eyes are focused upon their Master to follow His commands. No wonder, then, that they most closely resemble their Lord.

Dear parents, how can we parent better? Teachers,

(concluded on page 164)

Angels

Many people believe in angels. As Christians, we also believe that angels exist. However, we must be careful not to confuse what the world believes and what the Bible says about angels. A sad reality is that many people say they believe in angels, but not in God, or they believe that angels have more power than God does. Sometimes people give angels credit for things that God has done. And sometimes people believe things that are simply not true.

Let's examine more closely what the Bible teaches, so that we can better understand what is true and what is not true about angels. First of all, angels are created beings; they are not gods. "For by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him" (Colossians 1:16). Since God created them, they are His servants. They are creatures, so they worship God, their Creator. "And again, when he bringeth in the first begotten into the world, he saith, And let all the angels of God worship him" (Hebrews 1:6). They joyfully serve the Lord.

Because angels live in heaven with God, they are holy. They are without sin, and praise God without envy or pride. There are angels who have sinned: they are the devils, and will be cast into hell along with all unbelievers on the Day of Judgment. In heaven, however, there is no sin, for God does not tolerate sin in His presence. Heaven is filled with thousands of angels who delight to serve God perfectly. "Is there any number of his armies?" asked Bildad the Shuhite in Job 25:3a. "But ye are come unto mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels" (Hebrews 12:22). What a wonderful place heaven must be!

Angels are divided into different types. The Bible speaks of the angel of the LORD. This refers to the Lord Jesus Christ Himself. "And he shewed me Joshua the high priest standing before the angel of the LORD, and Satan standing at his right hand to resist him" (Zechariah 3:1). This angel of the LORD, the Lord Jesus, ordered Joshua's filthy clothes to be replaced with clean garments, and a beautiful crown to be set on his head even though Satan stood nearby to condemn him. This is something only the Savior can do.

Isaiah describes the seraphim for us: "Each one had six wings; with [two] he covered his face, and with [two] he covered his feet, and with [two] he did fly" (Isaiah 6:2). Seraphim have six wings; cherubims have two.

The ark of the covenant was adorned with likenesses of cherubims covered in gold, one on each end of the mercy seat: "And the cherubims spread out their wings on high, and covered with their wings over the mercy seat, with their faces one to another; even to the mercy seatward were the faces of the cherubims" (Exodus 37:9). There is also Michael, the archangel, or the great prince of heaven: "And at that time shall Michael stand up, the great prince which standeth for the children of thy people" (Daniel 12:1a). In the beginning, after the creation of the angels, the Bible tells us, "there was war in heaven: Michael and his angels fought against the dragon" (Revelation 12:7a). He seems to be the angel in charge of battle against Satan and all evil. Then there is Gabriel, the angel who brought tidings of Christ's birth to some of God's people. He told Zacharias that he and Elisabeth would have a son who would be the forerunner of the Savior. When the old priest would not believe him, he said, "I am Gabriel, that stand in the presence of God; and am sent to speak unto thee, and to shew thee these glad tidings" (Luke 1:19).

Every single angel has a purpose, regardless of his position. All angels stand ready to serve God; all angels are God's messengers, whether they must bring messages of joy or warning. When the Lord Jesus Christ was born, "the angel of the Lord" brought the tidings of His birth to the shepherds in the fields of Bethlehem. Then, "suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God" (Luke 2:13). It is no wonder then, that the angels are interested in the gospel, and the salvation of sinners. Peter tells us that "the angels desire to look into" the things of God (1 Peter 1:12). Jesus said, "I say unto you, that likewise joy shall be in heaven over one sinner that repenteth" (Luke 15:7a). They rejoice when sinners are saved because they know salvation is God's special gift to His people.

Sometimes, however, the angels have unpleasant news to deliver. The angels who came to visit Lot in Sodom brought a fearful message of destruction: "We will destroy this place, because the cry of them is waxen great before the face of the LORD; and the LORD hath sent us to destroy it" (Genesis 19:13). Not only were the angels sent to bring Lot this frightening message, they were also commanded to actually carry out the judgment of God. This happened more often. When the Israelites were outnumbered by their enemies and cried to the Lord for help, "the angel of the LORD went out, and smote in the camp of the Assyrians an hundred fourscore and five thousand: and when they arose early

in the morning, behold, they were all dead corpses" (2 Kings 19:35). Finally, on the great Day of Judgment, the Lord Jesus Christ will appear with the angels to judge all people. "And they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. And he shall send his angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other" (Matthew 24:30b, 31). The angels of God are mighty warriors in the heavenly army of the King of kings.

One very beautiful, comforting fact is that angels protect God's children. A well-known text is Psalm 19:11: "For he shall give his angels charge over thee to keep thee in all thy ways." God orders His angels to personally watch over His dear children wherever they go. When Daniel was thrown to the lions because he refused the commandment of the king to stop praying to God, the Lord sent an angel to protect him during that long, dark night. Several times, angels released the apostles from prison so they could continue to preach the gospel. A particularly precious verse for God's "little ones" is Matthew 18:10: "Take heed that ye despise not one of these little ones; for I say unto you, That in heaven their angels do always behold the face of my Father which is in heaven." The Psalmist tells us that "the angel of the LORD encampeth round about them that fear him, and delivereth them" (Psalm 34:7). Though they cannot see Him, the Lord Jesus is always near His people.

