

the Banner *of Sovereign Grace Truth*

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God Provides a Son
Thy King Cometh Unto Thee
Promises, Promises



A Periodical for Young and Old

THE BANNER OF
SOVEREIGN GRACE TRUTH

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Dr. Joel R. Beeke, Editor

2965 Leonard St., N.E., Grand Rapids, Michigan 49525
(616) 977-0599 fax (616) 285-3246
e-mail: jrbeeke@aol.com

Dr. Robert D. Johnson, Assistant Editor

Raybrook Estates II, 2105 Raybrook Dr., SE, #4029
Grand Rapids, Michigan 49546 (616) 464-3241

**Brenda Pols, Subscription Manager
and Accounts Receivable**

540 Crescent Street, NE
Grand Rapids, Michigan 49503-3402 (616) 791-9486
e-mail: bsgt@hnr.org

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THANKS TO PAUL AND JANE POLS

I wish to extend my warm thanks and heartfelt gratitude to Jane and Paul Pols for all the work they have done in the role of "Subscription Manager and Accounts Receivable" for this periodical over the past several years. Dear friends, you have fulfilled this task with immense dosages of love for and commitment to your work, often going beyond your duty. Thanks so much for your superlative and conscientious work on the BSGT for so many years. Every blessing to you on your impending move to the Chicago area.

Also, a warm welcome to Brenda Pols who will take over the task of Subscription Manager and Kris DeMeester who will help out with the financial records. May God bless you both as you undertake this work.

—JRB

P.S. This issue contains the final Calvin article for 2009, in this never-to-be-forgotten year of the quincentennial of Calvin's birth. May God richly bless the articles we have printed on Calvin and his work throughout this year, together with the scores of Calvin conferences that have taken place and the hundreds of books and articles on Calvin that have been printed all around the world. May the burgeoning interest in Calvin and Reformed theology continue!

PROMISES, PROMISES

Rev. Mark Kelderman

*H*ow many times have you heard someone make a promise but they have not kept it? Sadly this is all too common today. You can hear children on the playground, “But it wasn’t a pinky promise,” or “I had my fingers crossed so it doesn’t count.” In our world today when so much is uncertain and shaken, we need solidity and certainty. That is just what Advent sets before us. When we speak about God’s promises, we realize that they are certain, they are sure. The problem is that we question God’s promises, but the one thing we learn from reading the Word of God is that although God seems to tarry, yet He will fulfill His promise.

I want to take you back to the time between the two testaments. God was no longer speaking; it seemed God had nearly forgotten His promise to send a deliverer. Hundreds of years passed and Israel was subject to various nations. By the time Jesus came there was terrible political unrest; politicians were hated and not trusted. Overspending had caused huge taxes to be levied—remember Joseph and Mary. Religion and politics were getting mixed, divorce was commonplace, and the court systems were corrupt. One would almost think that we are describing events of today. Yet God had made a promise: He would send His Son, and we are told very precisely what would happen. He would be a seed of the woman, crush the head of the serpent, be a son of Abraham, be of the line of Judah and King David, be the Passover Lamb, be a man born of a virgin woman in Bethlehem, be called out of Egypt, be a prince of peace, be placed outside the camp, not have a bone broken but be pierced, have the character of meekness and holiness, be hung on a tree, be anointed king, ride on a colt, see no corruption, and be raised again. Some say there are 365 promises fulfilled through His coming.

Even though Israel had all these assurances and promises of God, only a few were waiting for the consolation of Israel. Simeon had been shown he would not die before he would see the Lord’s Christ. Anna waited for the redemption and deliverance of Israel. John the Baptist was sent of God to call the people to repentance and remind them of the promises of God by pointing to the Lamb of God who was to come. Are you like them? Do you rest in the promise of God that He will be mer-

ciful and gracious to all who come to Him? Are you sure concerning His promise that He will never leave you nor forsake you and is coming again to take you home, that all this is certain to you because of what Christ has accomplished through His work on your behalf? If these promises are sure for you, then do you also with anticipation wait for the fulfillment of our Lord’s second advent, the day that the Scriptures tell us will burn as an oven, when every eye shall see Him—the day that will be preceded by great persecution and the rise of the antichrist?

Peter tells us that just before this day scoffers will raise the question, “Where is the fulfillment of His promise?” If we stand back and survey the promises already fulfilled, how could anyone dare utter such a statement? Considering all that Christ fulfilled in His first coming, how dare we question all the promises of God regarding His second coming? Yet our society today is living out this very question. Everything about our culture and society is crying out, “Where is His promise?” The first coming of Christ is simply a reminder that Christ is coming again in judgment. For most people that promise is far from their minds when they celebrate Christmas.

Do you cling to the Lord and His promises? Are you certain of His promise that all things work together for good to those who love Him and are called according to His purpose? Are you certain that in Christ all things are yours, and that you are complete in Him? In this advent season, I, with Peter, would stir up your minds by way of remembrance of those things which He has promised: I will be a God unto you and to your seed after you. I am going away to prepare a place for you. I will send the Comforter to you and He shall dwell within you. I will give you pastors according to My heart, who shall feed you with knowledge and understanding. I will give you a heart to know me, that I am the LORD: and you shall be My people, and I will be your God: for you shall return to Me with your whole heart. Plead these promises this advent season.

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

God Provides a Son

by Rev. Donald Overbeek

“And she brought forth her firstborn son...” (Luke 2:7).

Reflecting upon Christ’s birth reminds Christians of God’s right and power to intervene. He has intervened in history, He has intervened in the church, and He has intervened in personal lives as well. And yet, paradoxically, there seems to be no time in our year more hostile toward God’s intervention than “Christmas.” We have traditions, holidays, seasonal gatherings, and decorations, often combining to challenge the intervening power of God today. Yet our natural unwillingness for God to show Himself only serves to magnify His gracious resolve to do so.

There were many great displays of God’s intervening ability in the history of God’s people, as there are with us today. It is particularly interesting to trace the themes outlined below in the account of Abraham’s willingness to offer Isaac (Gen. 22) and God’s providential intervention. In both accounts, we see God coming at just the right time, in the most opportune moment.

First, when God intervenes, He intervenes in line with His providence. In Luke 2:1, we read of Augustus’s decree, the outworking of which led to “all going to be taxed, everyone to his own city.” This is not the only decree we have operating here. There is the larger, hidden decree of God, which is directing matters smaller (like Joseph’s lineage) and greater (like the Son’s birth) than those affected by the census decree. Let the incarnation seal the truth of God’s providence to your heart. This is not mere theory to be turned over in our minds; it is a reality to live by. Nothing will give more comfort in distress and confidence in trial than the awareness of God’s fatherly providence.

Second, when God intervenes, He intervenes when His covenant time is ripe. God is never early and never late. His timing is impeccable; verses 4–6 show this in two ways. From verse 4 we learn of the long history of Joseph’s family, spanning hundreds of years back to David. Then in verses 5 and 6, the comparison is made to Mary’s giving of birth which is

sudden and shorter. Whether long in coming or surprisingly sudden, God fulfills His covenant promise. The believer often wrestles with the tension of God’s apparent delays and the hope of sudden intervention. In light of this tension, the Spirit has been given to seal the promise to us and to work faith and obedience in us.

Third, when God intervenes, He intervenes as a substitute. Verse 7 has become so familiar in its description of swaddling clothes, a manger, and “no room in the inn.” Sadly, many glorified inaccuracies have crept into our thinking about what these actually were. If we look closely at the pronouns, we can find a clearer lesson. The verse focuses on the humanity of the Son: *He* was wrapped in the clothes, *He* was laid in a feeding trough. Then we read the reason: “because

there was no room for *them* in the inn.” The problem wasn’t that no room was made for Jesus, but for Joseph and Mary, for the adult beds were full. He came and was humilatingly subject to humanity’s problems and injustices. Even more than this, he bore these problems uniquely upon Himself. At his birth, He was a substitute, through His growth in obedience He was a substitute, and in His suffering and death He was a substitute!

The incarnation must amaze us with the uniqueness of Christ as God’s ultimate intervention because of sin.

God intervenes in order to reveal Himself to us. When all is said and done, no gifts or gatherings can rival the glory of God’s revealing Himself to us in His Son. While this glory will be veiled for a time, faith sees it. Our response to its message this season hastens us toward the final intervention of God—no longer as a helpless infant but as a victorious King.



Rev. Donald Overbeek is pastor of the Heritage Reformed Congregation of Bradford, Ontario.

Thoughts for the *New Year*

by Rev. David Lipsy

Why celebrate the New Year? There's no command or precedent for it in Scripture. The year changes and a calendar page is turned. It doesn't commemorate any particular event. Besides, as Christians we don't want to be associated with all the drunkenness and foolishness that often accompanies so-called New Year's festivities.

Did you ever notice how God marks time in Scripture? Consider, for example, Exodus 12:2: "This month shall be unto you the beginning of months: it shall be the first month of the year to you." God taught Israel how to mark time, using their deliverance from Egypt as their starting point, their New Year. Let's try Genesis 11:10: "These are the generations of Shem: Shem was an hundred years old, and begat Arphaxad two years after the flood." Here someone's birthday is marked in terms of years after the flood of Noah's time. How about Ezra 6:15: "And this house was finished on the third day of the month Adar, which was in the sixth year of the reign of Darius the king." Here God measures time in terms of the reign of a certain king.

What event are *our* years measured against? You could hardly tell anymore, except perhaps on some official documents. Until recently, one would commonly read or write, "In the year of our Lord..." and follow those words with the year number (e.g., 2009, 2010, etc.). Throughout the world, everyone keeps track of the passing of time with respect to the birth of Jesus Christ (give or take a few years). Isn't that striking? The Chinese have their calendar and New Year. Other cultures do, too. But when the world compares notes, when nations want to have a year name that everyone recognizes, they all revert to "the year of our Lord" even if it's not explicitly mentioned. Did you ever wonder why?

Christianity has had an enormous impact on much of the world. People in positions of authority who had a say about the calendar presently used all over the world were related to Christianity. That's the historical reason.

A more satisfying answer is this: we know that the living God has given to His Son, Jesus Christ, all authority in heaven and earth (Matt. 28:18). We also know God has also given all nations to the Lord Jesus (Dan. 7:14). Is it any surprise that, in His inscrutable wisdom and sovereign providence, matters have been so ordered that virtually all people must reference time in terms of the Son of God, Jesus Christ? Mere coincidence? "Coincidence is when we choose to keep God anonymous," said a friend recently.

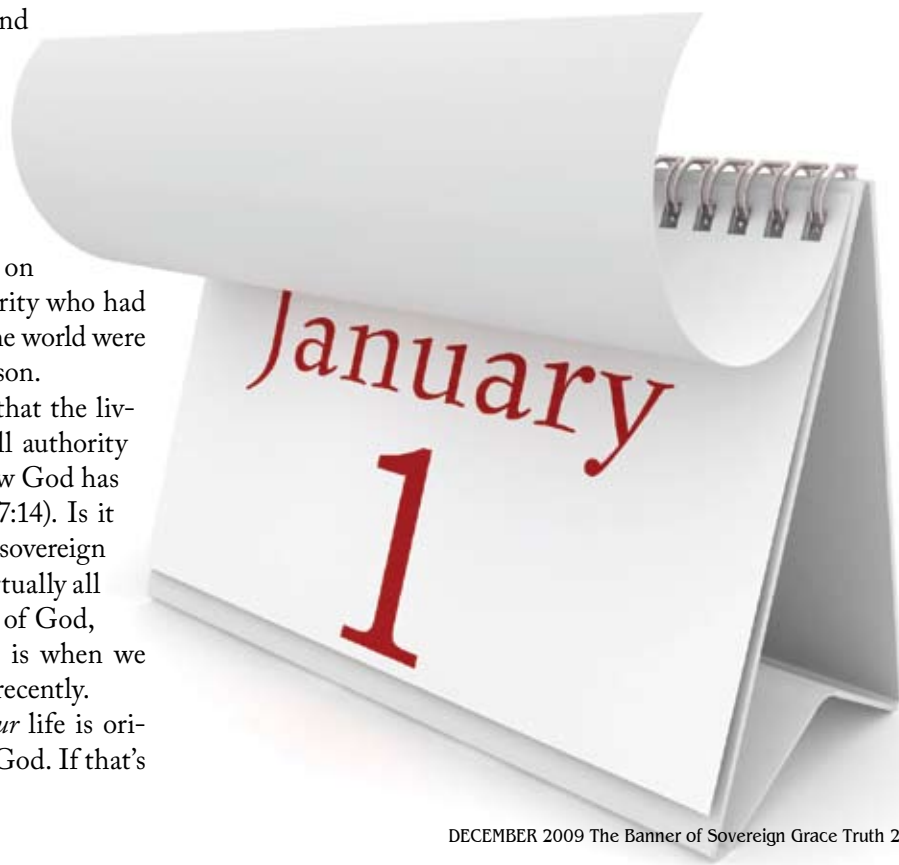
The question of the moment is whether *your* life is oriented on this same Christ, the Son of the living God. If that's

not true for me and for you, we had better make that the top priority on our list. God has a date with each of *us* on His itinerary. The calendar pages run out one day, don't they? Some year will be our last; after that it's the time where time is no more. Then what?

If you're unsaved, wouldn't it be something if 2010 became the "year of the Lord" for you, personally? Why wait for the inevitable? Seek the Lord *now* while you still have time. Repent before Him and cast yourself without reservation upon the mercies of God's Son Jesus. Tomorrow, after all, might be just a day too late.

And for those of us who believe, has last year been a year centered on Him? Or was He just somewhere on the list of things that occupied our time and attention? If this was so, maybe we should start the year with fresh repentance and a resolution (in conscious dependence on the grace of God, Acts 5:31) that He would be at the *top* of each day's matters of importance. If last year was a year of the Lord for us, let us give thanks and strive diligently that this year might build upon the last. What joy if, when we come to the last page of our life's calendar, we won't look back with regret but instead look forward with joyous anticipation for the transformation of the "year of our Lord" into "eternity with our Lord."

Rev. David Lipsy is pastor of the Reformed Church of Harrison, Arkansas.



Thy King Cometh unto Thee

Matthew 21:1-22

A few chapters previously, Matthew wrote, “From that time forth began Jesus to shew unto his disciples, how that he must go unto Jerusalem, and suffer many things of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised again the third day” (16:21). That is the background for Matthew 21, the story of Christ’s entry to Jerusalem, fully aware of what must befall Him there.

The Celebrated Entry

On the outskirts of the city, Jesus sends two disciples to a nearby village to fetch a female donkey and her colt. The owner of these animals, although unknown to the disciples, is on close terms with Christ, believing in His mission. Merely hearing “the Lord hath need of them” (Matt. 21:3) is enough for the man to permit his animals to be led away.

