



The Outlook

Devoted to the Exposition and Defense of the Reformed Faith

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Meet the Editor

Before I introduce myself I would like to express a word of appreciation to the retiring editors of *The Outlook*, Rev. and Mrs. Tom Vanden Heuvel. I began serving on the Board of Reformed Fellowship almost ten years ago. At that time Tom and Laurie had been editors for a little over a year.

Back then most of us were struggling with the issues within Christian Reformed Church. The Vanden Heuvels used *The Outlook* to not only give us a proper perspective on those issues, but to broaden our vision. By getting writers from a variety of backgrounds and a variety of sources, they taught us that there were faithful, reformed people outside of our own denomination. When the time came when we could

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no longer tolerate some of the Synodical decisions of the CRC, we were not afraid to leave because we knew that the reformed faith was larger than just our own little circle.

Unfortunately, once we left the CRC, two things happened. First, many readers did not take *The Outlook* with them because they saw the

magazine as one being written only for the conservative members of the CRC. And second, once we left, we settled down in a variety of denominations and federations, and, once settled, felt we no longer needed *The Outlook*. Subscriptions began to decline.

In an effort to increase subscriptions the Board proposed a variety of marketing strategies. We took a survey to see who our audience was; we tried different styles, different approaches, even different paper to boost the subscriptions. None of it worked. Subscriptions continued to decline.

Then, in the providence of God, several things happened. The first was that my term as a board member



Volume 51, No. 4 (ISSN 8750-5754) (USPS 633-980) "And the three companies blew the trumpets...and held THE TORCHES in their left hands, and THE TRUMPETS in their right hands. . .and they cried, 'The sword of Jehovah and of Gideon'" (Judges 7:20).

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ended. Thankful that I would no longer have to deal with the concerns of the Board, I cheerfully renewed my subscription and enjoyed reading the magazine in my leisure.

The second thing that happened was reported in the January issue of *The Outlook*. In a historic meeting in Orlando, Florida, the World Fellowship of Reformed Churches and the International Reformed Fellowship joined together to become the World Reformed Fellowship. After eleven years of editing *The Outlook*, Rev. and Mrs. Vanden Heuvel resigned in order to become Directors of Communications for the World Reformed Fellowship. We certainly wish them God's blessing as they continue with their vision to promote the reformed faith in this global endeavor.

The Board was then faced with two options: Either they would have to quit publishing *The Outlook* or they would have to find a new editor. Taking the declining subscriptions into account, some on the Board felt that *The Outlook* had served its purpose, and after fifty years should cease publication. Others felt the magazine could still be used by the Lord in the promotion of the reformed faith.

Somehow, I wound up back in the picture. After meeting with the Board at their January meeting, the Board decided to continue publishing *The Outlook*. They also approved me as the new editor. I will say from the outset of this endeavor that I do not have the wisdom nor the skills of previous editors. When I read the wisdom of the original writers back in the 1950s; when I look at the brilliance of the Rev. Peter De Jong and what he accomplished as editor, and when I recall the leadership the Vanden Heuvels provided, I take this position rather reluctantly.

For those who do not know me, I am a farm boy/factory worker that, for some reason, the Lord made into a minister. In the last fifteen years, He has allowed me serve His people in three different churches - one in Iowa and two in Michigan. I am married with four children, ranging in age from thirteen to three.

As far as experience in the field of editing and journalism, I have none. My hope is that, like another famous "W", I can gather learned and able people around me who will make the magazine [and me] look good.

My vision for *The Outlook* is to provide original articles that focus on the conservative reformed churches within the United States and Canada. I would like to see the magazine promote the reformed faith on different levels. To accomplish the first part of this vision I will try to get a variety of writers from various denominations and federations. To achieve the second part, *The Outlook* will feature articles that will try to appeal to all ages and to a variety of educational levels.

We will have a page for teenagers which will highlight conventions, offer Bible studies, and give young people and young peoples' leaders something to read. There will be a monthly meditation. Those meditations will begin with monthly articles on the fruits of the Spirit. We will look back over the years and glean tidbits of wisdom from earlier issues - each month covering a year of *The Torch and Trumpet* and later *The Outlook*. I am delighted that Dr. Venema has indicated that he will continue to write for *The Outlook* and continue to look forward to his thought provoking articles.