Many people in our days place far too much emphasis on the role of angels, even worshipping them. Charles Spurgeon explains: "It is superstitious to worship angels; it is proper to love them.... They were not ashamed to come and tell the news of Christ's birth to humble shepherds. Mark how well they told the story, and you will love them." We may love the angels because they love God and serve Him better than we do, but we may not worship them. When John saw an angel on the Isle of Patmos, he tells us, "And when I had heard and seen, I fell down to worship before the feet of the angel which shewed me these things. Then saith he unto me, See thou do it not: for I am thy fellowservant, and of thy brethren the prophets, and of them which keep the sayings of this book: worship God" (Revelation 22:8b, 9).

Certainly, angels are blessed creatures, but those who love the Lord are even more blessed. The angels never sinned, and that is a wonderful thing, but they are filled with wonder at the saints of God who have been redeemed from sin and made righteous by the blood of Christ. They do not understand the mystery of salvation. God's people do not understand it either, but they experience a joy that the angels will never comprehend.

Children, do you belong to the blessed people of God? Does God surround you with the protection of His angels? Or do you live your life unprotected by both the angels and the Lord Himself? Will the angels have to perform the dreadful task of casting you into hell, or will they

joyfully carry you into heaven? Will you one day join the angels in praising and glorifying God? This is such an important matter. Do not put off answering these questions! Spend time reading God's Word and praying for the Holy Spirit's saving work. It will not be wasted time, for the Lord gladly hears the prayers of children.

Bible Quiz

Who saw the angels? Look up the texts to find the answers.

Across

3. Acts 12:7
4. Daniel 3:25
6. John 20:11, 12
9. Joshua 5:13-15
13. 1 Kings 19:5
14. 2 Chronicles 18:13, 18
15. Acts 10:3
19. Matthew 1:20
22. Luke 2:9
24. Acts 8:26
25. 2 Samuel 24:17
26. Judges 6:12
27. Genesis 18:1, 2
28. Luke 1:26, 27

Down

1. Daniel 6:22
2. Zechariah 3:7
5. Luke 1:11
7. Genesis 19:1
8. Exodus 14:19
9. Luke 22:43
10. Genesis 28:12
11. Revelation 1:1
12. Judges 13:8-20
14. Exodus 3:2
16. 2 Kings 6:16, 17
17. Matthew 28:5
18. Isaiah 6:2
20. Genesis 16:7-14
21. Numbers 22:31
23. Acts 27:23, 24

Please send your puzzle answers to:

Banner Puzzles and Questions

Attn: Mrs. Diana Kleyn

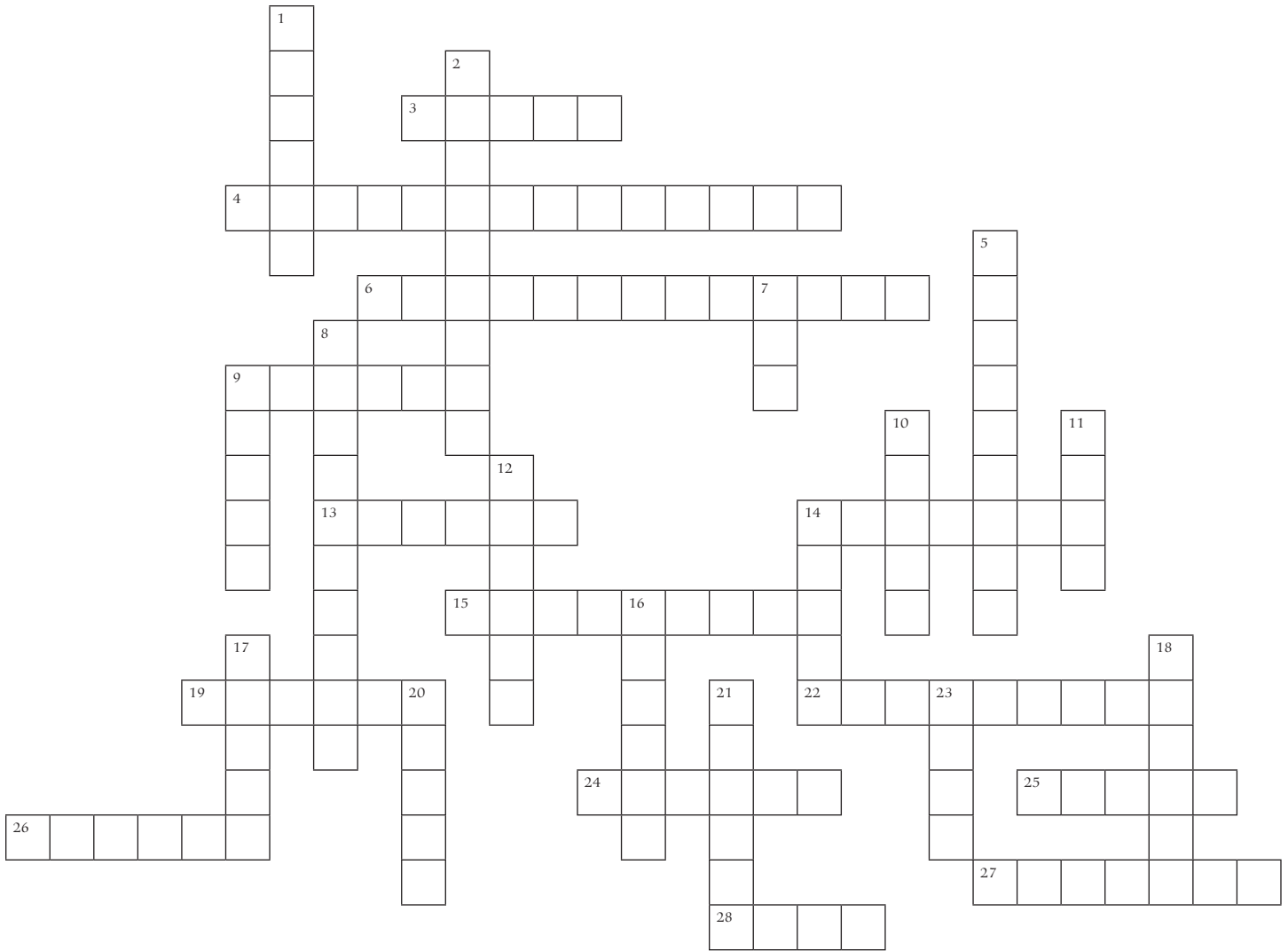
540 Crescent St., NE, Grand Rapids, MI 49503