With the requisite animals in hand, the disciples and a crowd of people set about the task of investing the occasion with all possible pomp and circumstance. The disciples strip off their cloaks to provide festive draping for the donkey and make a little ceremony of setting Jesus in place for the ride into the city. The “very great multitude” (v. 8) hastily contrives a royal carpet by spreading their cloaks on the roadway, while some cut branches from nearby trees to wave, adding yet another festive touch.

These Psalm-singing Jews have a fitting song to sing. Echoing Psalm 118:25–26, they sing “Hosanna!” which is Hebrew for “Save us now,” or, as it reads in the KJV, “Save now, I beseech thee, O LORD.” As is, it is a one-word prayer for the salvation of God. But the text is spontaneously altered to become “Hosanna to the Son of



David!” which is a messianic title, acknowledging that God has promised to save His people by the hand of His anointed King.

Matthew reminds us that this was all done to fulfill the prophecy of Zechariah 9:9. But we should not miss the intentional paradox in the prophecy between the high station of Zion’s King and Savior and the lowly manner in which He presents Himself to His people: “meek, and sitting upon an ass” (Matt. 21:5). The King comes not with a show of force, not with a sword girt on His thigh; not on a prancing steed; not riding in a chariot of war. This King comes to make peace, not to wage war.

Even so, Christ is publicly signing His own death warrant, for this public demonstration rouses the whole city and has everyone asking, “Who is this?” (v. 10). Word of this impromptu parade quickly reaches the ears of the Jewish leaders, confirming their worst fears about Jesus. His presence in Jerusalem under these conditions threatens their power and authority; something now must be done to solve this political problem.

The Cleansing of the Temple

Christ dismounts in the city and enters the temple, where He confronts one of the unintended consequences of the Mosaic system of animal sacrifice. The animals to be sacrificed must meet strict standards of perfection, so a lucrative trade has sprung up in the courts of God’s house. The dispersion of the Jews has compounded the problem, since Jews coming to the temple from places outside Judea only have their home currency, not the currency required for purchasing the sacrificial animals. What began as a

necessary service of currency exchange is now a thriving, corrupt business.

Exercising God-given authority as the Lord's Christ, Jesus sets about the task of cleansing the temple, driving out the merchants and money changers, and charging them with turning the house of prayer into a den of thieves. He then turns to the blind and the lame, and righteous wrath gives way to compassion as He uses that divine authority to heal. Meanwhile, bands of children go about the temple, repeating the song of the day: "Hosanna to the Son of David" (Matt. 21:12–17).

The chief priests and scribes are "sore displeased" (v. 15) by the authority Christ displays in cleansing the temple and healing the sick. But they turn their anger on the children, protesting their singing. Jesus counters their protest by quoting Psalm 8. He says that the grace and glory of the Son of man (v. 4) under whose feet God has put all things (v. 6), must evoke praise even from "babes and sucklings."

The Cursing of the Barren Tree

Matthew next relates how Christ curses a fig tree for not producing fruit, and the tree withers away. The disciples

marvel at the phenomenon, prompting a short, encouraging lesson on believing prayer and the power of true faith (21:21–22). The disciples apparently do not link this event with the parable of the barren fig tree that Christ has taught them earlier (Luke 13:6–9).

Christ's cursing of the barren fig tree must be placed in context with the other demonstrations of His unique, God-given authority in this passage. The fig tree is a symbol of the barren, unbelieving church of those times, which was about to fall under the wrath and curse of God. This prompts us to wonder: What if Christ were to draw near to the city in which we live? How would He be received? What corruptions would provoke His righteous wrath? Would our barrenness call down His fatal curse? What neglected ministries of mercy and compassion would He need to restore in our churches? How will we respond when our King comes to us?

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.

Study Questions

1. In what ways was the obedience of the owner of a female donkey and her colt an example for us today?
2. Provide three reasons why Christ came on a donkey. What does each of these reasons teach us?
3. Why did the Jewish leaders feel threatened by Jesus' presence in Jerusalem? How and why does this reason for feeling threatened still divide religious people today? What can we do to minimize this threat?
4. Why is Christ so angry when He witnesses the lucrative trade that had sprung up in God's courts? Why can we call this righteous anger? Prove from Scripture that we, by grace, can show righteous anger today. Define righteous anger. Explain how we can easily convince ourselves that we are displaying righteous anger when, in reality, our anger is still selfish and sinful. Why is righteous anger one of the most challenging emotions to exercise for a Christian?
5. How does Christ's attitude to the temple-traders contrast with His attitude to the blind and lame? How does your attitude to the handicapped compare to Christ's?
6. How does Christ receive glory from "babes and sucklings"?
7. Answer the six questions that are contained in the last six sentences of this article.

NEW TESTAMENT BIBLE STUDY

Profiting from the Parables (11)

by DR. GERALD BILKES

the prodigal son [4]

Read: Luke 15:1–32 (esp. 25–32)



Luke 15 starts and ends with celebration. The celebration at the beginning was the real celebration; the one at the end further comments on the celebration. It's important not to skip this conclusion, which is the actual climax of the chapter. Throughout this parable, Jesus has unveiled what is really going on: these sinners are coming to Jesus because of the seeking love and drawing power of God.

Now Christ's parable comes full circle and we see how it all fits together. The prodigal represents the repenting sinners, the father represents God, and the elder brother represents the murmuring Pharisees and scribes. Thus the father's celebration is a celebration of the triumph of grace in the lives of sinners. Let's unpack this in more detail.

The Greatness of the Celebration

The father's exuberant welcome of his returning son spills over into a great celebration. Christ's parable sketches a great and happy feast. There was "music and dancing" (v. 25); emotions were high. Moreover, this was the time for the fatted calf to be eaten (v. 23). Not long ago, the prodigal couldn't even satisfy his hunger with corn husks; now a sheep or a goat isn't good enough (v. 23). It had to be the fatted calf—a sign that this was a celebration of the highest sort. The father could not anticipate anything more festive for which he would need to save this fatted calf. The greatest indication of how important this feast was is that the text specifically says that "they began to be merry" (v. 24). It was not a one-day feast or a weeklong feast. It was simply a feast that begins with no end in sight.

The Reasons for the Celebration

The parable explicitly lists the following reasons for this celebration:

1. *The son was found (v. 24).* We are happy whenever we find

something we've lost. Imagine your happiness if you found your child who had been lost for quite some time!

2. *The son was safe and sound (v. 27).* After all that the prodigal son had cast himself into, it was a miracle, really, that he was "safe and sound" (v. 27). He had engaged in riotous living; he had been through a famine. To put it in his own words: he was "perishing with hunger" (v. 17). The word in the Greek also has the connotation that he was now "back in his right mind," sort of like the Gadarene demoniac after Jesus healed him (Mark 5:1). That is indeed what grace does to lost sinners, and it is cause for celebration.

3. *The father received him (v. 27).* None of these reasons so far would have been cause for celebration if the father had not "received" the son. As hard as it is to believe, there have been human fathers who have not accepted back returning children. But this father received his son with open arms, and the celebration itself is magnificent proof of it.

4. *The son was alive (v. 24).* This celebration wasn't a birthday; it was a resurrection celebration. Before, there was the sorrow of death; now it had been turned to the joy of new life. This was the celebration of a grave stone rolling away and a man thought dead being alive and breathing once again.

The Test of Celebration

Not everyone was celebrating, however. In fact, one man was angry about the celebration. Not only did he not see and agree with the reasons for celebration, this elder brother had personal reasons for exasperation. He was furious because others are festive.

This shows how the whole celebration was a test of whether people know grace. If they understood grace, they would have a gracious spirit, and they could not help but identify with the joy of perishing sinners that are saved. Grace and joy are

“close cousins,” you might say. Where the one is, the other will not be far behind.

This does not mean that everyone can always discern the beginnings of new life equally well. For example, when Saul of Tarsus was saved, some in Jerusalem “believed not that he was a disciple” (Acts 9:26). This still can happen today. But the anger of the elder brother is different. He was still in the bondage of the covenant of works, and he was envious and vexed that his brother was not suffering as he was. Let the conversion of sinners around us be a test for us whether we have truly tasted that the Lord is gracious, or whether we perhaps are still operating under a legalistic scheme and can rejoice only when others are in the same bondage as we—or even greater.

The Call to Celebration

Jesus’ actions always implicitly call to us. Doesn’t God call us to have the same mind as was in Christ Jesus (Phil. 2:5)? When Jesus “received sinners and ate with them” (15:2), this is not something we can leave to the Lord and not be concerned to emulate. Indeed, Jesus’ reception of sinners is worth much more than our acceptance of them, and yet the parable is filled with calls to know and join in the rejoicing of God in heaven (15:7, 10). This joy is “the concert of heaven.” The father of the parable issued it in two ways:

1. Generally and invitingly. He says: “Let us eat and be merry” (v. 23). From this we can learn that God Himself rejoices over sinners whom He saves. In the words of Zephaniah, “he will rejoice over thee with joy; he will rest in his love, he will joy over thee with singing” (Zeph. 3:18). And He invites people everywhere to join in this joy—much like the Psalms so often do when they call heaven and earth, nations and angels, to rejoice over the works of the Lord (e.g., Ps. 97:12; 98:4).

2. Specifically and entreatingly. One of the most surprising aspects of the parable is the final statement of the father: “It was meet that we should make merry, and be glad: for this thy brother was dead, and is alive again...” (v. 32). He was explaining the need to rejoice in a way that the elder brother should be able to understand: “It was meet.” This is the terminology of “duty” and “propriety,” which the Pharisees were so focused on. They were constantly concerned about these two things. Using concepts that they should recognize and esteem, the father “entreated” the elder brother (v. 28). This word “entreated” is the same word that Jesus used to characterize the work of the Holy Spirit (*parakaleo*—as we sometimes say, the Spirit is the Paraklete). How true it is that everyone, including Pharisees, needs this powerful work of the Holy Spirit to break down all resistance against the glorious “logic” of grace, and to see its perfect “meetness” for themselves and others.

STUDY QUESTIONS

1. Find some texts that prove that grace and joy are “close cousins.” Why is having a gracious spirit such a test of having yourself received grace?
2. We might not be as angry as the elder brother, but can we at all identify with the elder brother’s mentality? How is Matthew 23:4 something we do or could fall into?
3. We cannot infallibly tell a true conversion from a temporary or false one like Christ and the Father can. Does this mean we should not be glad whenever we see any sign of turning, even if we can’t be sure it is a true turning to God?
4. Would you agree that the father “stooped” to the level of the elder son’s way of thinking? Is that the same as meeting people “half-way”?
5. Why doesn’t the parable tell us how the elder brother responded to the father? What responses are possible? How does the work of Holy Spirit fit into this?

Dr. Gerald M. Bilkes is Professor of Old and New Testament at Puritan Reformed Theological Seminary and an ordained minister in the Free Reformed churches of North America.

Defending Definite Atonement



DR. JOEL R. BEEKE

Objections Answered

The major objections to limited atonement are based on textual and practical considerations. The textual objections include the following:

1. Texts in which the word *world* is used to describe the objects of the death of Christ's death, as in John 3:16 and 1 John 2:2: "And he is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world."
2. Texts in which the word *all* is used to describe the objects of Christ's death, such as 2 Corinthians 5:15, "He died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them, and rose again"; Romans 8:32, "He...spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all"; and 1 Timothy 2:4–6, which speaks of Christ giving Himself as a "ransom for all."
3. Texts that seem to state that some for whom Christ died may perish. One such text is Romans 14:15: "But if thy brother be grieved with thy meat, now walkest thou not charitably. Destroy not him with thy meat, for whom Christ died." Another, 2 Peter 2:1, in which the apostle speaks of false teachers who deny the Lord "that bought them."

When these texts are handled carefully and honestly, considering their context and the intent of the author and measuring Scripture against Scripture, apparent problems are nearly always readily resolved.¹ For example, the Greek word for world (*kosmos*) can have several meanings in Scripture. Sometimes it refers to the entire elect world, meaning both the Jews and Gentiles; sometimes it refers to the public who surrounded Christ, especially the Jews; sometimes it refers to all kinds of people, such as kings and subjects; sometimes it refers to humankind under the righteous judgment of God or to the kingdom of evil forces, both angelic and human, as related to the earth; sometimes it refers to creation, or to the

earth itself, or in the classical sense, to an orderly universe; and sometimes it simply refers to a great number of people.²

As for specific texts, John 3:16 does not reflect on the atonement's extent; rather, the key to John 3:16 is in the purpose clause of verse 17: *in order that* "the world through him might be saved." *World* is referring not to everyone but to the world under judgment and condemnation. B. B. Warfield says *kosmos* is used in John 3 not to suggest that the world is so *big* that it takes a great *deal* of love to embrace it all, but that the world is so *bad* that it takes a great *kind* of love to love it at all, and much more to love it as God has loved it when he gave His Son for sinners in it.

In 1 John 2:1–2, the apostle is saying that Christ's defense before God is so complete that it is sufficient for the sins of the world. He is also saying that the sacrifice Christ made was not only for the Jews or for a small group of first-century believers, but for people of every tribe, tongue, and nation through all time. John Murray speaks about the ethnic universalism of the gospel, meaning that those for whom Christ died are spread among all nations. Abraham Kuyper shows that the Greek word translated "for" (*peri*, not *hyper*) means "fitting for" or "with respect to." Hence, the meaning of the Greek can be that Jesus is a propitiation just like we and the entire world need—or, just as Jesus is our propitiation, so the entire world needs that same propitiation.³

As for the texts that use the word *all*, 2 Corinthians 5:14–15 uses *all* in the context of the unity of death and resurrection. Christ rises for those in union with Him; therefore, His death must be thought of in those same terms.⁴ The phrase "delivered up for us all" in Romans 8:32 is in the context of God's foreordination of His people (vv. 28–30) and of Christ's intercession for the elect (vv. 33–39). The words "ransom for all" in 1 Timothy 2:4–6 are clearly set in the context of prayers being offered for all kinds of people (vv. 1–2). Since the word *all* does not always mean all individuals in either Greek or English usage, there is no compelling reason to conclude that the *all* in verses 4 and 6 refers to every single person.

What of texts that seem to speak of believers falling away from faith? The context of Romans 14:15 shows that the

apostle is not talking about a brother for whom Christ died apostatizing from the faith altogether, but about one who would feel crushed if a fellow Christian became such a stumbling block in his life of faith that he would begin to traverse the road that leads to destruction. And 2 Peter 2:1 probably refers to false teachers who had been nominal members of the church but who in their actions, were denying the Savior they once professed but never knew in truth. They may have had historical, even temporary and miraculous, faith, but never possessed true saving faith,⁵ for they rejected the Savior and did “stumble at the word, being disobedient: whereunto also they were appointed” (1 Pet. 2:8). Certainly, Christ did not redeem those who were ordained to be disobedient!