The Board and I believe that *The Outlook* has a marvelous potential for being the magazine you love to read. I covet your prayers as we begin this journey together.

Rev. Wybren H. Oord

SYNOD OF THE UNITED REFORMED CHURCHES IN NORTH AMERICA, 2001

The Consistory of Escondido United Reformed Church of Escondido, California will be convening the Synod of the United Reformed Churches in North America on, D.V., June 5, 2001 at 1864 North Broadway, Escondido, CA 92026. The meeting is scheduled to start at 1:30 PM on Tuesday, June 5, and will be completed, D.V., noon or after on Thursday, June 7. Westminster Seminary in California [WTS] will host synod delegates for an inspirational evening on June 5, at 7:30 PM. Friends of the federation are cordially invited to observe Synod and are welcome to attend the inspirational meeting, which will take place at WTS, 1725 Bear Valley Parkway, Escondido, CA 92027. (Seating at WTS is limited.) If you need additional information, call Rev. Jerome Julien, the Stated Clerk, at [708] 418-5321, or fax [708] 418-5591, or email him at pdykstra@juno.com

The Gift of Love

Americans are good at destroying perfectly good words with abuse and overuse. Hallmark Cards and Harlequin Romances have managed to make “love” sound like a single syllable cliché. Therefore, any discussion of true biblical love has to begin with a battle for a definition.

That battle is certainly worth fighting. LOVE - a critically important topic. It is the overwhelming command of Scripture. As Jesus said in Luke 10:27

“Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind’ and, ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.”

The Apostle John insists that without love one cannot claim to be a Christian: “Anyone who does not love remains in death” (I John 3:14).

So what does “love” mean? For the sake of brevity let’s wipe the slate clean of all that the current culture calls love. There are bits and pieces of truth in there, but those bits and pieces are so covered with romanticized, eroticized, and trivialized rot that we will just let them be.

Unfortunately, love remains a fuzzy notion even in the “christian” culture. I read of a proper English pastor trying to explain I Corinthians 13 to a room full of school boys. The preacher explained:

“One might go through this chapter of St. Paul and simply substitute the word ‘gentleman’ for ‘love’ wherever it occurs. A gentleman is patient, a gentleman envieth not, dealeth not perversely, is not puffed up. He concluded: “The Apostles would have been rather sur-

prised at the concept that Christ had been scourged and beaten by soldiers, cursed and crowned with thorns, and nailed to the cross in order that we might all become gentleman!”

This sentimentalizing of modern Christianity has led many to assume that the “greatest of these” means “being nice.”

I have also noticed a conservative Reformed misconception of love. Of this we also need to be aware. In

This sentimentalizing of modern Christianity has led many to assume that “greatest of these” is “being nice.”

our laudable zeal to forsake the romanticized notions of the world and the sentimentalized notions of evangelicalism, we are in danger of slipping into a “legalized” notion of love, that is, “love equals obedience”. For instance, Dr. Jay Adams in his classic *“Competent to Counsel”* writes:

“A simple biblical definition of love is: The fulfillment of God’s commands....Love is a relationship conditioned upon responsibility, that is, responsible observance of the commandments of God” (pg 55).

There is so much that is good and right in this definition! Jesus Himself said “if you love me you will keep my commandments” (John 14:15). Dr.

Adams has done the church a great service in reminding us that love must be defined in relationship to God and the commands of God. Nonetheless, while love must involve obedience, we must be careful not to reduce it to obedience, duty, or responsibility.

True loving actions, as with any good work, are directly tied to the **motivations** behind those actions. This is easy enough to illustrate. Imagine a young man going up to a plain, timid, young lady and complimenting her. He told her that he loved the outfit she was wearing, he thought her hair was pure art, and that she had the most stunning eyes he had ever seen. On the outside we could argue that this is a kind, loving sort of thing to do. But if we knew that he was doing this on a bet with his buddies and that they were all at a distance laughing out loud we immediately see the act for what it was. In the very act of complimenting her he was actually condemning her for her plainness! If the motive is evil the action is evil.