e-mail: ckleyn@comcast.net

Thanks again to all who sent in the answers to last month's puzzle.

Lucas, Alexander
 Emily Beeke
 Esther Beeke
 Lydia Beeke
 Lauren Bilkes (2)
 Allison Boerkoel
 Leah Boerkoel
 Neal Boerkoel
 Shelly Boot (2)
 Arianna DeHaan
 Julia DeHaan
 Rosalyn DeHaan (2)
 David Hoggatt (2)
 Aaron Kamp (2)
 Phillip Kamp (2)
 Amanda Koppert
 Hailey Meerdink (2)
 Nicholas Meschke (2)
 Melanie Otten
 Alex Talbot
 Amanda Talbot

Matthew Talbot
 Anna VanBeek
 Leah VanBeek
 Calvin VanBrugge
 Mark Vandenberg
 Hannah VanderStel (2)
 Megan VanderStel (2)
 Olivia VanderStel (2)
 Lydia VanDriesten
 Mary VanDriesten
 Hannah VanKempen
 Matthew VanKempen
 Jason VanWoudenberg
 Leah VanWoudenberg
 Erwin Veldhuizen
 Wilena Veldhuizen
 Kathleen Ziegler
 Matthew Ziegler
 William Ziegler
 Johnny Zomer



STORIES FOR CHILDREN

God a Refuge

"God is known in her palaces for a refuge. For lo, the kings were assembled, they passed by together. They saw it, and so they marveled; they were troubled, and hastened away."

—Psalm 48:3-5

During the rebellion in Ireland in 1793, the rebels had decided to attack the Moravian¹ settlement at Grace Hill. A large number of soldiers marched toward the town. When they arrived there, however, they saw no one in the streets or in the houses. Where had all the citizens gone? The Moravians had long expected this attack, but since they did not believe in fighting, they assembled in their chapel. They prayed to God, whom they trusted to be their shield in the hour of danger. The enemies, expecting to meet with swords and armor, were astonished. This was certainly not what they had expected!

¹ The Moravians were followers of John Huss. "The Moravian Brethren" was a Protestant denomination founded in Saxony in 1722 by Hussite emigrants from Moravia, a region of central Czechoslovakia.

Where they expected weapons in hand, they saw hands clasped in prayer; instead of armor, they saw the bended knee and bowed head before the throne of the Prince of Peace. The Moravians were praying!

Not only were they praying for protection, these Christians were asking God to show mercy to their murderers. Then they heard songs of praise and hymns of confidence in the sure promise of the Lord. These Christians completely baffled the enemies who had gathered against them. They beheld in silence this little band of Christians. They filled the streets, lingering for a night and a day. They were simply unable to raise their hand against them. Realizing that the Moravians were protected by a force stronger than they were, the enemies turned and marched away from the city, without having injured a single person, or stolen a single loaf of bread. The inhabitants of the neighboring villages heard about this special display of protection from heaven, so they brought their possessions and asked for shelter in Grace Hill, which they began calling the City of Refuge. "For I, saith the LORD, will be unto her a wall of fire round about, and will be the glory in the midst of her" (Zechariah 2:5).

Ready to Kill

"We, or ever he come near, are ready to kill him."

—Acts 23:15

In one of his sermons, Mr. Thorowgood, a minister of the 17th century, preached against the sin of swearing. One of his hearers, his conscience stinging, thought the minister was speaking to him only. Instead of crying out to God for forgiveness, however, he was filled with rage and resolved to kill the minister. In order to carry out his evil plan, he hid himself behind a hedge he knew Mr. Thorowgood



would ride by when he went to preach his weekly lecture. When the minister approached the hedge, the man prepared to shoot him, but his gun jammed.