Most major practical objections to limited atonement can be summarized in two questions:

• *How can the atonement be glorious if it is limited to some?*

This question really has two aspects. The first is the false idea that Christ died for a tiny remnant of people. Both the Canons of Dort and the Second Helvetic Confession reject that conclusion on the basis of Scripture passages that say heaven will house a great multitude of redeemed people that no man can number, from every kindred, tribe, tongue, and nation (Rev. 7:9–17).⁶

The second aspect is the false idea of who does the limiting in atonement. It is the Arminian, not the Calvinist, who limits Christ’s redemption. The Calvinist teaches that salvation is sure for every man, woman, teenager, boy, or girl who comes to the Lord Jesus Christ. None shall be turned away (John 6:37). The Calvinist says, “In His atonement, Jesus built a bridge from the depths of my depravity to God and heaven, and, by sending His Spirit, will bring every sinner for whom the bridge was laid all the way to glory.” That statement is the essence of the gospel. God will not fail to gather in every single one of His elect. There will be no empty seats in heaven.

Arminians say atonement only makes salvation possible. In doing so, they greatly limit the efficacy of the bloodletting of the Son of God. One Arminian put it this way: “The atonement would be just as efficacious and glorifying to God if not one sinner ever appropriated it.” In the Arminian view, the atonement created the possibility of salvation, but men must complete the bridge by exercising their own free will.⁷

• *How can you preach the gospel to all men without distinction if Christ did not die to save all?*

In other words, if you cannot come to a sinner and say, “Christ died for you,” how can you ask him to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ? Doesn’t Calvinism dampen evangelistic zeal? Let me offer three responses. First, the content of the gospel is not telling people that Christ died for this or that specific person. There is not one instance in the preaching of the book of Acts, private or public, where the apostolic gospel says

Christ died for any individual. The gospel says that God has sent His Son, who lived, died, and rose again. That is adequate salvation for the vilest of sinners, for the promise is: “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved.”

Second, the Calvinist view of the atonement guarantees the success of evangelism. The elect will be saved infallibly through the preaching of the gospel, for God determined that it would be so through the eternal covenant of redemption established among the persons of the Trinity. In His sovereign, gracious, distinguishing love, the Father has chosen certain people (Rom. 9:11–13; Eph. 1:4) whom He gave to His Son (John 6:37, 39; 17:6, 24), who, in turn, committed Himself to accomplish their redemption by obeying the precepts of God’s moral law perfectly on their behalf (His active obedience) and paying the penalty due them for their disobedience to the law (His passive obedience). Thus God can be just and the justifier of those who believe in Jesus (Rom. 3:26). Under the Trinitarian covenant, the Spirit is sent into the world by the Father and the Son (John 15:26; 16:5–15) to apply Christ’s saving work to the elect.

We need to remember that the decretive and covenantal will of God is effectual. What God purposes, He performs. Christ’s atonement is the work to which He committed Himself from eternity. Definite atonement flows out of the electing purpose of God and adheres fully with other doctrines of Christology that are grounded in eternity, such as the doctrines of Christ as the second Adam, of His high-priestly work, and of His covenant role.

Knowing that the elect will be gathered by the second Adam (John 17:12; Rom. 5:12–19) makes Calvinists bold in evangelism. They also are patient in it, knowing that God will save sinners in His time and way through the priestly work of Christ (Isa. 55:10–11). They are zealous, knowing that God’s glory will come to be (1 Cor. 1:27–31), and prayerful, knowing that He alone will and can accomplish salvation as an ever-faithful, covenant-keeping Lord (Eph. 2:1–10).⁸ Nearly all the great and zealous evangelists of the church from the sixteenth-century Reformation to the early nineteenth century, before Charles Finney (1792–1875), were committed to definite atonement rooted in this God-centered covenant theology. Would anyone dare say that George Whitefield lacked evangelistic zeal in preaching the gospel? Would anyone say the same of Charles Spurgeon, William Carey, David Brainerd, Jonathan Edwards, or Asahel Nettleton? Each of these great evangelists professed a definite design in the atoning work of Christ and boldly heralded Christ as a freely offered and willing Savior to all who repent and believe.⁹

Third, while we cannot fully grasp with our finite minds how to reconcile a definite, limited atonement with Christ’s all-sufficient blood and a universal invitation to believe, such is the pattern of Scripture and the way of God (John 6:37–40). Moreover, since the atonement is not limited in itself, though it is in its design, and since the promise is that all who by faith truly come to Christ for salvation will certainly

be saved (Rom. 10:13), limited atonement is not inconsistent with a universal call to faith.

This is also the position of the Canons of Dort. Affirming that Christ's blood is shed effectually only for those "who were from eternity chosen to salvation and given to Him by the Father" (Head II, Art. 8), the Canons read, "The promise of the gospel is, that whosoever believeth in Christ crucified, shall not perish, but have everlasting life. This promise, together with the command to repent and believe, ought to be declared and published to all nations, and to all persons promiscuously and without distinction, to whom God out of His good pleasure sends the gospel" (Head II, Art. 5).

Roger Nicole says our major problem in understanding definite atonement is that we think that a coextensive provision is necessary for a sincere offer of any kind; that is, Christ has to have died for every person in order for every person to be offered salvation in Him. Nicole says this premise is false even in mundane human affairs:

For instance, advertisers who offer some objects on the pages of a newspaper do not feel that honesty in any way demands of them to have a stock coextensive with the circulation figures of the newspaper. Really, the only requisite for a sincere invitation is this—that if the conditions be fulfilled, that which is offered will actually be granted.¹⁰

Jesus says, "He who cometh to me I will in no wise cast out" (John 6:37). Unlike stores with limited stock, Jesus' stock is never exhausted.

William Symington argues likewise:

We hold that the sacrifice of the Lord Jesus possessed an intrinsic value sufficient for the salvation of the whole world. In this sense it was adequate to the redemption of every human being.... The worth of Christ's atonement we hold to be, in the strictest sense of the term, infinite, absolute, all-sufficient.... This all-sufficiency is what lays the foundation for the unrestricted universality of the gospel call.... Such is my impression of the sufficiency of the atonement, that were all the guilt of all mankind concentrated in my own person, I should see no reason, relying on that blood which cleanseth from all sin, to indulge despair.¹¹

Symington concludes: "Let sinners everywhere know that if they perish it is not because there is not merit in Christ sufficient to meet all the demands of law and justice against them. Let them all turn and embrace the kind, the sincere, the urgent call to life and salvation by mere gratuity on the part of God: 'Whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely.'"¹²

If, by grace, you receive this water of life, you will be saved. No one has ever perished who has believed in the Lord Jesus Christ. The message of the gospel is: "The bridge is finished. Christ will enable you to put your weight on it, and

He will carry you all the way across. He welcomes all who come. Trust Him."

Without faith, Christ's atonement does us no good. We experience the benefits of Christ's accomplishment only when we, with our empty hands, embrace Christ. The good news is that the atonement has been achieved before we exercise faith (Rom. 5:5–11). The reconciliation is there to be received; and by grace, we receive it when Christ, by the Holy Spirit, draws us to Himself.

Redeemed by Precious Blood

Arminianism and Calvinism are based on different premises. Calvinists believe in a definite atonement, one that holds that Jesus Christ actually redeemed everyone He intended to redeem through His substitutionary death. As Tom Ascol says, "Just as the high priest under the old covenant wore the names of the twelve tribes of Israel on his breastplate when he performed his sacrificial service, so our great High Priest under the new covenant had the names of His people inscribed on His heart as He offered up Himself as a sacrifice for their sins."¹³ Not one who belongs to Christ will be lost.

Nicole has often said that when Calvinists declare they believe in a *limited* atonement, Arminians can proclaim an *unlimited* atonement, but when Calvinists proclaim a *definite* atonement, no Arminian wants to claim an *indefinite* atonement.¹⁴ Though *definite atonement* or *particular redemption* are better expressions than *limited atonement*, let us not forget that every Calvinist and Arminian, in actuality, believes in a limited atonement. As Ascol points out, "The Arminian view, claiming that the atonement is unlimited in its extent, is forced to conclude that it is limited in its efficacy. It failed to accomplish its universal purpose."¹⁵ Spurgeon describes this failure well:

Many divines...believe in an atonement made for everybody; but then, their atonement is just this. They believe that Judas was atoned for just as much as Peter; they believe that the damned in hell were as much an object of Jesus Christ's satisfaction as the saved in heaven; and though they do not say it in proper words, yet they must mean it, for it is a fair inference, that in the case of multitudes, Christ died in vain, for he died for them all, they say; and yet so ineffectual was his dying for them, that though he died for them they are damned afterwards.¹⁶

Speaking with Spurgeon, we Calvinists may say to our Arminian friends, "You are welcome to your atonement; you may keep it. We will never renounce ours for the sake of it." For we need a Savior who truly saves (Matt. 1:21) with a redemption that truly redeems by "the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot: who verily was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but

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Battling with Technopoly (1)

Anthony Selvaggio



A couple of years ago, I asked my wife for a portable Global Positioning System device, also known as a GPS. A GPS device allows you to identify your exact location by means of satellite. It prevents you getting lost when hiking, camping, hunting, or fishing. It allows you to mark your beginning point and then electronically retrace your steps back to that point. In other words, it's really neat!

The humorous thing, however, is that I have absolutely no need of this device! I don't hike, camp, hunt, or fish. So why did I want it? I wanted it because it's really neat! Like many people in our culture, I suffer from "technophilia"—the love of technology.

BLESSINGS

Now there's nothing wrong with technology *per se*. In fact, there are many things right about technology. Technology has brought tremendous blessings to our world, such as vaccines, agricultural advances, and indoor plumbing.

Even Neil Postman, a critic of the effects of technology, noted that it would be "stupid to be anti-technology. That would be something like being anti-food. We need technology to live, as we need food to live."¹

But Postman also qualified that statement by cautioning, "But, of course, if we eat too much food, or eat food that has no nutritional value, or eat food that is infected with disease, we turn a means of survival into its opposite. The same may be said of our technology."² Therefore, what I am confronting is not technology itself, but the harmful effects resulting from the misuse and overuse of technology.

What I am confronting is what Neil Postman referred to as "technopoly."³ Postman defined technopoly as a "state of culture" and a "state of mind" which "consists in the deification of technology, and takes its order from technology."⁴

Technopoly occurs when technology dominates and controls our lives, when it becomes an idol.

Let's take a look at technopoly in the Bible.

At first, we might think the Bible doesn't address the topic of technology at all. After all, computers, cell phones, and the like are part of our modern world, not the ancient. Of course, none of these devices existed in biblical times. However, that does not mean technology did not exist in the age of the Bible.

CURSES

Even the most ancient and primitive cultures developed some form of technology. Just because these ancient cultures did not have iPods does not mean they did not face the threat of technopoly. For instance, the early chapters of the book of Genesis provide us with two examples of cultures which succumbed to technopoly.

The first example of a technology-dominated culture emerges immediately after the Fall. In Genesis 4, a contrast is set forth between the two remaining sons of Adam—Cain and Seth. Seth and his descendants served the Lord; they worshiped God, calling "on the name of the Lord" (Gen. 4:26). However, Cain and his descendants were known for something entirely different. They were known for their technological prowess. Instead of worshipping God, they built cities (Gen. 4:17), developed musical instruments (Gen. 4:21), and forged a variety of tools (Gen. 4:22).

The sons of Cain were masters of technology, but their culture was devoid of God. Bruce Waltke notes that the sons of Cain are “symbolic of human culture with great civilizations and no God.”⁵ Technology became their idol. They overvalued their technology and relied on it rather than on God. Remember, it was the wickedness produced by the technologically dominated culture of the sons of Cain which eventually led God to destroy the world with a flood.

A second biblical example of technopoly stemmed from the Babelites. After the Flood, evil once again began to prosper in the world, particularly through the descendants of Noah’s son Ham. Ham’s descendants, like those of Cain, became known for their technological prowess in building cities and making war (Gen. 10:8–12).

In Genesis 11, we learn that most of mankind came to embrace the ways of the descendants of Ham. They allowed technology to become a tool of godlessness, a means of opposing the rule of God. In Genesis 11:4, we learn that the Babelites decided to build a massive tower which “would reach to the heavens.”

WORLD VIEW

The reason they desired to build this tower was to “make a name” for themselves (Gen. 11:4). In other words, they wanted to climb into the heavens to dethrone God and become gods

themselves. This is why God came down and confused their efforts. He recognized that their construction project represented a direct attack on His kingship. For the Babelites, technology became a means of undermining God’s rule of the universe.

Once again, my point is not that the Bible teaches technology is inherently evil. After all, in Genesis 6, we learn that Noah saved the world by building a massive ark—a Herculean exhibition of technological capability. The problem for the sons of Cain and the Babelites was that they misused technology to advance the plans of Satan and undermine a God-centered world view. Both cultures fell victim to the evils of technopoly.

1. Neil Postman, *Building a Bridge to the Eighteenth Century* (New York: Alfred Knopf, 2001), 44.
2. Ibid.
3. Neil Postman, *Technopoly: The Surrender of Culture to Technology* (New York: Vintage Books, 1993).
4. Ibid., 71.
5. Bruce Waltke, *Genesis* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2001), 99.

Anthony Selvaggio is visiting professor at the Reformed Presbyterian Theological Seminary in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, and a teaching elder in the Reformed Presbyterian Church of North America. He is the author of several books including, *The 24/7 Christian: Practical help from the Book of James* (Evangelical Press).

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was manifest in these last times for you, who by him do believe in God, that raised him up from the dead, and gave him glory; that your faith and hope might be in God” (1 Pet. 1:19–21).

*Bearing shame and scoffing rude,
In my place condemned He stood;
Sealed my pardon with His blood:
Hallelujah! What a Savior!*

—Philip Paul Bliss

Christ’s atonement did not partially fail; it totally succeeded. Jesus never fails!

1. John Gill, *Body of Divinity* (Grand Rapids: Sovereign Grace Publishers, 1971), 467–75; Owen, *The Works of John Owen*, 10:316–421; John Murray, *Redemption Accomplished and Applied* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1955), 71–75; Pink, *The Satisfaction of Christ*, 253–66.
2. Vine’s *Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1985), 233–34; and Duane Edward Spencer, *TULIP: The Five Points of Calvinism in the Light of Scripture* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1979), 36–37.
3. Abraham Kuyper, *Particular Grace: A Defense of God’s Sovereignty in Salvation* (Grandville, Mich.: Reformed Free Publishing, 2001), 23–33.

4. Herman Ridderbos, *Paul: An Outline of His Theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1975).
5. For helpful exegetical considerations, see Letham, *The Work of Christ*, 240–45.
6. See the Conclusion of the Canons and the Second Helvetic Confession, chap. 10, “We must hope well of all, and not rashly judge any man to be a reprobate” (Schaff, *Creeds of Christendom*, 3:848).
7. Cf. Pink, *Atonement*, 244.
8. See Letham, *The Work of Christ*, 234–37.
9. Shedd, *Dogmatic Theology*, 2:482–89; J. I. Packer, *Evangelism and the Sovereignty of God* (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity, 1961).
10. Roger Nicole, *Evangelical Theological Society Bulletin* (Fall 1967): 207.
11. William Symington, *The Atonement and Intercession of Christ* (Grand Rapids: Reformation Heritage Books, 2006), 185–86.
12. Ibid.
13. Thomas K. Ascol, “For God So Loved the World,” *Tabletalk*, 29, no. 9 (September 2005):16.
14. Roger Nicole, “The ‘Five Points’ and God’s Sovereignty,” in *Our Sovereign God*, ed. James Boice (Birmingham, Ala.: Solid Ground Christian Books, 2008), 32–33.
15. Thomas K. Ascol, “For God So Loved the World,” 17.
16. Charles Spurgeon, *New Park Street Pulpit* (Pasadena, Tex.: Pilgrim Publications, 1975), 4:70.