But what if the motive is a **good** motive, such as a sense of duty? If God says “give generously to the poor” and we dutifully do that, is that a loving action? Maybe, maybe not! Martin Luther ran himself ragged trying to do all the things he believed God wanted him to do. And yet he confessed that he did not love God, instead, he hated him! Even actions accompanied by good motives cannot equal love. The fact is, they may mock it.

Consider an illustration John Piper uses regarding roses. Suppose a husband presents his wife with a lovely bouquet on their anniversary. She rejoices at the sight and begins to thank

Grandma Work

him profusely. Then he raises his hand and says “No need to thank me, dear, it’s my duty.” Who among us would be surprised to find this “dutiful” husband eating his roses?

Now, let’s rewind the tape to find out what went wrong. As we replay the scene we see that everything was going fine right up until the infamous “duty” line. For some reason the wife would not accept duty as love. Why not? Because duty claims all the honor for itself. When a man gives his wife flowers out of duty, he is paying honor to *his* sense of responsibility but he is most certainly **not** paying honor to his wife’s desirability!

God insists that we love Him in a way that honors Him and not us. He will not accept duty in place of delight. The only love which can be called truly biblical love is that love motivated by a sincere desire to honor God. This is what motivates God Himself to love.

Eph 1:4-6 “In love, He predestined us to be adopted as His sons through Jesus Christ, in accordance with His pleasure and will *to the praise of his glorious grace*, which He has freely given us in the One He loves.”

God’s love is motivated by a fierce desire to honor the glory of His grace. And since it is God’s love that is poured into our hearts (Romans 5:5), our love must be motivated by this same desire - a delighting in God and a passion to glorify and exalt His holy Name. The first petition in the Lord’s Prayer, “Hallowed be Thy Name”, corresponds perfectly to the “first” commandment - “love the Lord Thy God.” And so we have our definition. Love for God is having a delight in God and a deep desire to magnify His Name that yields the fruit of glad obedience. Let us so love.

Rev. Dale Van Dyke

Grandma, have you checked your spiritual job description in the Bible lately? Are you doing the job effectively and efficiently as the Bible tells you? You have an important, precise detail of service for God. The following is what we will think of in this article as God’s explicit job description of spiritual work for Grandma or older women:

“Likewise, teach the older women to be reverent in the way they live, not to be slanderers or addicted to much wine, but to teach what is good. Then they can train the younger women to love their husbands and children, to be self-controlled and pure, to be busy at home, to be kind, and to be subject to their husbands, so that on one will malign the word of God.”

Titus 2:3-5 (NIV)

The NKJV concludes Titus 2:5 with the words: “that the word of God may not be blasphemed.” The MacArthur Study Bible (p. 1887) comments on “not be blasphemed”: “...When Christians claim to believe God’s Word but do not obey it, the Word is dishonored.”

In his letter to Titus, Paul gives Titus a definite student body – older women – and a specific subject matter – “Grandma Work.” Grandmas, in turn, are given a definite set of students – younger women – and a given curriculum to teach – “Wife and Mother Work.” The following illustrates the content of the verses:

I. “Grandma Work”

A. Teacher: Titus (Scripture)

B. Students: Older women

C. Subject Matter

1. To live reverently
2. To not slander

3. Do not be addicted to much wine

4. To teach what is good

5. To train the younger women

II. “Wife and Mother Work”

A. Teachers: Older women

B. Students: Younger women

C. Subject Matter

1. To love one’s husband

2. To love one’s children

3. To be self-controlled

4. To be pure

5. To be busy at home

6. To be kind

7. To be subject to one’s husband

III. Educational objective: No one will malign (blaspheme) the word of God.

Isn’t it a beautiful example of divine wisdom to establish such an efficient, spiritual, educational system within each family and within the church? It provides for a built-in, trained, replacement teaching staff for each family and each church for every generation as one generation replaces another.