The next week, the man hid in the same place with the same plan. When Mr. Thorowgood came by, the man attempted to fire again, but once again, the gun jammed. Twice in a row, his gun had jammed!

This was too great a coincidence, and the man realized that God was protecting His faithful servant. His conscience accusing him for such great wickedness, the man called out to the minister, who had thus far been unaware of any danger. Falling down on his knees, with tears in his eyes, the man told him the whole story, and begged the minister's forgiveness. This miraculous providence was used for the man's conversion, and he became a serious Christian from that time on.

God Shields His People

"As the mountains are round about Jerusalem, so the Lord is round about his people from henceforth, even for ever."

—Psalm 125:2

A chief in Eimeo (a South Sea Island) was converted to God through the preaching of missionaries. The native people, however, were not happy with this change; they hated him. No longer did the chief participate in their idol worship. Instead he told them they should destroy their idols and serve the one true God. They decided they did not want this man as their chief any more; some of the people on the island conspired to kill him when he and a few other Christians were assembled together in the evening for prayer.

The wicked men stealthily approached, armed with muskets. Taking aim, they were about to destroy the whole group. The praying Christians knew nothing of

the evil lurking just outside their home, but God intervened in a miraculous way. Suddenly, the murderous natives were seized with unexplained horror at what they were about to do. Terrified, they threw down their guns, rushed into the room, confessed their sin, and begged for forgiveness. The Christians received them with so much kindness and so freely forgave them that they were utterly overwhelmed. They went away, promising never to harm them again—and they kept their word.

Deliverance

"I will deliver thee in that day, saith the Lord; and thou shalt not be given into the hand of the men of whom thou art afraid."

—Jeremiah 39:17

Augustine was traveling to a distant town to preach. He took with him a guide to direct him in the right direction. However, for some unexplained reason, the guide chose the wrong road, so the two of them took the



long way to the town where he was headed. Afterward, Augustine heard that, by taking this detour, his life had been spared. Some men who had planned to murder him were waiting for him along the intended route. Because he had traveled another way, the men were not able to carry out their wicked scheme.

All stories adapted from *Instructive Anecdotes Illustrative of the Old and New Testaments* by John Whitecross. Glasgow: Thomas D. Morison.

Diana Kleyn is a member of the Heritage Netherlands Reformed Congregation of Grand Rapids, Michigan.

NEWS & ANNOUNCEMENTS

PASTORAL CALLS

Candidate Don Overbeek has received the following pastoral calls:

- from the HRC of Chilliwack, BC to labor in Mexico.
- from the HRC of Hull, Iowa to labor in Plymouth, Wisconsin.
- from the HNRC of Burgessville, Ontario to labor in Bradford, Ontario.
- from the HNRC of Grand Rapids, Michigan.

He has declined the call to labor in Mexico.

Candidate Bert Pohl has received a call from the Jordan HRC to labor in Yellville, Arkansas.

OBITUARIES

KINNEY, Daniel Jack, aged 94, passed away May 28, 2007 in Grand Blanc, Michigan. He was preceded in death by his wife Marguerite; Sons/daughters-in-law—Jack & Virginia, Jim & Jean. Six grandchildren; six great-grandchildren. (Rev. F. VanderZwaag, Acts 26:27-29).

PRINCE, Marjorie, aged 92, passed away on Friday, June 8, 2007, Holland, Michigan. She was preceded in death by her husband, Wilbur "Bill" Prince in 2000; a son, John, in 1965; daughter-in-law, Betsy Prince, in 2005. She is survived by her children—Calvin Prince, David & Kathy Prince, Sharlene & Jerry Mannes, Jacquelyn & John Lawrence, Mark & Bonnie Prince, Dean & Carol Prince,



Dwight & Elizabeth Prince. Brother and Sisters—Glenn & Louise Quist, Mrs. Alvin (Mary Jane) Hossink, Laurena & Orië VanderBoon; Sisters-in-law—Mrs. James (Hazel) Quist, Mrs. Clarence (Frances) Quist. Thirty-one grandchildren; thirty-two great-grandchildren. (Dr. J. R. Beeke, Isaiah 49:14-17; Rev. Chad Steenwyk, John 14:1-3).

COVENANT COLLEGE ZAMBIA TRUST

is seeking a person qualified to fill the position of

LECTURER IN THEOLOGY

Job Profile

The Lecturer in Theology is expected to assist in the total operation of the College. This includes:

1. *Lecturing* in any of the theological subjects of our curriculum. All teaching should be adapted to the cultural setting of the college and students.
2. *Mentoring* the students in their individual learning process and pastoral practice.
3. *Assisting* in the overall college administration, such as accounting, registration, and duties to represent the college.
4. *Participating* in various activities that flow from the missionary character of Covenant College's ministries in general.

Job Qualifications

The person who qualifies for this position should meet these basic requirements:

1. He is a dedicated Christian, and member in good standing of a church that is Reformed in doctrine and practice;
2. He has received adequate formal theological training;
3. He experiences that the Lord is directing him to this work of lecturing in a missionary setting;
4. He is willing to live on the mission station.

The Trust would prefer to appoint someone:

- who is married and has children (in light of the present staffing situation);
- who has some experience in pastoral work and/or teaching;
- whose church/denomination can contribute towards his financial support.