Piety within Proper Bounds: John Calvin on Christian Worship

Rev. William Boekestein

“True worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth” (John 4:23).

The following is adapted from an address given on July 17, 2009 at a conference commemorating the 500th birthday of John Calvin (1509–1564).

One of the trends among Christians today is a desire for only practical Bible messages. People don't want to hear about religious topics that are irrelevant to their faith-walk. In many ways this is an appropriate demand since all true theology is practical (2 Tim. 3:15–16). But is “worship” one of those relevant topics?

Robert Rayburn concludes an excellent address on worship with this claim: “The faith of many today has been weakened because they do not know how to worship.” If he's right, then worship is an intensely practical topic. John Calvin would certainly agree. According to him, “The whole substance of Christianity [chiefly consists in] the mode in which God is duly worshipped.” That is to say, all of Christianity can be boiled down to proper worship. Calvin himself said that the goal of theology is worship (taken from the Old English word *worth-ship*), that is, to declare the worthiness of God.

Worship was of the highest importance to Calvin and the Protestant Reformers. In a sense, the Reformation itself is the impact that Calvin and others had on Christian worship. The Reformation was mainly liturgical. Even reforms in doctrine were intimately connected with the church's worship. Speaking more specifically, Calvin's impact here is his “middle way” between two extremes that existed in his day and that exist in ours.

On the one extreme is what we might call, “non-liturgical worship.” All too often, services today are, according to Rayburn, “a hodge-podge of elements put together in such a way that neither the minister conducting the service nor the congregation participating has any real sensitivity to proper movement in the worship.” If any concern is given to the relationship between the elements of the service it is on largely pragmatic grounds.

On the other extreme is what we might call, “excessively liturgical worship.” In these churches the drama is in the ritual, not in the doctrine. Rites are performed that few people understand but which give the worshippers the false satisfaction of having “done church.”

Calvin's position is a middle way. To him, worship is structured as well as Spirit-dependent. It is reverent but not enigmatic. It is, as we'll see in a moment, in Spirit and truth.

In highlighting the contributions of Calvin, we are not

suggesting that our worship today must look exactly like it did in Geneva in the sixteenth century. But to suppose that we have nothing to learn from Calvin is to cut ourselves off from the benefits of historic Protestant worship.

The goal of this article is to outline three of Calvin's principles of worship and then to see how these principles can be worked out in as controversial a topic as church music.

Calvin's Principles of Worship

Three primary principles may be drawn from Calvin's Commentary on John 4. This passage is an important starting point for Calvin on this topic. Here Jesus teaches the Samaritan woman the nature of true worship. The fulcrum of the discussion is Jesus' claim that “true worshippers will worship the Father in spirit and truth” (John 4:23).

It may be that the following principles will seem rather ordinary to us. If so, we need to remember that in the eyes of the Roman Catholic Church, Calvin was, and still is, a revolutionary. Calvin himself realized that these principles were considered radical. One of the most helpful of Calvin's writings on worship is called *The Necessity of Reforming the Church*. In this treatise Calvin is responding to the allegation that his reforms of worship have “disturbed the church and in a manner convulsed the whole world.” If these principles seem commonplace today, that itself is a testimony to God's enduring work through Calvin.

True worship is God-focused

The most important principle of worship is that it finds its center in God. As Jesus said, true worshippers worship “the Father.” Right worship of God, said Calvin, is “to ascribe and render to Him the glory of all that is good, to seek all things in Him alone, and in every want have recourse to Him alone.” True worship is, in a manner of speaking, to have a “God-complex.”

This teaches us something very fundamental about our worship services. Again, in the words of Rayburn, “Good worship services are not for the enjoyment of the worshippers. They are to provide an opportunity for devout believers to offer the sovereign God of the universe that adoration, praise, honor, and submission of which He is worthy and to receive that spiritual food which He provides true worshippers only through the Word and the sacraments.” Worship is not



for the people but for God. As soon as we forget this we are headed for trouble.

Are our services chiefly aimed at attracting people? We need to be careful that the direction of our worship doesn't start drooping horizontally.

True worship is biblically based

Jesus also said that true worship is "in truth." That is, true worship is governed by the truth of the Word.

Calvin draws this principle also from the second commandment. If the first specifies which God to worship, the second tells us how to worship that God; specifically, that our worship must not be based on our imagination and creativity. "The law," said Calvin, "is a bridle to prevent men from turning aside to spurious worship."

He says, very simply, that "piety...confines itself within due bounds." That is, true worship of God abides by the standards of God Himself. The standard of Scripture trumps pragmatic concerns. Calvin is very strong on this point: "Nothing is more wicked than to contrive various modes of worship without the authority of the Word of God."

We should examine every part of our worship service in light of the Bible. Calvin warns against "attempting anything in religion at random" or based on good intentions.

Not only is worship regulated by God's word, it is also expressed through the Word. Our worship services must breathe a spirit of Bible. The Word must be sung, prayed, preached, and received via the sacraments. If a stranger were to walk into your service at any point, would he soon realize that your worship is an expression of the Word of God?

True worship is spiritually simple

Jesus (in John 4:23) not only stresses that true worship is God-directed and Bible-based; it is also spiritual. I have combined spirituality with simplicity because, to Calvin, simplicity is essential for achieving the spiritual quality of worship. In other words, in advocating a spiritual simplicity Calvin opposes worship that is externally ceremonial.

What do we mean by that phrase? Calvin cites "incense, candles, holy garments, an altar and [other assorted] vessels" as examples of the type of ceremonialism that is inappropriate in the gospel age. These ceremonies, while giving the appearance of spirituality, actually tend to obscure Christ. Calvin acknowledges that in the Old Testament the godly did use many ceremonies but explains that this is not fitting after the temple veil was rent and the temple ceremonies were fulfilled in Christ.

In our day, few Protestants would claim that these ceremonial accoutrements have any inherent spiritual significance. But what about their use as aids? Speaking frankly, Calvin finds the argument to be quite lame. He says that God alone knows thoroughly what is good for us. He knows us better than we do ourselves and knows what is helpful for us. Imagine a child who uses chocolate syrup in the place

of toothpaste and argues to his parent that it helps him get into the spirit of tooth-brushing! This "aid" to tooth-brushing is actually counter-productive, as any good parent would understand. God best knows how to "get us into the spirit of worship."

Still, Calvin does not maintain that no ceremonies may be used in Christian worship. There are a few, he says, that do not obscure Christ but rather illustrate Him very well. Chief among these are baptism and the Lord's Supper. These are the Spirit-given rites that truly aid the spiritual worshiper.

Calvin disdained external distractions because he wanted to get to the heart of worship. True worship is a simple fellowship between the believer and the Triune God.

Calvin calls us to check our hearts. Some of us pride ourselves on having a good liturgy or none at all. But a good liturgy or lack thereof will not make godly worship. A spiritual simplicity is the heart of the matter.

Calvin's Principles Applied to Singing

Some implications of these principles have been drawn out already but we conclude by applying them to what is usually considered the core of worship: singing. Singing is an appropriate test case because, as Calvin said, "singing has great power to inflame men's hearts to praise God with a burning zeal."

Singing must be God-directed

Interestingly, for Calvin, singing is prayer; prayer plus tune and rhythm. And although there are horizontal implications for prayer (and singing) it is primarily a vertical exercise.

For all we hear about seeker-sensitive worship, John 4:23 teaches that God is the seeker of worship. This understanding changes the way we approach singing. It helps, for example, those who struggle with singing. Since our singing is to God it matters little what others think of it. When we sing, we should be sensitive to His watchful eye.

The demand that worship be God-directed also means that the songs we sing must lead to Christ. This does not mean that they must avoid all personal references to the worshiper. But it must mean that the song clearly points to the redemption of God in Christ.

Singing must be spiritually simple

For Calvin, all worship is essentially spiritual. This means that singing must proceed from a sincere heart. In fact, Calvin argues that in true worship, the Spirit actually sings through us. Is this what your singing is like?

In terms of simplicity, worship songs should be accessible to all. This may mean explaining vocabulary in songs or explaining how they fit into the service.

Singing must be governed by Scripture

One of the more controversial questions of church singing is

(continued on page 282)



A Plea for Those in Secret Sin

CHARLES SPURGEON (1834–1892)

Now I come...to plead with all my might with some of you whom God has pricked in your consciences. I have come to entreat you, if it be possible, even to tears, that you will give up your secret sins. I have one here for whom I bless God: I love him, though I know him not. He is almost persuaded to be a Christian. He is halting between two opinions: he intends to serve God, he strives to give up sin, but he finds it a hard struggle. As yet, he knows not what shall become of him. I speak to him with all love: My friend, will you have your sin and go to hell, or leave your sin and go to heaven? This is the solemn alternative.

To all awakened sinners I put it: May God choose for you! Otherwise, I tremble as to which you may choose. The pleasures of this life are so intoxicating, the joys of it so ensnaring, that did I not believe that God works in us to will and to do, I should despair of you. But I have confidence that God will decide the matter. Let me lay the alternative before you: on the one hand, there is an hour's merriment, a short life of bliss, and that a poor, poor bliss. On the other hand, there is everlasting life and eternal glory. On the one hand, there is a transient happiness and afterwards overwhelming woe. In this case, there is a solid peace and everlasting joy, and after it overflowing bliss. I shall not fear to be called an Arminian when I say, as Elijah did, "Choose you this day whom you will serve! If God be God, serve him; if Baal be God serve him" (Josh. 24:15; 1 Kings 18:21). But, now, make your choice deliberately, and may God help you to do it! Do not say you will take up with religion without first counting the cost!...

Sinner, you will never regret that choice, if God helps you to make it. You will find yourself a happy man here and thrice happy throughout eternity.

"But," says one, "Sir, I intend to be religious, but I do not hold with your strictness." I do not ask you to do so. I hope, however, you will hold with God's strictness. God's strictness is ten thousand times greater than mine. You may say that I am puritanical in my preaching. God will be puritanical in judging in that great day. I may appear severe, but I can never be as severe as God will be. I may draw the har-

row with sharp teeth across your conscience, but God shall drag harrows of eternal fire across you one day. I may speak thundering things. God will not speak them, but hurl them from His hands. Remember, men may laugh at hell and say there is none. But they must reject their Bibles before they can believe the lie....

Will you keep your secret sins and have eternal fire for them?

Remember: It is of no use; they must all be given up or else you cannot be God's child. You cannot by any means have both! It cannot be God and the world, it cannot be Christ and the devil; it must be one or the other. O, that God would give you grace to resign all; for what are they worth? They are your deceivers now and will be your tormentors forever. O, that your eyes were open to see the rottenness, the emptiness, and trickery of iniquity. O, that God would turn you to Himself. May God give you [the] grace...of repentance at this very hour to say, "Henceforth it is war to the knife with my sins! Not one of them will I willingly keep, but down with them, down with them!"

*The dearest idol I have known, whate'er that idol be,
Help me to tear it from its throne, and worship only Thee.*

"But oh, sir, I cannot do it! It would be like pulling my eyes out!" Yes, but hear what Christ says: "It were better for thee to enter into life with one eye, than having two eyes to be cast into hell fire" (Matt. 5:29). "But it would be like cutting my arm off!" Yes, and it would be better for you to enter into life halt or maimed, than to be cast into hell fire forever (Matt. 5:30). When the sinner comes before God at last, do you think he will speak as he does now? God will reveal his secret sins: the sinner will not then say, "Lord, I thought my secret sins so sweet, I could not give them up." I think I see how changed it will be then. "Sir," you say now, "you are too strict!" Will you say that when the eyes of the Almighty are glowering on you? You say now, "Sir, you are too precise"; will you say that to God Almighty's face? "Sir, I mean to keep such-and-such a sin." Can you say it at God's bar at last? You will not dare to do it then. Ah, when Christ comes

a second time, there will be a marvelous change in the way men talk. I think I see Him! *There* He sits upon His throne! Now, Caiaphas, come and condemn Him now! Judas, come and kiss Him now! What do you stick at, man? Are you afraid of Him? Now, Barabbas, go! See whether they will prefer you to Christ now. Swearer, now is your time! You have been a bold man. Curse Him to His face now. Now drunkard, stagger up to Him now! Now infidel, tell Him there is no Christ now—now that the world is lit with lightning and the earth is shaken with thunder until the solid pillars thereof bow themselves—tell God there is no God now; now laugh at the Bible; now scoff at the minister. Why, men, what is the matter with you? Why can't you do it? Ah, there you are; you have fled to the hills and to the rocks—"Rocks hide us! Mountains fall on us! Hide us from the face of Him that sitteth on the throne" (cf. Rev. 6:16). Where are now your boasts, your vauntings, and your glories? Alas, alas for you in that dread day of wonders.

Secret sinner, what will then become of you? Go out of this place unmasked; go out to examine yourself. Go out to bend your knee, go out to weep, go out to pray. God give you grace to believe! And oh, how sweet and pleasant the thought, that this day sinners have fled to Christ, and men have been born again to Jesus! Brethren, before I finish, I repeat the words at which so many have caviled—it is now or never, it is turn or burn. Solemnly in God's sight I say it; if it be not God's truth, I must answer for it in the Great Day of account. Your consciences tell you it is true. Take it home and mock me if you will; this morning I am clear of your blood. If any seek not

God but live in sin, I shall be clear of your blood in that Day when the watchman shall have your souls demanded of him. Oh, may God grant that you may be cleared in a blessed manner! When I went down these pulpit stairs a Sabbath or two ago, a friend said to me words that have been in my mind ever since: "Sir, there are nine thousand people this day without excuse in the Day of Judgment." It is true of you this morning. If you are damned, it will be not for [lack] of preaching to you, and it shall not be for [lack] of praying for you. God knows that if my heart could break of itself, it would for your souls; for God is my witness, how earnestly I long for you in the bowels of Christ Jesus. Oh, that He might touch your hearts and bring you to Him! For death is a solemn thing, damnation is a horrible thing, to be out of Christ is a dreadful thing, to be dead in sin is a terrific thing. May God lead you to view these things as they are and save you for His mercy's sake! "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved" (Mark 16:16).