My grandmother took Titus 2:3-5 very seriously. She had a happy, pleasant personality with a good sense of humor. She could and did speak naturally and easily about her spiritual beliefs and values. She read her Bible faithfully, knew its contents, and sought to live it and speak it. She was a prayer warrior and prayed diligently for her family and descendants. Her life was an example to her daughters, daughters-in-law, and granddaughters, as well as to all of her family. She was a cheerful, busy homemaker, and she stressed contentment by counting her blessings rather than numbering her

Thoughts on Ascension Day

losses. She taught the wives, mothers, and granddaughters in her family by example and by espousing the values of loving one's husband and children and caring and providing lovingly for one's family and home. I thank God for a dear Christian grandmother and a dear Christian mother whose lives witnessed to the teachings of Titus 2:3-5.

Grandma, are you accomplishing your teaching assignment from God? Are you doing your God-given spiritual task? Is your life in accordance with what Titus 2:3-5 demands? Are you faithfully teaching the wives, mothers, and granddaughters of your family and church the curriculum God set forth for you?

Grandma, guard yourself against the persuasive feminist voices of today. Be sure that you, by example and/or word, are not inadvertently teaching your female family charges to pursue self-gratification, career choices and advancements, and money as priorities rather than the curriculum God has set down for you to teach. Are your next generation women carrying out their "Wife and Mother Work" properly, and are they well prepared for their "Grandma Work" because of your life, work, and teaching in their midst? Read and meditate on Titus 2:3-5. Then by life and precept, fulfill your biblical, spiritual job description for "Grandma Work."

Happy Mother's Day, Grandmas, members of God's "Grandma Work" staff! Also, Happy Mother's Day, Wives and Mothers, who are in the "Grandma Work" training program! May God bless your work and make each of you a blessing to your family and your church family.

Mrs. Jan Groenendyk

In Article 53 of the Church Order of the Canadian Reformed Churches, we are told that the churches ought to commemorate the central New Covenant acts of salvation - namely, Christ's birth, death, resurrection, ascension, and the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. Yet, sometimes, we can feel that this is a holdover from late medieval superstition. After all, the Old Covenant feasts were all fulfilled in Christ and, in Him, we have a continual festival day by day. Because of this, one could argue that we ought not set apart time for days of commemoration. Along this same line, one could even argue that the Old Covenant sabbath day was fulfilled in Christ, and perhaps we ought to do away with Sunday too! Of course, that would be silly - and so would doing away with these special days.

Here the example of Israel should guide us. They were given a festival calendar centered on commemorating the LORD's works of salvation. We are to learn also by this example. Thus, despite Puritan objections, Article 53 of the Church Order seems to reflect biblical wisdom.

Still, when we look at the days of commemoration, there seems to be something of an imbalance. For most, Christ's birth gets the lion's share of attention. As good Protestants, we also focus a lot on the cross and somewhat less on the resurrection. There is very little attention paid to the ascension of Christ. Certainly, of all the "special" services, the Thursday worship service commemorating the ascension is the least well attended, if it is commemorated on the Thursday at all.

At best, we see the ascension as how the resurrected Christ got from earth

to heaven. In fact, there is very little in the New Testament that refers directly to the ascension. The accounts of the ascension are found only at the end of Luke's Gospel and at the beginning of Acts. There are a few scattered references to the ascension throughout the other Gospels and in the Epistles.

Yet, we sense that there is something very important in the ascension of Christ. If we think back on the whole of the Bible, we see that there is a great deal in the Bible about ascending. Just think about all the significant events in the Bible that take place on high places, mountains, upper rooms, rooftops, and the like. Men and priests are always going up, ascending, to enter in before God.

Thought about in this context, the ascension follows and completes the resurrection. The resurrection reveals the meaning of the cross: victory over sin and death. The ascension, then, shows us the meaning of the resurrection: access to God. All the "going up" in the Old Testament speaks of meeting with God, of access to Him.

This begins with Garden of Eden, which is high ground with the life-giving waters flowing down. It is on a mountain that the Ark comes to rest and where God renews His covenant with Noah. Abraham goes up Mount Moriah finding first, the Angel of the LORD, and later, the ram caught in a bush. Moses goes up Horeb and hears God's voice from the burning bush; he brings Israel to that same mountain and God speaks His Law to them. In fact, Moses is always going up. He goes up Sinai several times and finally goes up Mount Nebo.