Application

The Secretary of Covenant College Trust and the College Principal are available to give more detailed information regarding the position and the qualifications.

Those convicted to apply are invited to write a letter of application to Covenant College Zambia Trust. This application should be accompanied by a CV (resumé), letters of recommendation from church and work, diplomas/certificates of schooling and training, and any other relevant material illustrating his suitability for this position.

Contact and information:

Covenant College Zambia, P.O. Box 560229, Petauke, Zambia

Pastor Conrad Mbewe (Trust Secretary): tulip@zamnet.zm

Pastor Cees Molenaar (College Principal): covenantcollege@iwayafrica.com;

Phone: +260979390245

General Description of Mission

The Trust is responsible for the following ministries:

Covenant College – for the training of local pastors

College Farm – to supply food for the students, provide small business training and community development aid

Christian Education Fund (CEF) – assisting Christian Community Schools with materials and teacher training

Child Evangelism and Pastors Wives training.

Description of College

Calling: Covenant College responds to the calling to assist local churches with the training of their leaders. After three years of study, students obtain either a Certificate or Diploma in Theology. The curriculum covers the basic areas of the theological disciplines, such as OT, NT, Systematic Theology, Church History, Practical Theology, and Missiology.

Doctrinal Basis: The doctrinal basis is the Holy Bible and the Reformed Confessions of Faith (Belgic Confession of Faith, Heidelberg Catechism, Canons of Dordt, Westminster Confession of Faith, Larger and Shorter Catechism, 1689 Baptist Confession of Faith). The College is interdenominational with regard to the churches that it assists and the churches that support it.

Character: The College emphasizes the great value of personal relationships between instructor and learner. The academic achievements have no end in themselves, but should support the general calling of each student to lead his church by example, preaching, and teaching.

Obituary notices and church events are printed free of charge; marriage and anniversary notices will be charged at \$5.00 per issue and must be individually submitted. Other announcements and/or requests will be approved by the editorial committee on an individual basis as received.

TEACHERS NEEDED

The Heritage Reformed Christian School of the Hull, Iowa, HRC invites applications from qualified elementary, middle school, and high school teachers for the school year beginning August 2007. We currently offer grades K-8 in a multi-grade setting. Our plans are to add grade 9 in Fall 2007 with the intent to have all 12 grades in four years, D.V. Please submit your resumé, statement of faith, and philosophy of education to Doug Post, 2787 360th St., Rock Valley, Iowa 51247, phone: 712-722-4258, fax: 712-722-8859 or e-mail: doug.post@interstates.com.

The Board of Oxford Reformed Christian School (ORCS) invites applications for elementary and secondary teaching positions for the 2007/2008 school year.

ORCS is currently located 20 minutes south of Woodstock in Springford, Ontario. We are a newly established, parent-run school serving local Reformed communities. Our present enrollment is 170 students and we offer Kindergarten to grade 10. Our plans are to add grade 11 in 2007 and grade 12 the following year. Due to increasing enrollment and an expanding curriculum, we have a need for qualified, energetic teachers to join our staff team. All applicants committed to the Reformed faith and to Christian education are encouraged to apply.

Applications should include a resumé, statement of faith, philosophy of Christian education, and references. Send to: Oxford Reformed Christian School, Attn: Mr. William Van Brugge, Principal, P.O. Box 68, Springford, ON, NOJ 1X0. E-mail: oxfordreform@execulink.com

Jordan Christian School is inviting applications for teaching positions for the school year beginning September 2007. We are a small, K-12 school, located in a scenic, rural area in the Niagara Peninsula, just outside St. Catharines, Ontario. We are looking to fill Elementary and Secondary positions with committed, qualified teachers of Reformed background. If you are an active learner, with a passion to teach and a warm heart for children, we would like to consider how you would fit into our teaching team. Please send a copy of your resumé, with a cover letter, Philosophy of Education, and a Statement of Faith to Jordan Christian School, 4171 15th Street, Jordan Station, Ontario, Canada, L0R 1S0, jcschool@talkwireless.ca. Attention: Mr. Mark Fintelman, principal, or Mr. Ron Brouwer, Education Committee secretary.

Providence Christian School invites qualified applicants for a full-time position at the Junior High and/or Senior High level commencing August 2007. Providence Christian School is situated in beautiful southern Alberta, minutes from Lethbridge. PCS has grades K-12 with about 105 students attending, and about 12 staff members. Qualified applicants who submit to God's Holy Word and the Reformed Confessions are encouraged to apply. Please submit a resumé and references to the attention of Mr. J. Kikkert, Principal, Box 68, Monarch, Alberta, T0L

1M0. Phone/Fax: 403-381-4418 or e-mail: provchr@telusplanet.net

Plymouth Christian Elementary School, Grand Rapids, Michigan, is looking for a certified part-time/full-time teacher to teach subjects in grades 4-6 for school year 2007-2008. Interested applicants may contact Mr. David Engelsma, administrator at 616-458-4367 (school) or at 616-453-8623 (home). Contact may also be made via e-mail, denielsma@sbcglobal.net

Evangelism Conference

Living Out the Great Commission





Conference Speaker
Rev. Paul T. Murphy
Messiah's Covenant Community Church
Brooklyn, New York

**NIAGARA REFORMED
BIBLE CONFERENCE**

September 28 & 29,
Immanuel Orthodox Reformed Church,
2900 Fourth Ave., Jordan, ON, L0R 1S0

www.nrbc.ca info@nrbc.ca

THE FREE REFORMED STUDENT SOCIETY

College and University students are invited to attend the following meeting:

SPEAKER: Rev. Paul Den Butter

DATE: Friday, July 13, 2007

TIME: 8:00 p.m.