*Lord, search my soul, try every thought;
Though my own heart accuse me not
Of walking in a false disguise,
I beg the trial of thine eyes,
Doth secret mischief lurk within?
Do I indulge some unknown sin?
O turn my feet whene'er I stray,
And lead me in thy perfect way.*

From a sermon delivered on Sabbath morning, February 8, 1857, at the Music Hall, Royal Surrey Gardens by Charles Spurgeon, the renowned 19th-century Baptist preacher of Metropolitan Tabernacle in London.

(continued from page 280)

"What should we sing?" Calvin's basic answer was: "The Bible, and primarily the Psalms."

Calvin did not exactly sing only Psalms. Singing of the Commandments and of the Apostles' Creed and Simeon's Song (*Nunc Dimittis*) were regular parts of Calvin's liturgy. He was convinced, however, in his words, that the inspired Psalms of David are the "best spurs to incite us to pray to God, to praise Him, and to meditate on His works in order to love, fear, honor, and glorify Him." Calvin's famous claim that the Psalms are "an anatomy of all the parts of the soul" explains why, in his opinion, psalm-singing contributes to a balanced piety. Without being grounded in psalms, worship is in danger of becoming one-dimensional. Does not Calvin speak to the present?

In an article entitled "Where Have All the Psalms Gone?" Emily Brink succinctly sums up the situation in many evangelical, and even Reformed, churches today: "Psalm-singing has fallen on hard times." She reminds us that ever since the release of Calvin's Genevan Psalter in 1562, "psalms have been at the heart of the worship and piety of" reformation-minded Christians.

Conclusion

These are just a few of Calvin's contributions to worship. The particular form which he advocated may not have been perfect but we believe it pointed in the right direction, was governed by the right standard, and flowed from a concern for spiritual sincerity.

One issue always associated with worship is that of change. Calvin demonstrates that the Christian church should always be reforming according to the Bible. Some of our churches are too quick to accept any change that may "work." Some of our churches are too resistant to biblical change.

Calvin was satisfied that change is justified so long as our goal is that "the one God may be worshipped amongst us, and that His simple truth may reign in our church." What more worthy goal could be imagined? If worship is the sum of religion, what could be more practical?

Rev. William Boekestein graduated from Puritan Reformed Theological Seminary and is the pastor of Covenant Reformed Church in Carbondale, Pennsylvania.



The Peaceful Parent and Teacher

“Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee: because he trusteth in thee.” —Isaiah 26:3

Perfect peace? Perfect peace? How can a parent find perfect peace? How is it possible for a teacher to live in uninterrupted peace? Is peace attainable when raising children and teens in a sinful world?

We cannot reach this goal ourselves—not by focusing our thoughts on our children or our students, not by dwelling on their challenges and problems, not by trying to develop the perfect strategy or solution. But our text begins with God. It focuses on what the Lord will do. “*Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace...*” This shifts our focus and lifts our vision. It directs us to the Almighty God, to His Word, to His promises. It focuses on Him on whom our mind is to be stayed and the one in whom we are to trust—God and not ourselves. What is impossible with us is possible with God (Mark 10:27).

Why do you have sleepless nights? Why do we experience restless times? Why do we battle with worries, anxieties, and fears? Because our vision is too horizontal. We fixate on our child, on ourselves, and on the problem. Our minds stay on this, and we cannot rest until we have found a solution. But “the perfect solution” lies beyond our ability to achieve.

Whether or not a problem looms large or appears small depends on our perspective. To an ant, a pebble may appear as an immovable mountain. To us, the pebble can simply be kicked out of the way. Our problems with a child or student may appear to be immovable mountains to us, but what are they in God’s sight? To a God who created and upholds the entire universe, a universe that cannot contain Him, how great or small is the mountain that you are so worried about moving? No wonder Jesus teaches us, “If ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye shall say unto this mountain, Remove hence to yonder place; and it shall remove” (Matt.

17:20). When focused on God, the smallest seed of faith can move mountains of worry.

We need to fix our minds on God, on His Word, on His Son the Lord Jesus Christ, on His gospel, and on His almighty power and limitless grace. Our text describes it as one’s mind being *stayed* on Him. The Hebrew word means to lean upon, to take firm hold of, to set one’s self upon, to stand fast on. The “continental divide” on this matter is whether we try to lean on and take firm hold of our own abilities to solve problems and resolve issues, or whether we stand fast and are stayed upon God. The waters of the one flow into a sea of worry and anxiety while the other flows into a sea of peace and rest.

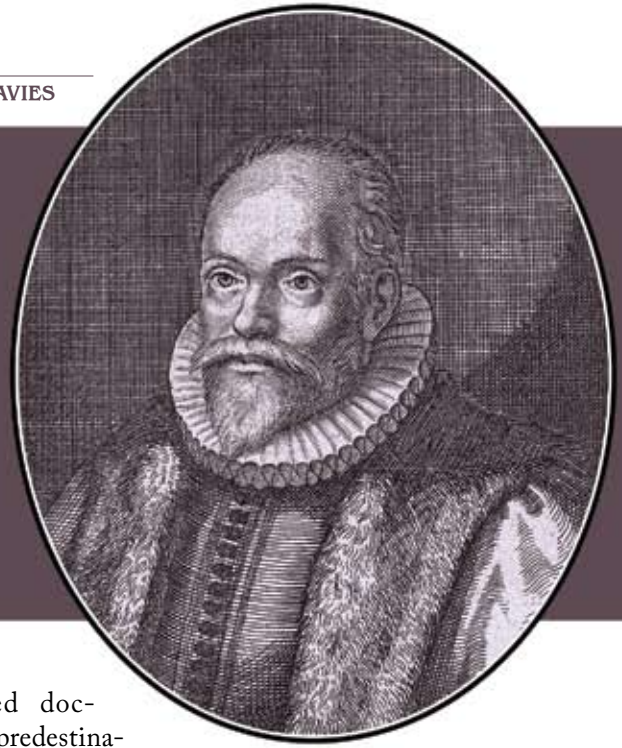
This does not mean that we are not to be concerned about the sins and problems in the lives of our children or students. It does not mean that we are not to plan intelligently and try to solve problems and resolve conflicts. We are called to pray and work. But the difference is in whom we place our hope and trust. If we trust in self and our abilities and our solutions, we will never find lasting peace. Why not? Because no matter how effectively we parent or how efficiently we teach, many issues regarding our children and students go beyond our abilities to control. We must parent and teach to the best of our abilities, but God alone can turn, change, or convert the hearts of our children and students.

What wisdom and peace there is to be found when we render to ourselves whatever belongs to us in these matters, and render to God what is His! After doing our best, peace will only be attained by those whose minds are stayed on God because their trust is in the Lord.

Are you a peaceful parent, a trusting teacher?

James Arminius

In what must be one of the great ironies of church history, James Arminius shares an anniversary year with John Calvin. The Genevan Reformer was born 500 years ago on July 10, 1509. Arminius, who did so much to question Calvin's theology of sovereign grace, died on October 19, 1609.



Like Calvin, Arminius is one of the few figures in Christian history to have lent his name to an "ism." His teachings, popularly labeled Arminianism, have spread far and wide and influenced many.

Evangelicals have not been immune to his views. During the eighteenth-century evangelical revival, George Whitefield famously fell out with John Wesley over the latter's Arminianism.

In this article we will look at the man behind the "ism" and consider how James Arminius became an Arminian. More importantly, we will ask whether Arminianism stands up to the test of Scripture.

Early life

James Arminius was born in Oudewater, southern Holland, in 1560. His father died when he was an infant, but wealthy friends of the family provided for James's education. He studied at the universities of Marburg and Leiden before being sent to Geneva, where he sat at the feet of Theodore Beza, Calvin's successor in the city.

Arminius was a diligent scholar and his work impressed his teachers, including Beza. But student life is not forever and, in 1588, Arminius was invited to return to Holland as one of the pastors of the Reformed Church in Amsterdam. In 1590, he married Elizabeth Reael, daughter of an Amsterdam magistrate with whom he was to have nine children. The doctrinal standards of the Dutch Reformed Church were the *Heidelberg Catechism* and *Belgic Confession*, both solidly Calvinistic documents.

In 1603, Arminius was appointed professor of divinity in his *alma mater*, the University of Leiden. But it soon became evident that his theology was not fully orthodox. His ideas on predestination proved especially controversial. He rooted election in God's foreknowledge of which sinners would believe in Christ.

It used to be thought that Arminius's problems with the

Reformed doctrine of predestination began when he was asked to refute the unorthodox views of Dirck Coornhert, an opponent of Calvinistic theology. But this account has been challenged by more recent scholarship (see *God, Creation and Providence in the Thought of Jacob Arminius*, Richard A. Muller; Baker, 1991).

We need to see Arminius in context. In the early seventeenth century, Reformed theologians began to draw heavily on medieval scholastic theology. They looked to the writings of Thomas Aquinas, Duns Scotus, and others to help develop a more systematic approach to theology.

Scholasticism

Scholasticism offered a sophisticated theological method that came with its own ready-made technical arguments and special terms. All this was handy for discussing the finer points of theology. Arminius would have received a thorough grounding in the scholastics during his student years.

In looking back to scholasticism, the Reformed were following in the footsteps of John Calvin himself. Calvin rejected the wilder speculative excesses of the scholastics, but used their arguments and terminology when it suited his purpose.

Like Calvin, later Reformation leaders found Aquinas especially helpful. He emphasized the sovereignty of divine grace in salvation, harking back to the teachings of Augustine of Hippo. Reformed theologians were not only familiar with the older scholastic tradition, but also engaged with the leading Roman Catholic theologians of the day.

Some in the Catholic Church were already beginning to question the Augustinian thread in Aquinas's teaching. Among its critics was Louis de Molina, an early Jesuit theologian. Molina tried to reconcile the sovereignty of God with human freedom. He posited a theory of "middle knowledge," where God's knowledge of future events is dependent on the free actions of human beings.

The influence of Molina can be traced in Arminius's thinking on the relationship between God and humanity. Arminius, too, spoke in terms of "middle knowledge." The Leiden professor taught that God has placed limits upon Himself so that human beings may act with freedom.

Alarm bells

This view obviously poses a problem for the Reformed doctrine of predestination, which insists that God has sovereignly willed whatever comes to pass. Election is not to be based merely on God foreseeing which human beings would freely choose to be saved. Rather, God actively elected some sinners to life and salvation in Christ in accordance with the good pleasure of His will.

Alarm bells soon began to ring when Arminius's ideas on predestination were made public through his teaching at Leiden. Some insisted he should be called to justify his views in a specially convened synod. Arminius refused, arguing that his teaching was in accord with the Reformed confessions. He may have sincerely believed this to be the case, as have some of his followers, but he was mistaken.

The *Belgic Confession* states in Article 16—on the doctrine of election: "We believe that...all Adam's descendants having thus fallen into perdition and ruin by the sin of the first man... God showed himself to be as he is: merciful and just.

"He is merciful in withdrawing and saving from this perdition those whom he, in his eternal and unchangeable counsel, has elected and chosen in Jesus Christ our Lord by his pure goodness, without any consideration of their works. He is just in leaving the others in their ruin and fall into which they plunged themselves."

Arminius's position was quite different from this. He stated: "God decreed to save and damn certain particular persons. This decree has its foundation in the foreknowledge of God, by which he knew from all eternity those individuals who would through his preceding grace, believe, and, through his subsequent grace would persevere, according to the administration of those means which are suitable and proper for conversion and faith; and, by which foreknowledge, he likewise knew those who would not believe and persevere" (*Works of Jacob Arminius*, Volume 1; www.ccel.org/ccel/arminius/works1.iii.vi.i.html).

Fore-loved

Note that Arminius does indeed ascribe election to the grace of God. This grace is sufficient to save whoever will believe, but it does not effect salvation through God's active choice. Election is simply a matter of God foreknowing who would avail themselves of the offer of redemption.

This teaching subtly undermines the Reformation insistence that salvation is by grace *alone*. If, by virtue of universal grace, *all* sinners theoretically have the ability to choose to be saved, then why do not *all* sinners in fact choose to be saved? In the end, the answer to this must come down to human choice. Some choose to avail themselves of salvation in Christ, but others do not. For all that some say about this choice being grace-enabled,

it is not really an effective grace that actually saves, but merely a "grace" that facilitates the sinner's choice to believe.

In other words, Arminianism is a form of semi-Pelagianism, which teaches that man must cooperate with God's grace in order to be saved. The Arminian approach questions the New Testament's verdict that the unbeliever is dead in trespasses and sins (Eph. 2:1) and, therefore, *unable* to choose to be reconciled to God. According to the Bible, grace is both sufficient *and* effective (2 Tim. 1:8–10).

When Scripture speaks of the foreknowledge of God, it does not mean that God simply looked into the future to see who would choose to be saved. Consider what Paul says in Romans 8:29–30, where "foreknew" means something like "fore-loved." God loved certain sinners and predestined them to be conformed to the image of His Son. He took the initiative throughout the processes of salvation.

God calls, justifies, and glorifies His chosen people. This does not mean that He forces salvation upon unwilling human beings. Rather, the Father sets us free to believe in Christ and be saved by the power of the Holy Spirit.

Corrosive influence

After long resisting open discussion of his views, Arminius finally agreed to a conference at The Hague where his teaching could be properly examined. But he fell ill and died on October 19, 1609.

His Arminianism did not die with him. In 1610, a group of Dutch divines sympathetic to Arminius' theology issued five *Remonstrant Articles*, which may be summarized:

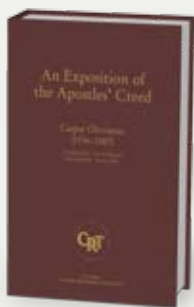
1. Predestination is conditional on God foreknowing who would believe.
2. Christ died for all, although only believers will be saved.
3. Human beings are sinners and cannot believe apart from the grace of God.
4. Saving grace may be resisted.
5. The doctrine of the final perseverance of the saints needs to be investigated further.

Many have found Arminius's theology appealing. After all, it is flattering to human nature to think that we can make at least some small contribution to our salvation. The anti-Puritan Archbishop Laud and his followers held to Arminian doctrine. Huge sectors of contemporary evangelicalism are, in fact, Arminian. That is what lies behind the type of evangelism that places all its emphasis on sinners "deciding for Christ."

Arminianism is corrosive of the gospel. It has had a baleful effect upon the theology and mission of the church. James Arminius was a learned and able theologian, yet we must reject his teaching because it robs the triune God of His glory in salvation.

Guy Davies is a Reformed Welsh minister serving in the Southwest of England. This article is reprinted from *Evangelical Times*.

New RHB Books



An Exposition of the Apostles' Creed

Caspar Olevianus

Lyle D. Bierma (trans.)

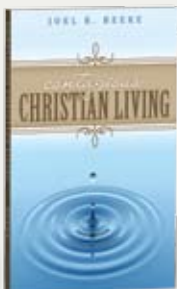
R. Scott Clark (intro.)