Israel, as the LORD's people, proclaims His Word from Gerizim and Ebal. David conquers Mount Zion and on Mount Moriah the Temple is built. Israel, whether they come from the north or south, are said to "go up" to Jerusalem and the Temple. Elijah calls the people up Mount Carmel for the renewal of the covenant. Mountains figure prominently in the prophecies of Isaiah and Ezekiel. In the New Testament, we read about the Sermon on the Mount, the Mount of Transfiguration, the Mount of Olives, and Scripture ends with the mountain city, the New Jerusalem.

There is also, in both the Old and New Testaments, a repeated emphasis on upper rooms and rooftops. We read about Saul 'going up' to meet Samuel in 1 Samuel 9. The Last Supper, Peter's vision and Pentecost all take place in an upper room. In fact, Pentecost is a Sinai-like event. Sinai was covered with wind, fire, and thunder. Acts 2 speaks of the same elements filling the whole house just as the Glory-Cloud filled the Tabernacle and the Temple. Thus, "high places" and all this "going up" certainly are important.

So, we see that the Bible is full of ascending. Yet, sin keeps man from going up, from ascending to meet God. Beginning with Adam's fall, man is exiled from God's presence. The whole history of the Old Covenant is God saving, "Come near, but not too near." Throughout the Old Covenant, He allows His people access, but it is always limited and always with great dangers attached.

***The ascension, then,
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Remember Mount Sinai? Israel could not go up the mountain. They could not even touch the mountain. Because of sin, man is essentially cut off from God. All through the Old Testament there were barriers between God and man - from the cherubim with the flaming sword, to the boundaries around Sinai, to the curtains of the Tabernacle and Temple, and the Levites who guarded the sanctuary. How could man ever ascend to God?

We begin to get the answer to that question in Genesis 22. There Abraham ascended Mount Moriah and found the sacrifice prepared by the LORD. We see it again in the sacrificial system that was established at Sinai.

The first sacrifice explained in Leviticus is usually called the "whole burnt offering." The problem with calling it that is that the Hebrew word has nothing to do with "burning", or "wholeness", or "offering". Rather, it means "to go up, to ascend." In this sacrifice, the whole animal was burned on the altar and went up in smoke. It represented ascension to God.

The animal on the altar did not represent a judgment on sin. That part of the sacrifice was taken care of when the animal's throat was slit. It was then as dead as it was going to get and represented the need for death to take place because of sin. Then the animal would be skinned, cut into pieces, and washed with water from the laver. The water from the laver

represented water from heaven, i.e. the Holy Spirit, and the washing of the animal was its symbolic resurrection.

Only after the animal was killed and washed could it be placed into the fire of God's presence. There to be transformed into smoke which ascended in order to be part of the Cloud around God.

The sacrifice was consumed as food for God, as a sweet smell. The ascending smoke spoke of glorification and acceptance into fellowship with God. The death and resurrection of the sacrifice prepared the way to God. What was the result of the sacrifice's ascension? This made the worshipper accepted by God. It established a relationship of love with Him. To do that, however, the sacrifice had to be acceptable to God. It had to be a male of the right sort, without blemish, and offered in the sanctuary ordained by God.

The smoke of the Old Testament sacrifice illustrates for us the great significance of the ascension of the Lord Jesus Christ. It follows and completes the resurrection. He fulfilled all the requirements of the true Ascension Offering. The dead and resurrected Christ leads the way into the heavenly sanctuary. His death on the cross is only effective as it is presented before the Father. He is the Lamb provided by God (shades of Genesis 22 as well as Leviticus 1). He is without sin, and offered in the true temple of heaven. The Ascension is the heavenly reception of the sacrifice.

Jesus Christ came down from heaven to earth in order to take our human nature and to redeem us. He came, as the Creed reminds us, "for us men and for our salvation." He came to earth from heaven in great humility, and He returns to heaven in triumph

and glory. Jesus accomplished all that was necessary for our salvation. And He ascends to heaven in the Glory-Cloud of God's presence with His people.