PLACE: Dundas FRC meeting room
Student Society meetings focus primarily on topics of particular concern to University and College students and recent graduates. We also encourage

Young people (18 and up) in the work force to attend our meetings.

A collection to defray the meeting costs will be taken.

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how can we improve as teachers? By growing in a child-like and student-like teachable spirit. Be constantly at Jesus' feet. Do not trust yourself and your thoughts, desires, and preferences in any situation. Trust your Master's Word, will, and example. Parent more like He would. Model Him more in the classroom. Subdue your pride and wrestle against your innate tendency to deal with situations simply as you feel like doing. Strive for a teachable spirit. Pray and aim for the goal of responding to every situation more like your Master would.

Are you an intractable parent, a teachable teacher?

James W. Beeke is an elder in the Chilliwack, British Columbia, Heritage Reformed congregation and is currently an educational consultant and superintendent of schools in China.

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They had little spiritual life. They did not evangelize, and there was not much prayer. The minister began to preach and teach about the need to speak to others around them about the Bible, Christ, sin, and salvation. He set before them the Great Commission: to go into the world and make disciples of all men. Soon, members of the congregation came to him and said, "You are bringing unrest, it was peaceful before you came." The minister replied, "Yes, it was peaceful, but it was the peace of death. It was the peace of the graveyard." He was concerned about the honor of God and His Word before he was concerned about the false peace which the people wanted to preserve. This was being a peacemaker.

Next time I want to address more practically what it means to be at peace with others around you. For now, ask yourself: "Have I tasted true and lasting peace? Am I a peacemaker?" If so, then yours is the kingdom of heaven.

Rev. M. Kelderman is pastor of the Heritage Netherlands Reformed Congregation of Burgessville, Ontario.

INTERNATIONAL NEWS

Martyrs in India. On June 2, two Christian leaders were stabbed to death at a Christian school and orphanage in Uttah Pradesh, India. It is believed Samuel Masih and Aman Singh, leaders at the school, were brutally killed by anti-Christian Hindu extremists. Aman Singh's body had more than 20 stab wounds, while Masih had been stabbed five times (*VoM*).

Fears in Nigeria. Nigerian Christians fear that persecution, especially in predominantly Islamic northern Nigeria, will increase, following the recent election of Muslim Umaru Musa Yar'Adua as president. As governor of the Katsina state in northern Nigeria, Yar'Adua imposed shari'a law and also permitted the closure of some churches and the deliberate denial of land for building new churches (*Compass Direct*). The Nigerian presidency alternates between Muslims and Christians in an effort to maintain relative stability among several powerful ethnic groups and political tensions.

NATIONAL NEWS

Unprofitable Gambling. Canada's state-run gaming industry made \$15.3 billion last year, while Canadians spent \$14.5 billion on slot machines, lottery tickets, and racetrack betting—getting nothing in return. Industry profits totaled \$10.6 billion in 2006, of which about \$7.4 billion went into provincial revenues and \$3.2 billion to charities. The numbers show that Canada's "gambling industry" is important to the economy—larger than its forestry and automotive industries. But what the numbers do not show is the large and longer-lasting negative social costs associated with gambling, such as bankruptcy, depression, suicide, and loss of employment (*Family News*).

Stem-Cell Research. The US Congress has voted to use taxpayer dollars to fund the destruction of embryos for research. President Bush has vetoed the bill. Likewise, New Jersey voters will decide in November whether to use taxpayer money to fund stem-cell research, including research that destroys human embryos. If approved by voters, grants would be given for research on both adult and embryonic stem cells

and umbilical cord blood. The executive director of New Jersey Right to Life feels that "taxpayers should be outraged" (*CitizenLink*). In January, scientists gave evidence before the US Congress that some adult stem cells are just as flexible as embryonic stem cells. The underlying question here, however, is whether scientific research should be accountable to the sanctity of life and, ultimately, to biblical authority.

Partial-Birth Abortion. A three-judge panel of the 6th US Circuit Court of Appeals ruled in June that Michigan's ban on partial-birth abortions is unconstitutional, because it also could outlaw other types of late-term abortions. The law defined birth as the moment any portion of the baby emerges from a woman's body. Meanwhile, the Louisiana state Senate voted unanimously to outlaw partial-birth abortion, and the bill has been sent to the Louisiana House.

PERSECUTION SPOTLIGHT: LAOS

Laos is a small, landlocked country located between Vietnam and Thailand. Perhaps the least developed country in Asia, it is home to about 6 million people. Most are Buddhists and/or animists; less than 2% are Christians. Laos is a communist state that controls religious thought and expression. The constitution provides for religious freedom, but the lack of specific regulations on religious matters allows local officials to interpret the law as they choose. The government allows limited presence of Christianity, restricts the number of open churches, and regularly closes churches, especially in the countryside.