Olevianus's *Exposition of the Apostles' Creed* is a collection of sermons he preached on the basic articles of the Christian faith. It serves as a reminder that the Reformed tradition did not see itself as separate from the universal

church, though it was principally opposed to Rome. Rather, Olevianus and his tradition argue for a Reformed catholicity rooted in the ancient confession of the church.

This new translation by Lyle D. Bierma, along with R. Scott Clark's historical introduction, will benefit both scholarly and general readers. Charged with federal language, the *Exposition* explains the Christian faith as the believer's fellowship with God in the covenant of grace. Thus, it is significant for its contribution to the development of Reformed covenantal theology. In addition to exhibiting its historical value within the Reformed tradition, readers will be "directed," as Olevianus had intended, "toward edification in true and sound piety."

(HC, 200 pages) \$40.00/\$30.00



Contagious Christian Living

Joel R. Beeke

When some people smile, they ignite smiles in people around them. They have contagious smiles. If that's what a contagious smile is, what is contagious Christian living? It is living that is so godly and so consistent that people around them cannot help but be impacted and inspired. In *Contagious Christian Living*, Joel R. Beeke looks at

four people in the Bible to find out how people today can live an influential life in dependence on the Holy Spirit. Here is your invitation to read about, and pray for, the sacrificial submission of Jephthah's daughter, the Christ-centeredness of Bartimaeus, the contagious blessings of Jacob, and the consistent integrity of Daniel.

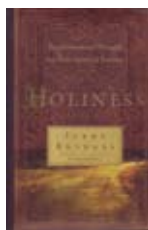
"One of Joel Beeke's best books yet. In these pages he gives us profound truth in a luminously simple style, applied with a pastor's insight to contemporary living. From the fascinating experiences of four real people he calls us to become contagious believers—winsome in self-sacrifice, integrity, and a passion for Christ. This is a wonderful volume—'narrative theology' as it should be but rarely is—and in itself contagious. Absorb it yourself and buy copies for your church. Anyone who wants to grow spiritually will benefit enormously and eternally from these sermons."

— Edward Donnelly

Principal and Professor of New Testament,
Reformed Theological College, Belfast

Minister, Trinity Reformed Presbyterian Church, Newtownabbey
(PB, 130 pages) \$9.00/\$6.50

Other New Books



Holiness, Day by Day—Jerry Bridges

A one-year devotional, *Holiness Day by Day* takes you deeper than other, shorter devotionals, stimulating stronger commitment and spiritual transformation. Each reading is carefully chosen and compiled from Jerry Bridges's best writings.

(HC, 336 pages, NavPress) \$15.99/\$12.00

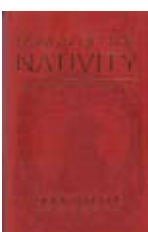


Communion in the Spirit: The Holy Spirit as the Bond of Union in the Theology of Jonathan Edwards

Robert W. Caldwell

This study explores the central connections Edwards drew between his doctrines of religious experience and the Trinity. It takes us through the major areas of Edwards's theology, including his Trinitarianism, the end for which God created the world, Christology, justification, sanctification, and glorification, to demonstrate the centrality of the Holy Spirit throughout his theology.

(PB, 212 pages, Wipf and Stock Publications) \$27.00/\$20.00

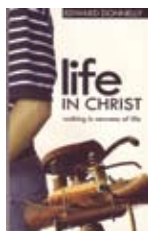


Songs of the Nativity: Selected Sermons on Luke 1 & 2

John Calvin

Luke's gospel is notable for its distinctive songs, strikingly reminiscent of the Psalms. Chief among these are Mary's song, the *Magnificat*; Zechariah's song, the *Benedictus*; the angels' song, the *Gloria in excelsis*; and Simeon's song, the *Nunc dimittis*. They are full of prophetic hope, eager expectation, and joyful thanksgiving. Robert White's excellent translation of Calvin's sermons on these songs transports us back to St. Peter's Cathedral, Geneva, where Calvin can be overheard preaching on issues of perennial importance to all Christian men and women.

(HC, 258 pages, Banner of Truth) \$24.00/\$17.00

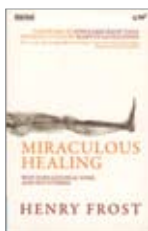


Life in Christ: Walking in Newness of Life

Edward Donnelly

Beginning with the way in which we consciously enter into union with Christ, Edward Donnelly shows how this union provides us with a new identity, enables us to draw directly from Him the strength to live Christ-like lives, and brings us into a worldwide family. Finally, he helps us to see how "pain and suffering are God's paradoxical means of bringing us closer to Jesus and making us more like Him."

(PB, 112 pages, Bryntirion Press) \$13.99/\$11.00



Miraculous Healing: Why Does God Heal Some, and Not Others?—Henry Frost

This question has been the subject of a great deal of heart-searching throughout history. People's opinions have caused pain and euphoria—but have they shed light upon this emotional topic? Henry Frost's book has been a touchstone of authority on the issue of miraculous healing since its initial publication in 1931; it is still frequently quoted. Sickness and disability are not academic issues and this book will be of interest to anyone who struggles with illness, or loves someone who does.

(PB, 128 pages, Christian Focus Publications) \$10.00/\$7.50



Trinitarian Spirituality: John Owen and the Doctrine of God in Western Devotion— *Brian K. Kay*

This work examines the problem of how to connect the historic doctrine of the Trinity to Christian devotional practice. Two criteria for a successful Trinitarian spirituality are proposed: that of drawing significantly from nuances of the classic formulations of the doctrine, and dealing with the mode of original Trinitarian self-disclosure, that is, the unfolding biblical doctrine of the *historia salutis*. Various historical attempts at articulating a method are examined, with special emphasis given to the Puritan John Owen.

(PB, 214 pages, Wipf and Stock Publishers) \$27.00/\$20.00



Communion with God: Fellowship with Father, Son and Holy Spirit— *John Owen*

John Owen examines the Christian's communion with God as it relates to all three members of the Trinity. He shows that every Christian does have communion with God, and that this communion takes place distinctly with Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Our relationship with God the Father is primarily through love and faith, our relationship with God the Son is through fellowship and grace, and our relationship with God the Holy Spirit is primarily through comfort and sanctification. A classic of Christian devotional thought, *Communion with God* still influences the church today. This is the original text with a new layout and is fully subtitled, which makes it more accessible to a new generation of readers.

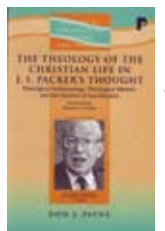
(PB, 431 pages, Christian Heritage) \$16.00/\$12.00



Praying the Lord's Prayer— *J.I. Packer*

In his book, *Praying the Lord's Prayer*, an excerpt from *Growing in Christ*, J. I. Packer presents a powerful truth: prayer is a natural activity between the heavenly Father and His children. As Packer works through each phrase of Christ's pattern of prayer, readers will begin to grasp the basic principles and guidelines of prayer. As we apply the truths of this book to our prayer lives, we will experience intimate communication with God and will strengthen our own conversations with our Father in heaven.

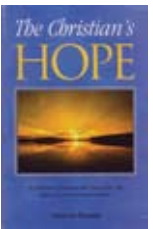
(PB, 128 pages, Crossway) \$10.00/\$7.50



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J.I. Packer has wielded widespread influence on evangelicalism for more than three decades. This study pursues a nuanced understanding of Packer's theology of sanctification by tracing the development of his thought, showing how he reflects a particular version of Reformed theology, and examining the unique influence of theological anthropology and theological method on this area of his theology.

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(PB, 175 pages, Pietan Publications) \$12.00/\$10.00

The above titles are recently published or reprinted. The first price is retail, and the second is our discounted price. PB = paperback, HC = hard cover.



Heart for the Gospel, Heart for the World: The Life and Thought of a Reformed Pioneer Missiologist Johan Herman Bavinck (1895-1964)— *Paul J. Visser*

This study presents the missiological inheritance of Johan Herman Bavinck in an organized and systematic form. The following topics are discussed: theology of religion, biblical theology of missions, elenctics (mission apologetics), and practical subjects such as enculturation, ecumenism, and the race issue. The context in which Bavinck developed his vision is discussed in an explicit way. Special attention is given to the influence of Hendrik Kramer on Bavinck's development as well as the psychological dimension in his theologizing. The author evaluates the relevancy of Bavinck's missiology for the development of a Reformed missiology. The book is made complete by an extensive biographical sketch shedding light on the background and way of life of Johan Herman Bavinck.

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A Light in a Dark World

All of Israel looked forward to the day when the promised Messiah would come. Israel has a history filled with grief and sorrow because of their sin and rebellion. Their sins led them away from their God and King, so the Lord would punish them in order to turn them back to Himself. Because of these sins, God sent His beloved Son to bring light into the dark world of sin and sorrow. Why? Did Israel deserve God's love and favor? Was there something about them that pleased God? Was Israel better than the nations around them? No, there was nothing about Israel that made God favor them. His goodness and mercy caused Him to sacrifice His sinless Son for the sins of an ungrateful, wayward people.

From what did God rescue His people? Were they in danger? Yes, they certainly were in danger! All of mankind is in danger. To understand this danger, we must turn to the first few chapters of the Bible. Genesis 1 and 2 describe the six days of creation. God created a beautiful, perfect world. "And God saw every thing that he had made, and, behold, it was very good" (Genesis 1:31a). Things did not remain beautiful, however. Satan tempted Eve and then Adam, and they fell from perfection, dragging the entire human race with them, bringing a curse on all of creation. As a result, every person born is doomed for eternal destruction. Darkness replaced light, so we cannot see the danger all around us. Worse, we all believe that we live in the light, but do not understand that our eyes are blinded and cannot see God's light. We think we are wiser than others; we even think we are wiser than God! Isn't that how Satan tempted Eve—by telling her that she would be as wise as God if she ate the fruit of the forbidden tree? He said, "Ye shall not surely die: for God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil" (Genesis 3:4b-5). Eve believed the serpent rather than God; and so it is with all of us to this day: we believe Satan, the father of lies, rather than God who cannot lie.

God knew that Adam and Eve and all the generations to come would be blanketed with this blinding darkness. He also knew that it was their own fault. Yet He had compassion on the human race and thought of an amazing rescue plan—one that would cost Him great loss and pain. He chose to send light into the world that would shine into the darkness and reveal

the danger in which the people were. He chose to do this even though He knew His Light would be rejected and that people would foolishly prefer the darkness.

Something—or rather, Someone—else was needed. We need a Light to shine into the darkness all around us, but we need Someone to heal our blind eyes. Without the gift of sight, we will remain blind to our danger. So God the Father also sent the Healer into this sin-filled world. The Light is the Lord Jesus Christ; the Healer is the Holy Spirit. This is a gift that believers will never be able to repay; they will spend eternity praising and thanking God for His amazing love.

One quiet night over two thousand years ago, that Light came in Bethlehem. No one seemed to notice or even care. A helpless baby born to penniless parents hardly seemed like the way God would fulfill the promises He made through His prophets. The Son of God, born to poor parents? No nationwide celebration of the long-awaited Prince? No riches and honor for the Son of the almighty Ruler of heaven and earth? But God's ways are not our ways. God does not think like we do: "For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the LORD. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts" (Isaiah 55:8-9). God knew that the Lord Jesus needed to satisfy every detail of God's justice in order to save His people from eternal darkness. Jesus suffered poverty, rejection, homelessness, beatings, scorn, mockery, pain, loneliness, hell, and finally death in order to redeem, or buy back, His beloved children. He did this for ungrateful, sinful, proud, ignorant, willful, wicked, mean, hateful, selfish people who did not want God's love. They even killed the One who had come to save them from certain death. We rejected and killed the One who offered us free salvation!

"Not me," you say! "I would have welcomed Mary and Joseph into my home. I would have followed Jesus. I would have listened to Him and believed His words. I would have understood that He came to bring spiritual light into hearts darkened by sin. I would not have left Him when He was mocked and beaten. I would have stayed near Him when He hung on that awful cross. I would not have doubted that He would rise again on the third day!"

You are forgetting that your heart is also dark by nature and that you also are inclined to reject the Messiah. When we think we are better than those who condemned Jesus to death, we are displaying our depraved nature. Search your heart and ask yourself these questions: Am I always eager to read my Bible? Would I always choose the Lord Jesus over my own desires? Am I always obedient to my parents and teachers? Do I always show kindness and compassion to others? Do I seek to please God above all and others above myself? Do I love the things of God? Do I seek God's will in everything I do? Am I willing to take the side of someone at school who is teased? Do I want the praise of my friends more than the favor of God? Do I grieve over my sin? Do I long to please God? Every time we sin, we are rejecting the Lord Jesus. Every prideful thought, every selfish action proves that we love ourselves more than God. Does this make you sad? Do you long to be holy?

Dear children, this is why we need the work of the Holy Spirit. First of all, we are born sinful and do not understand our danger. Then, because we are born in sin, we are bent on committing sin every day. We need the Holy Spirit to shed His light in our hearts, and then we will see that our hearts are full of sin. Only then will we know that we are heading for what we deserve: hell and destruction. Not only do we need to see our danger, we need to have our sins washed away. We must ask the Lord to cleanse us in the blood of Christ. He suffered and died on the cross to pay for the sins of guilty, rebellious sinners. With His sacrifice, we can be redeemed: the Lord Jesus Christ has paid the price to release sinners from Satan's grasp.

The baby born in Bethlehem, laid in an animal feeding

trough because there was no room in the inn, despised and rejected because He was raised in the poor town of Nazareth, is the Son of God, the Light of the world. He is our only hope of salvation. Isaiah said, "He hath no form nor comeliness; and when we shall see him, there is no beauty that we should desire him" (Isaiah 53:2b). He didn't seem like anyone special, but thanks be to God, He also sent His Holy Spirit so that some people would recognize Him as the Light. They were filled with joy because they knew that this Jesus had come to save them from their sin and from eternal darkness.

What about you, dear children? Who is this Baby to you? Why do you like Christmas? Do you think only of presents and family gatherings? Is church a nuisance, interfering with your plans? Are you bored with hearing the story of the baby Jesus, the shepherds, and the wise men? By nature, we do not see anything special in the Lord Jesus; the story of the birth of Jesus Christ is just a nice story. That is why we need the Holy Spirit. Ask Him to open your blind eyes, not to frighten you, but to save you from your danger. Ask Him to show you how precious and beautiful the Light is. Ask Him to fill you with the same joy that the shepherds, Mary, Joseph, Zachariah, Elisabeth, the wise men, Anna, and Simeon experienced: the joy of greeting their Savior and Redeemer, knowing He came only because He is good.

I pray that this Christmas will be your best Christmas ever. I pray that the Dayspring from on high visits each one of you, "to give light to [you] who sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace" (Luke 1:78b-79).

Amazing Grace

"But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us" (Romans 5:8).

Mr. Nott, a missionary working in the South Sea Islands, was reading to some of the people out of the gospel of John. When he read John 3:16, a man interrupted him: "What were those words you just read? Could you read them again?"

Mr. Nott read the verse again: "For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life."