Jesus Christ ascends, however, not only as the sacrifice. True, He is the Lamb that was slain and is now alive. But Jesus also ascends as the Priest who offered the sacrifice. The importance of this is explained in Daniel 7. There Daniel was shown one "like a Son of Man" ascending to the Ancient of Days. Who would Daniel's first readers have thought of when they read about the "Son of Man"? They would have thought of Ezekiel, who was repeatedly called the "son of man." Who was Ezekiel? He was a prophet who was also a priest. He proclaimed the desolation of the Temple and the judgment to fall on Jerusalem. Ezekiel also proclaimed the resurrection of Israel and the restoration of God's dwelling with His people. One could develop the typology between Ezekiel and Christ, but it is enough for this article to see that Christ ascends as the Prophet-Priest Who receives the throne.

As the Priest who is the sacrifice, Christ makes intercession before God for us. This is the ongoing work of the great High Priest that results from His ascension. He intercedes so we would be blessed as a result of His sacrifice. That sacrifice makes us acceptable to God. Because Christ is before the throne, God is gracious to us. Our prayers and worship are joined to Christ's prayer and worship. His intercession puts us into a renewed relationship with God. We enter into the heavenly places; we already ascend the true Mount Zion.

In a similar way, we could work through Christ's ascension in terms of His prophetic work and His

kingly work. Instead, let us look at the forty day period between the resurrection and ascension. For forty days Jesus appeared to His disciples and taught them. The purpose of this period was to teach the disciples that His relationship with them after the resurrection had gone beyond what it had been before. The eleven were now His witnesses and they were being prepared to lay the foundation of His church.

But why forty days? The number forty is found often in the Bible. It

***To paraphrase
Paul, if Christ be
not ascended,
then our faith is
in vain.***

often represents a period of trial and incompleteness. Luke used it in Acts as a round number with symbolic meaning. Israel was led through the waters of the Red Sea and spent forty years in the wilderness. Christ, with Whom the new Israel came into existence, was baptized in the Jordan and led by the Spirit into the wilderness where He was tempted for forty days. With these uses of the number forty, Christ is shown to be the fulfillment of the history of salvation. The symbolic use of the number forty to stress the significance of events in Christ's life, in no way reduces or denies their historical character.

In the Book of Acts, we have the account of the new people of God. Luke uses the number forty so that we will not miss the significance of Christ's encounters with the eleven after the resurrection. By telling us

that Christ's teaching occurred over forty days, Luke also assures us that the eleven were firmly established in that teaching. They are prepared for the climactic event: His exaltation.

Through these events, we see that the resurrection and the ascension have to do with the church. They are prepared for the giving of the Holy Spirit. In fact, what the disciples do after the ascension is decidedly "ecclesiastical." They worship continually and publicly in the Temple, and they organize the church in the selection of Matthias. The goal of the ascension was not the salvation of individuals, but the gathering of the church.

This ecclesiastical emphasis explains why the Heidelberg Catechism aims its strongest criticism of Lutheran sacramental thinking in Lord's Day 18, which is about the ascension; and why Lord's Day 19, which is about Christ's enthronement in heaven, emphasizes that the ascended and enthroned Christ ascended and took the throne primarily as Head of the Church.

One of the New Testament words for believers is "saints," which means those with access to the sanctuary. What is interesting about the word is that it rarely, if ever, is used in the singular. When Paul writes to those who are "saints by calling" in 1 Corinthians 1:2, he is using the language of Leviticus 23:3, the holy convocations of Israel. It is not: "I am a saint; you are a saint" and so forth. Rather, as a body, as a gathered congregation, we are a holy convocation with access to the heavenly sanctuary. The ascension speaks of sanctification, but sanctification is corporate, as well as personal. We are sanctified as part of the visible gathering of God's worshipping people. The ascension is Jesus



Christ's Temple-building work and His ascension secures the royal priesthood.