The Laotian church experiences surveillance at every level by the state, and various social pressures against converts who renounce evil spirit worship. Efforts by local officials to force Christians to renounce their faith are commonplace in many areas. Still, there is much unregistered worship and the church seems to be growing despite persecution. The situation for Christians improved in 2006—persecution was less harsh and less brutal than before, and there were no reports of Christians being killed for their faith.

ITEMS FOR PRAYER

- ◆ Pray for Christian leaders in India as persecution there increases. Pray that the sovereign Lord will somehow use the raging of the heathen to advance His gracious kingdom.
- ◆ Pray that Nigerian Christians may not trust in chariots and horses, but rather increasingly learn to trust in the name of the Lord their God. Pray for peace among the various ethnic groups in Nigeria, and that political ambitions and oil revenues will not upset the delicate balance.
- ◆ Pray for those who are addicted to gambling and its associated sins. Pray that society will realize all such sin is profitless, that the wages of sin is death.
- ◆ Pray for more researchers who live and work as Christians.

- Pray that all researchers will work to protect the sanctity of life and submit to biblical authority.
- ◆ Pray that we as a nation will stop killing babies, whether by gruesome procedures or simply to protect the convenience of the mother. Pray that mothers and fathers who have killed their child in the past will now find forgiveness and healing by the blood of Jesus Christ.
- ◆ Give thanks that persecution in Laos was less in 2006. Pray that the government will be more open to Christianity and allow more freedom for faithful worship.
- ◆ Pray for the growth of the Laotian church. Pray the Lord will raise up more leaders who fearlessly live their faith in humility and boldness.



Am I a Peacemaker?

Rev. Mark Kelderman

**CORNER
FOR TEENS**

Our world is consumed with passion, hatred, and envy. This is true not only on religious and political levels, but also in business, in society, and in families. Jealousy and hatred drive many people to desperation. People need peace so badly.

As He preached the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus focused on peace as one of the Beatitudes. The first question we must ask ourselves is this: Who is the source of this peace? The assertion that no man can truly be at peace with his neighbor without being at peace with God is something with which I suspect you agree. Clearly, the Scriptures set before us the fact that peace was present at the beginning of creation. There was harmony, fellowship, and love. This peace was not only between man and his Maker, but also between Adam and Eve and the rest of creation. They did not abuse creation; the harmony within creation led God to say, "It is good." However, we all know that, when sin entered the world, disorder, destruction, and disruption began. Now there was war between God and man. There is war between the seed of the woman and the seed of the serpent. There is war between man and creation itself as man must work in the sweat of his brow, and animals serve unto death for the pleasure of man. Man is under the sentence of death. There is no more peace; discord and enmity abound. Where does this all come from? Is it not from the passions warring in our hearts? They stir up individuals, families, and nations.

The wonder is that God did not leave us in such a condition. Our God is a God of peace and reconciliation. Therefore, He determined to bring peace by sending into the world His Son, the Prince of Peace. This Son came to take away sin and enmity from the heart of sinners. He not only paid the price they owe for their sins, but He also sends His Spirit to work peace in their hearts. This work of the Spirit begins by showing us that we are not at peace by nature.

Are you at peace or at war at this moment? Perhaps the Spirit is showing you that you are at war—at war with your parents, with siblings, or with former friends. The root of this problem is your own lusts (James 4:1-4). God finds all of His children at war. But this is the wonder of the Beatitude before us: this same Spirit who convinces us of our warring heart renews us in Christ to seek after peace. When a sinner expects to be condemned because of his warring heart, the Holy Spirit shows him through the gospel that God is a God of peace through the work of Christ. When he believes this and receives Christ by faith, his heart will learn a peace that passes all understanding. Then he also will be kept in this perfect peace when his hope and mind are stayed upon Him.

Because of what He did on the cross—having made peace through the blood of His cross—Jesus Christ is able to reconcile sinners to God in peace. "Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ: by whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God... Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that ye may abound in hope, through the power of the Holy Ghost" (Rom. 5:1, 2; 15:13). Therefore, those who have experienced this peace will also seek to be at peace with those around them. And the Spirit works further: those who are in Christ by faith partake of the same nature as Christ and they become, by the grace of this Spirit, peacemakers. The same Spirit dwells in the believer that dwells in Christ; therefore, the characteristic of making peace will also be found in all those who belong to the kingdom of God.

There is a connection between the previous Beatitude and this one. We must be pure of heart in order to be at peace. James speaks about this. In contrast to envy and strife, he says that the work of grace and heavenly wisdom is "first pure, then peaceable." By this, you understand, we are not saying that we seek peace at the expense of allowing evil. There are some who seek peace at the expense of compromising with sin, but this is not being a peacemaker. Jesus was still a peacemaker when He took cords in His hands and drove out those who bought and sold in His Father's house. We must seek peace under the umbrella of truth and purity of heart. I am convinced that this is why Jesus also immediately follows this Beatitude with the next: "Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." If we are peacemakers, but not at the expense of truth, we will be persecuted.