The man stood up and exclaimed, "Is this true? Can this be true? God loved the world when the world did not love Him? God so loved the world that He gave His only Son to die, so that man did not have to die? Can this be true?"

Again, Mr. Nott read the verse. He told the man that these were God's own words. It was the message God was sending to the people in the South Sea Islands. Whoever believed in Him would not perish but live forever with Him.

The man was completely overwhelmed. Tears rolled down his cheeks as he thought about God's amazing love and grace. He went to a quiet place to think about what he had just heard. He could not understand how God could love such

unloving and ungrateful people. The words of John 3:16 entered his heart. The Holy Spirit used this message of God's amazing grace to renew the heart of this man. He never lost his wonder and thanksgiving for God's mercy to him, an undeserving sinner.

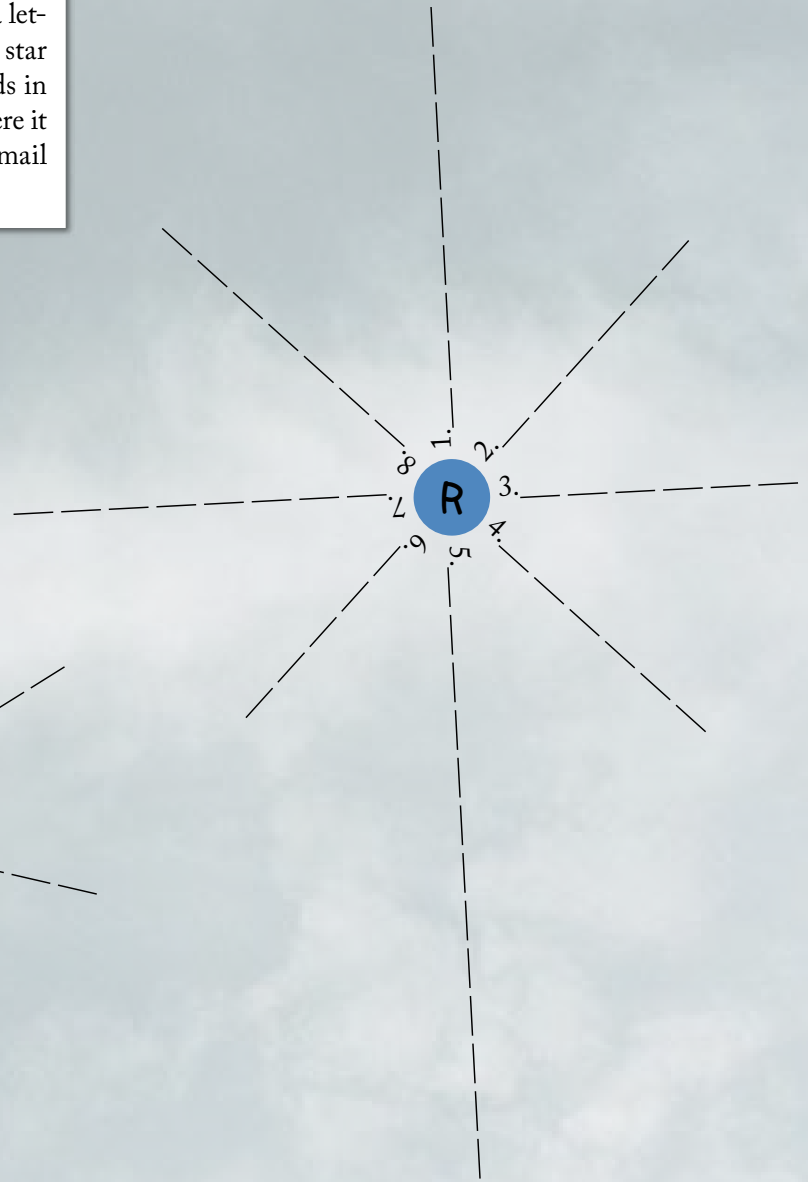
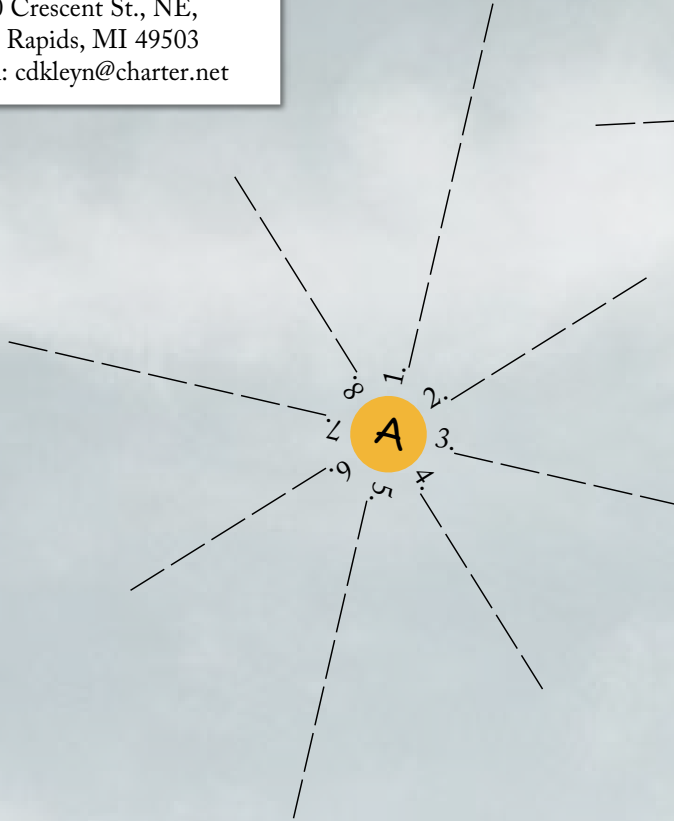
We have heard this text and its message countless times. Are we amazed at God's love? Have we obeyed God's call to repentance and faith? Or have we become so used to this amazing message that we ignore it? Ask the Holy Spirit to fill you with the same amazement this man had. The holy God in heaven sent His sinless Son to die for the sins of people who did not ask for Him or even love Him. Doesn't that amaze you? Flee to Him and ask Him to renew your heart and turn you from darkness to light so that you can live a life of thanksgiving and live with Him forever.

Adapted from John Whitecross, *Instructive Anecdotes Illustrative of the Old and New Testaments* (Glasgow: Thomas D. Morison, n.d.).

Diana Kleyn is the author of several books for children.

Here are some little puzzles shaped like stars. Each star has a letter in the center. Each word radiating from the center of the star begins with that letter. Look up the texts and place the words in the correct blanks. Count the spaces in each word to find where it belongs. Do as many as you can. Also, please note that my email address has changed.

Please send your puzzle answers to:
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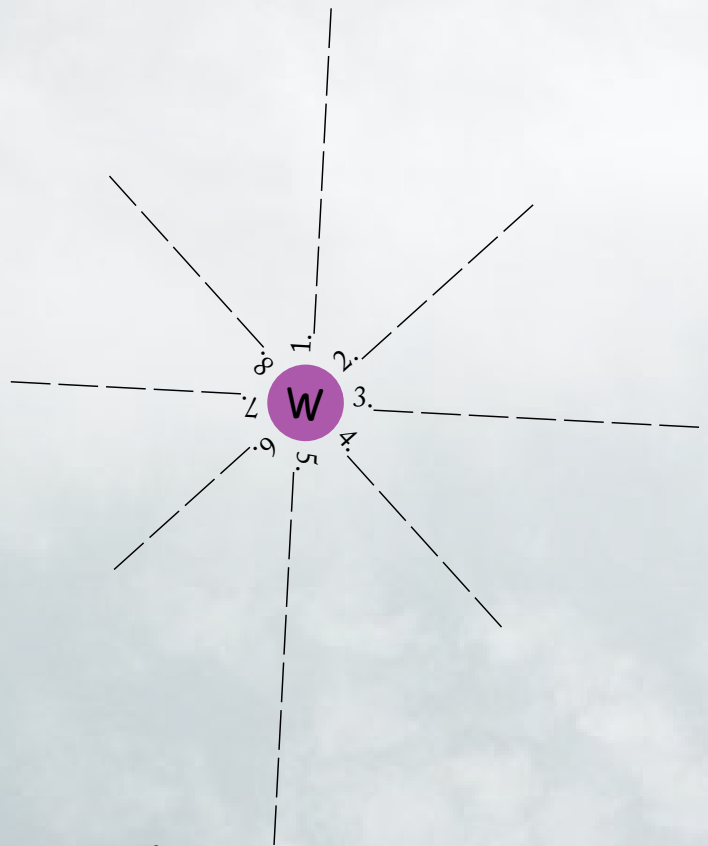
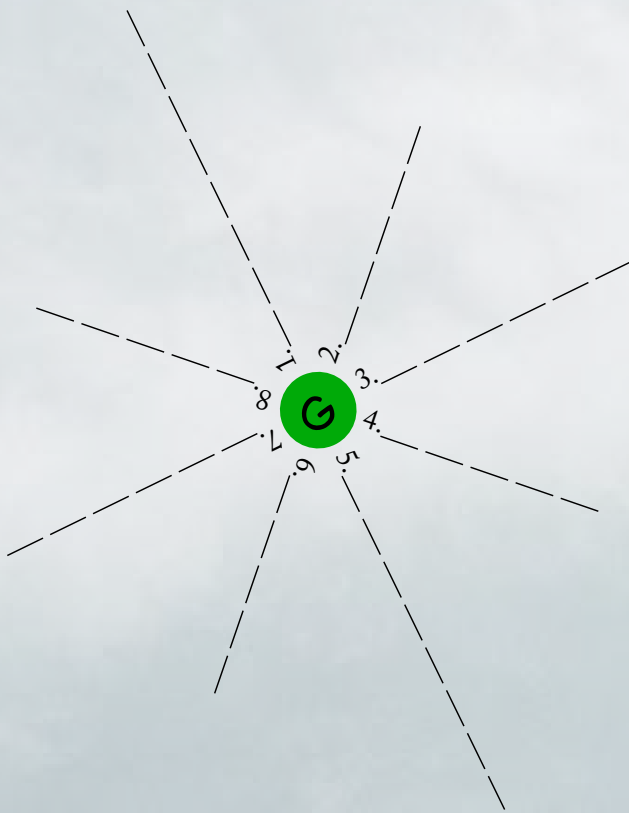


"A" Star:

1. "what time the star _____"
(Matthew 2:7).
2. "and the day star _____ in your hearts"
(2 Peter 1:19).
3. "And, lo, the _____ of the Lord came upon them"
(Luke 2:9).
4. "_____ thou that sleepest" (Ephesians 5:14).
5. "and their faces were not _____"
(Psalm 34:5).
6. "let us put on the _____ of light"
(Romans 13:12). (American spelling)
7. "He that loveth his brother _____ in the light"
(1 John 2:10).
8. "in him is no darkness _____" (2 words)
(1 John 1:5).

"R" Star:

9. "Light is sown for the _____"
(Psalm 97:11).
10. "the _____ of the glory of his inheritance in the saints" (Ephesians 1:18).
11. "in the _____ and shadow of death"
(Matthew 4:16).
12. "And the Gentiles shall come to thy light, and kings to the brightness of thy _____" (Isaiah 60:3).
13. "the Sun of _____"
(Malachi 4:2).
14. "the glory of the LORD is _____ upon thee"
(Isaiah 60:1).
15. "they _____ with exceeding great joy"
(Matthew 2:10).
16. "And his _____ became shining"
(Mark 9:3).



"G" Star:

17. "he is _____, and full of compassion, and righteous" (Psalm 112:4).
18. "The people that walked in darkness have seen a _____ light" (Isaiah 9:2).
19. "the light of the glorious _____ of Christ" (2 Corinthians 4:4).
20. "to _____ our feet into the way of peace" (Luke 1:79).
21. "I will also give thee for a light to the _____" (Isaiah 49:6).
22. "The LORD will give _____ and glory" (Psalm 84:11).
23. "for the Lord God _____ them light" (Revelation 22:5).
24. "for the _____ of God did lighten it" (Revelation 21:23).

"W" Star:

25. "for he that _____ in darkness knoweth not whither he goeth" (John 12:35).
26. "I am come a light into the _____" (John 12:46).
27. "but was sent to bear _____ of that Light" (John 1:8).
28. "let us therefore cast off the _____ of darkness" (Romans 13:12).
29. "The _____ said, The morning cometh" (Isaiah 21:12).
30. "the LORD my God _____ enlighten my darkness" (Psalm 18:28).
31. "_____ it is day" (John 9:4).
32. "The entrance of thy _____ giveth light" (Psalm 119:130).

Here are the answers to last month's quiz.

- | | |
|--------------------------------|---------------------------|
| 1. all the people | 14. after harvest |
| 2. saints | 15. after meals |
| 3. angels | 16. continually |
| 4. everything that hath breath | 17. upon our beds |
| 5. with all my heart | 18. in his sanctuary |
| 6. with instruments of music | 19. among the heathen |
| 7. talk | 20. with his people |
| 8. sing | 21. his mighty acts |
| 9. this is the will of God | 22. food, drink, clothes |
| 10. it is good | 23. victory |
| 11. for ever and ever | 24. salvation |
| 12. every day | 25. the Lord Jesus Christ |
| 13. night and day | |

Thanks again to all who answered last month's quiz! If your name doesn't appear on the list, I apologize. I am afraid some may have been lost during our move and e-mail address change.

Leah Boerkoel	Thomas Heikoop	Jenna Sinke
Neal Boerkoel	William Heikoop	Kaitlyn Stubbe
Andrew Boesterd	Colten Meerdink	Calvin VanBrugge
Breanne Boesterd	Hailey Meerdink (2)	Jayden VanBrugge
Becky Boot	Kas Meerdink	Michelle VanBrugge
Shelly Boot	Lukas Meschke	Megan VanderStel
Brianna Bouwheer	Nick Meschke	Olivia VanderStel
Janae denHertog (2)	Abby Mouring	Danique Veldhuizen
Matthew denHertog (2)	Tim Mouring	Paul Zekveld
Jenna DeWaal	Jenna Nieuwenhuis	Audrey Zevenbergen
Christiana Heikoop	Kyle Nieuwenhuis	

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FUNDRAISING HELP NEEDED

The Heritage Reformed Congregations of North America "Mission Committee" is seeking a volunteer who is experienced in fund raising. The Heritage Reformed Congregations, in obedience to Christ's Great Commission to His church, are actively engaged in the propagation of the gospel both at home and abroad. To carry out this sacred obligation, the Mission Committee's formal statement of purpose is as follows:

The purpose of the HRC missions program is to glorify God and present His character and nature by effectively proclaiming the message of salvation in Jesus Christ throughout the world, in order that lost sinners might be brought to salvation through the blood of Christ.

To follow through with this purpose the Mission Committee is in need of an individual(s) who can solicit funds from various organizations to further God's Kingdom. If you think you may be this person or know of someone who might be of assistance please write Ed Otten (Mission Finance Committee Chairman) at eaotten@vaxx-ine.com.