If we are united to Christ, the Prince of Peace, our whole being will encourage peace. People around us will be attracted to us because we seek peace; we will breathe peace. It will be witnessed in our words and actions. We have found peace with God, and we know that if we can find peace with God, anyone else we meet can also find the same in Him. However, there are many who do not understand the cost of being a peacemaker. It means that we must deny ourselves. At times we must be peace breakers to be peacemakers. There was once a minister who came to a congregation that was spiritually dead.

(continued on page 164)

From Our Mailbag



BANNER OF SOVEREIGN GRACE TRUTH

From a friend in California:

I just wanted to write you a brief note of encouragement. The article on “How to Pray in Prayer Meetings” was so encouraging. From my early conversion my pastor always said that the Prayer Meeting was one of the most important meetings. When he came to San Diego as a candidate, he came by the church on a Wednesday night to see how many were at the Prayer Meeting. There were only a few cars in the lot, while on the Lord’s Day the place was packed. He knew he was going to have some serious spiritual challenges. That was some 41 years ago, and the “Dos & Don’ts” are still just as true today.

Anyway, I was very blessed by this article, and we used it as an insert in our bulletin the very next Sabbath.

From an inmate:

I want to thank you for sending me the publication *The Banner of Sovereign Grace Truth*, the sermons from the Banner of Truth Tract Mission, and the booklets from The Inheritance Publishers. These have been a blessing to me over the years as I grow in God’s sovereign grace. I do pray that you can continue sending them yet another year. I would also like to get some free books. I could read them and then add them to our chapel library.

Thank you again and may God continue to give you the resources to carry out the work of getting His Word to others.

BANNER OF TRUTH TRACT MISSION

From an inmate:

Thank you for the continuous flow of inspiring messages. Your ministry is a life-line of anointing to those of us who are isolated. You do not know the impact of the seeds you are planting. Keep up the valuable work. I am praying for you.

GOSPEL TRUMPET

From a pastor in the Philippines:

Thanks for the “Gospel Trumpet” you sent me. I appreciated very much the messages written in it. I

am profited spiritually and encouraged to study more. Please send me more reading and study materials that would help us to understand more fully the Reformed doctrines.

I am the pastor of a small Baptist congregation and the Lord graciously opened our hearts to the Reformed faith. We love to preach the doctrines of grace as we continue to walk the path of reforming our church.

Please help us to improve our understanding of the faith. We need your prayers that the Lord would be gracious to us as we experience ridicule and arrogant and judgmental remarks from our other brethren because of our new-found faith of our forbears in the Reformation. Thank you so much for your kindness!

REFORMATION HERITAGE BOOKS

From a minister in Michigan:

Thank you for providing us with such an excellent bookstore—it has been a means of incredible blessing to me. I purchase mostly Puritan titles from the store, and I recently picked up the guide to the Puritans, where I discovered Joseph Alleine. I have since ordered the edition of his *Life and Letters* and am greatly enjoying it. I am wondering if you would be able to direct me to other sources for Alleine? I noted that there is not a definitive biography for him, and I am wondering if there are more of his writings extant?

From a minister in California:

I would like to express my appreciation for the RHB publication entitled *We with Our Children* by Rev. C. Harinck on the baptism form. This book is needed in all too many of our Continental Reformed Churches, in which our baptismal theology borders (or, may have already crossed over) on baptismal regeneration and covenant nomism. I plan to recommend it to as many as possible.

I told a friend that finally there was a book in print that expressed what he and I have taught our parish for six years, utilizing the classic distinctions of the covenant of works/grace, church visible/invisible, and those in the covenant externally/internally. I plan to write a review and submit it to several journals.

From *The Banner of Sovereign Grace Truth*
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PERIODICAL
POSTAGE PAID AT
GRAND RAPIDS, MI

THANKSGIVING FOR THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF CHRIST

Fountain of never-ceasing grace, Thy saints' exhaustless theme;
Great object of immortal praise, essentially supreme;
We bless Thee for the glorious fruits Thy incarnation gives;
The righteousness which grace imputes, and faith alone receives.

Whom heaven's angelic host adores was slaughtered for our sin;
The guilt, O Lord, was wholly ours, the punishment was Thine.
Our God in flesh, to set us free, was manifested here;
And meekly bore our sins, that we His righteousness might wear.

Imputatively guilty then our Substitute was made,
That we the blessings might obtain for which His blood was shed;
Himself He offered on the cross our sorrows to remove;
And all He suffered was for us, and all He did was love.

In Him we have a righteousness by God Himself approved;
Our Rock, our sure Foundation, this which never can be moved;
Our ransom by His death He paid, for all His people given;
The law He perfectly obeyed that they might enter heaven.

As all, when Adam sinned alone, in his transgression died,
So by the righteousness of One are sinners justified.
We to Thy merit, gracious Lord, with humblest joy submit;
Again to paradise restored, in Thee alone complete.

Our souls His watchful love retrieves, nor lets them go astray;
His righteousness to us He gives, and takes our sins away.
We claim salvation in His right, adopted and forgiven;
His merit is our robe of light, His death the gate of heaven.

—AUGUSTUS TOPLADY

The Banner
of Sovereign Grace Truth

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