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Rehoboth Christian School in Copetown, Ontario, is soliciting applications for a possible full-time teaching position in the grades 7-12 Technology courses to begin in September, 2009. Experience and knowledge in Construction Technology, Automotive Technology, and Design Technology (CAD) is preferred. For more information about RCS, please check out our website at www.rehoboth.on.ca. Applicants please send a cover letter and resumé to the attention of Mr. Jack Westerink—Principal, 198 Inksetter Road, P.O. Box 70, Copetown, Ontario L0R 1J0, tel. 905-627-5977, fax 905-628-4422, e. jwesterink@rehoboth.on.ca

The Board of **Oxford Reformed Christian School** invites applications for a teaching placement in the primary grades beginning in January. This is a maternity leave situation in which we will need a grade 2 teacher for the last half of the school year.

ORCS is currently located in a rural setting 20 minutes south of Woodstock in Springford, Ontario. We are a parent-run school serving the needs of several local Reformed communities and are in our fifth year of operation. Our present enrolment is 212 students and we offer Kindergarten to grade 12. 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. W. Van Brugge (principal); 308 Church St., P.O. Box 68, Springford, ON, N0J 1X0. For further inquiries, please e-mail: orcswvb@execulink.com or phone: 519-842-3230.

Obituary notices, church events, and marriage and anniversary notices will be printed free of charge and under no obligation of a gift received. Other announcements and/or requests will be approved by the editorial committee on an individual basis as received.

INTERNATIONAL NEWS....

Will Canada challenge the Muslim tradition of “honor killings”?

Canadian authorities are investigating the murders of four Muslims in Ontario that may have been “honor killings.” (Such killings are encouraged in Islam to preserve the honor of the family, due to sins committed by family members.) Authorities in Kingston, Ontario, have filed first-degree murder charges against the father, mother, and brother of three teenage girls and another individual who were found dead in a car submerged in a canal near the city on June 30.

On August 6, the three suspects did not enter pleas or seek bail when they made separate video appearances in a Kingston court. Originally the suspects claimed that one of the daughters might have “accidentally” driven the car into the canal, but investigators concluded otherwise.

The *Toronto Star* has reported that police are investigating the possibility that the behavior of one or more of the teenagers may have contributed to the motive for the killing.

Robert Spencer is the director of Jihad Watch. “As long as the roots of this—which do come from Islam—are not challenged, then we’re just going to see more and more of it,” he contends. “And so the idea that we should be tolerant and multicultural and say nothing to the Islamic community about honor killings only ensures that there will be more honor killings.” (*OneNewsNow*)

Report: Nearly 1 in 4 People Worldwide Is Muslim

The global Muslim population stands at 1.57 billion, meaning that nearly one in four people in the world practice Islam, according to the Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life report.

The project, three years in the making, also presents a

portrait of the Muslim world that might surprise some. For instance, Germany has more Muslims than Lebanon, China has more Muslims than Syria, Russia has more Muslims than Jordan and Libya combined, and Ethiopia has nearly as many Muslims as Afghanistan.

The report indicates that more than sixty percent of the world’s Muslims live in Asia. About twenty percent live in the Middle East and North Africa, fifteen percent live in Sub-Saharan Africa, 2.4 percent are in Europe and 0.3 percent are in the Americas. About three-quarters of Muslims living as minorities are concentrated in five countries: India (161 million), Ethiopia (twenty-eight million), China (twenty-two million), Russia (sixteen million) and Tanzania (thirteen million).

The immense size of majority-Hindu India is underscored by the fact that it boasts the third-largest Muslim population of any nation—yet Muslims account for just thirteen percent of India’s population.

Among the report’s other highlights:

- Europe is home to about thirty-eight million Muslims, or about five percent of its population. Germany appears to have more than four million Muslims—almost as many as North and South America combined. In France, where tensions have run high over an influx of Muslim immigrant laborers, the overall numbers were lower but a larger percentage of the population is Muslim.
- Of roughly 4.6 million Muslims in the Americas, more than half live in the United States although they only make up 0.8 percent of the population. About 700,000 people in Canada are Muslim, or about two percent of the total population.

Islam is the world’s second largest religion behind Christianity, which has an estimated 2.1 billion to 2.2 billion followers.

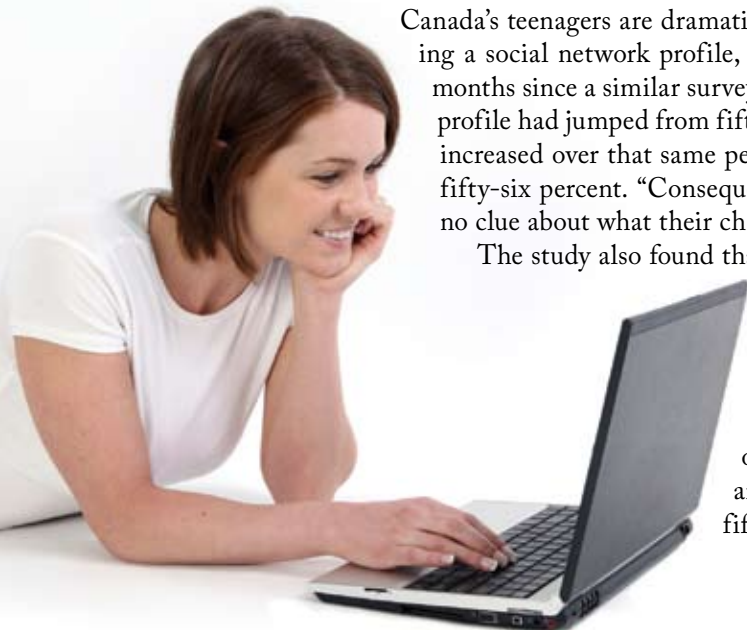
CULTURE – Three in Four Teens have Social Network Profile

Canada’s teenagers are dramatically outpacing their parents when it comes to developing and managing a social network profile, a new Ipsos-Reid study has discovered. It found that in the eighteen months since a similar survey was conducted, the proportion of “online teens” with a social network profile had jumped from fifty percent to seventy-six percent. The proportion of “online adults” also increased over that same period, but at a much lower pace, rising from thirty-nine percent to just fifty-six percent. “Consequently,” said study author Mark Laver, “some parents will have little to no clue about what their children are doing online.”

The study also found that Facebook is far and away the most popular social profiling site, with ninety-three percent of teens placing their profiles there, up from sixty-nine percent in 2007.

The next most popular sites are Windows Live™ Space (twenty-nine per cent), and MySpace™ (nineteen per cent).

In addition, as CTV British Columbia reported, forty-four percent of Canadians aged fifty-five and older also had a social network profile, and fifty-nine percent of women used online networking, compared to fifty-two percent of men. (TFN)



the Reformed Faith (I): Why are You Reformed?

Rev. M. Kelderman
Maarten Kuivenhoven



Why write a series of articles on the Reformed faith? One reason is because there is a growing number of people who claim the title of “Reformed” and yet do not understand what that really means. Some misunderstand the foundation and practice of Reformed, biblical truth; on the one hand, this leads to hypocrisy, and, on the other hand, the world looks at the church and is puzzled that people profess to be Christians but fail to live like Christians should. There are also young people leaving the Reformed faith for a variety of reasons, some for seemingly biblical reasons, and others to shed tradition that feels restrictive and legalistic. While some of these concerns are legitimate and must be addressed by the Reformed community, we nevertheless need to be cautious to “not throw out the baby with the bath water” by abandoning the Reformed faith in favor of a less biblical position.

At a recent lecture given at the Calvin for the 21st Century Conference in Grand Rapids, Dr. Ligon Duncan noted a resurgence of Calvinism in North America. He highlighted several men, both past and present, who God is using in a powerful way in our day to stand up for the Reformed faith: C.H. Spurgeon, Dr. Lloyd-Jones, Dr. John MacArthur, Dr. D. James Kennedy, Dr. R.C. Sproul, Dr. J.I. Packer, Dr. James Montgomery Boice, Dr. Roger Nicole, Dr. John Piper, and Dr. Albert Mohler. These men have been instrumental in spreading the Reformed faith either through evangelism, preaching, standing firm in controversy regarding the Bible, or writing good books. This resurgence of Calvinism is also made up of a host of young men and women who are rediscovering the Reformed faith and capturing the Reformed view of God, salvation, Scripture, and a host of other issues because their current religious settings are not offering biblical answers to their questions. Many of these people come from liberal and fundamental backgrounds and are slowly building a solid foundation in the Reformed truth, which many of you already have and perhaps are taking for granted. It is this foundation that we want to remind you of to foster a new love and appreciation for it, as it draws us closer to God’s Word and to Christ.

We realize that a series of articles could have been written on the Christian faith in general, but throughout church history we see the Spirit of Christ leading His Church into the truths of the Word of God. Among all the other Christian choices, the Reformed faith

and confessions conform most consistently to the Word of God. This is not to claim that those who do not hold to the Reformed faith are not Christians, but we would maintain that the Reformed faith is most consistent with the truths of Scripture.

In order to examine the Reformed faith carefully we need to turn to Scripture as the source of all our knowledge. Is that your foundation for examining what you believe? In our dialogue with others, Scripture needs to be our only foundation for truth; as we dialogue with you through these articles and as you dialogue with others about the Reformed faith, our starting point is the foundation of Scripture for faith and practice.

Another of our intentions in writing these articles is to reach out to those who are from a Reformed background but for various reasons have departed from that background. There are various reasons for this: hypocrisy in the church and never having understood the Reformed faith are two most commonly heard. We also want to reach out to those who simply continue to blindly hold to the Reformed faith and yet do not have a proper understanding of it. Perhaps you fit into one of these categories or you know of some friends who do. We pray that our future articles will help you to begin to love Christ and to love, appreciate, and understand the Reformed faith as we examine it through the lens of Scripture.

If you do not fit these categories, we pray that you would use these articles to strengthen your faith and commitment to Christ through the Reformed faith. You can also use these articles to reach out to the community around you to show what the Reformed faith really means for you and how it helps you to understand God, Christ, salvation, man’s nature, the church, and the end times. Our desire is to see young people in the church living more and more according to the teachings of Jesus Christ, whom we profess to follow and love. What “Reformed” actually means is that we are willing to be challenged in our thinking so that we might be brought more closely in line with the teaching of the Bible and reflect that in our lives as we grow in knowledge and understanding of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Rev. Mark Kelderman is pastor of the Heritage Netherlands Reformed Congregation of Burgessville, Ontario. Maarten Kuivenhoven is a theological student at Puritan Reformed Theological Seminary, Grand Rapids, Michigan. Feel free to email either of them: makelderman@execulink.com; kuivenhoven.maarten@gmail.com

We extend our apologies to the authors of this article and our readers for inadvertently repeating a previous article in last month’s Banner.

From Our Mailbag



CONFERENCE MINISTRY

From a friend in Wales:

At the Aber Conference in Wales, our son spoke to you and shared his experience with you. He said he told you that under your ministry that week was the first time he had wrestled with God in his life. His life has been changed ever since. He knows God is calling him to work for Him, but isn't sure how or where. But he is open to His call. Praise the Lord alone!

I thought I would let you know. Sometimes pastors aren't told the encouragements, just the problems (I am a pastor's kid!), so we want you to know that God is using you—also here in Wales!

SERMON AUDIO

From an e-mail friend:

You have blessed me very much through the preaching of God's Word. I am a fireman and am right in the thick of things and sometimes lose my focus. Pray that I may remain faithful so those that are dying around me may hear.

REFORMATION HERITAGE BOOKS

From friends in Mississippi:

We here would like to share with you two stories concerning the Bibles we purchase through Reformation Heritage book store. Since April we have purchased many cases of KJV military bibles to distribute to the chaplains serving our troops in Iraq and Afghanistan. We stand amazed that the Lord would bless our feeble efforts and lay on the hearts of some of our friends and loved ones to help get out His Word. These events are taking place half way around the world. We just thank Him and praise Him for His grace and mercy toward sinners such as we.

From a chaplain in Iraq:

I pray this finds you and your faithful fellowship doing well. God is at work in the desert! A colleague and I have been enjoying getting to see God at work around us! We are doing six services each week. We are seeing God's hand at work in everyone of them. God has placed us in the lives of men who are struggling in their walk but want so badly to do better. God is using us in growing disciples and encouraging the faithful. He has placed us in a great place! On to the story.

The Connex that had the KJV Army Bibles finally arrived. Our Battalion Chaplains were down for a training event and had requested some of them. Geoff had put eight of them in the back of our vehicle to give to the Chaplains. I was called to counsel with an American soldier on the Iraqi side of the camp. On my way back into our side, I went through a check point manned by Ugandan security forces. As they were looking at my vehicle, I noticed the main guard kept looking at my back seat. He finally asked, "Are those beebles?" I told him they were and asked if he wanted one. The three guards around my vehicle all took one. I saw another guard sitting out in front of the search area. I asked if she wanted one. When they said something to her about a Bible, she jumped up, squealed with delight, and ran to the car. She took the Bible as if it was a great possession that she might never have.

Thanks again for the blessing that God has allowed you to give to others because of your service and your willingness to give.

From another chaplain in Iraq:

Your Bibles were a hit here. In fact, there were a lot more people who wanted one, therefore, we decided to do Bible Trivia to help divvy them out. I want to thank you for what you provided. Those who have received them have enjoyed them immensely.

WRITING MINISTRY

From a friend in France:

Thank you for sending your very interesting pastoral letter. I was very moved when I read how hungry people are in the east and how ripe the fields are for harvest. Your letter has given me enough material to pray for especially in our Sunday gatherings. We, the four of us, are often so general in our prayers for others. We pick up the plights of persecuted Christians especially in China (to mention Pastor Gao); however, your pastoral letter has brought the needy Christians closer to home by giving us such exciting details of their conversion, their struggles, and their needs, but above all, we are clearly seeing that God is working mightily in the east to bring salvation to His people.

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PERIODICAL
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Let All Mortal Flesh Keep Silence

Let all mortal flesh keep silence,
And with fear and trembling stand;
Ponder nothing earthly minded,
For with blessing in His hand,
Christ our God to earth descendeth,
Our full homage to demand.

King of kings, yet born of Mary,
As of old on earth He stood,
Lord of lords, in human vesture,
In the body and the blood;
He will give to all the faithful
His own self for heavenly food.

Rank on rank the host of heaven
Spreads its vanguard on the way,
As the Light of light descendeth
From the realms of endless day,
That the powers of hell may vanish
As the darkness clears away.

At His feet the six winged seraph,
Cherubim with sleepless eye,
Veil their faces to the presence,
As with ceaseless voice they cry:
Alleluia, Alleluia,
Alleluia, Lord Most High!

LITURGY OF ST. JAMES, 4TH CENTURY, TRANSLATED FROM GREEK TO ENGLISH BY GERARD MOULTRIE

the **Banner** *of Sovereign Grace Truth*

OFFICIAL PUBLICATION OF THE
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