In these thoughts about Ascension Day, we have seen that the ascension is the climax of why the everlasting Son became man. As true Man, He is glorified and enters the heavenly sanctuary. In Him, Who is flesh of our flesh and bone of our bone, we are restored to fellowship with the Father. We have escaped the judgment against us and have been received again in God's favor because the One Who is not ashamed to call us His brothers is accepted into fellowship with God for us. To paraphrase Paul, if Christ be not ascended, then our faith is in vain.

Rev. Ken Kok

Sound Bites

Torch and Trumpet 1951

Webster's Dictionary defines a *sound bite* as "a brief recorded statement [as by a public figure] broadcast esp. on a television news program." Those "sound bites" refer to audible statements. Webster also defines *sound* as "free from error, fallacy, or misrepresentation", "logically valid and having true premises", and "showing good judgment or sense". In celebration of 50 years of publication, we look back to some sound bites of 1951.

April-May 1951 Volume 1 No. 1

"[God] always has the last word because He is always the First Word"

Shelter and Security

Leonard Greenway

"[T]he covenant idea places God and man in an abiding and constant relationship of love, or of wrath. Man the sinner isn't at one moment in a religious doghouse and the other at a religious feast. Erratic, temporary, arbitrary shiftings of man's relationship to God are foreign to the structure of the covenant. In Adam man remains under covenant condemnation, in Christ, man remains under covenant grace, always by reason of the Sovereign covenant keeping God."

"Though we have no obligation to pattern life on the Old Testament theocratic basis, we must not forget that Israel's life as a nation is more than history, but also revelation unveiling to us a God of the covenant whose gracious condescending favor extends into every detail of human life."

The Covenant is the Answer!

Alexander C. De Jong

"Woe to the Protestant who seeks to build his Protestantism as a second story upon a supposedly theistic foundation, and a first story built by Romanism or by Protestants in conjunction with Romanists. Only a defective Protestantism can be built

upon the perverted theism of the Romanist type."

Defending the Faith

Cornelius Van Til

"The calling of the Christian scientist is to show that truth in every realm of human endeavor has its origin in God, and hence there can be no conflict between revealed truth in nature and Scripture. We explain the one in the light of the other."

How Our Thinking Has Changed

John De Vries

June - July 1951 Volume 1 No. 2

"To aspire to be like God in once sense is the essence of virtue, to aspire to be like him in another sense is the greatest iniquity."

Love Your Enemies

John Murray

"A Christian must be a conservative, he must be reactionary enough to believe that the truth has been spoken once for all and that anything which purports to be true must agree with that once-for-all truth or be immediately discarded as falsehood.

"Our homes are drifting along lackadaisically into the dark waters of worldliness. Our churches are losing the loyalty of their members. Church people know more about the latest television show, wrestling match, radio drama and comic strip than they do about the Catechism or the Scripture, all because we have

not really fallen before the cross, sobbing out our penitent hearts, pledging ourselves with body and soul, for time and eternity, not to serve ourselves or our own interests, but [Christ] and him alone.”

When God Speaks
Arnold Brink

“The most prevalent and provocative picture of the Christian given in Scripture is that of the warrior involved in a life and death struggle against the forces of God’s enemies. For this conflict we have been recruited by Christ, our Captain. He calls us to fight the good fight of faith, to overcome the world, the flesh, and the devil - with the promise that we are more than conquerors through him who loved us and gave himself for us. It will not do for us to be satisfied merely because we might have had better equipment and superior training such as some of us are getting in the Christian schools, the doctrine classes, and the weekly preaching of the Word in our houses of worship. Without the will to resist the world, to oppose the evil one, without the militant mind we shall not maintain the cause of Christ or bring luster to his banner.”

“If we do not hate the world, the love of the father is not in us. Our enmity against the world must come to expression in the militant mind which opposes the world in the Church as well as without. Peter and John were cast into prison for their militancy. Paul had a riot on his hands, but he also had it said of him that he turned the world upside down. We will never be confronted with a riot nor turn anything upside down as long as we keep polishing our guns and pressing our uniforms and standing at attention on parade, that is, as long as we use all our time and money merely to keep our church organization going.

Militant Christianity
Henry Van Til

August - September 1951 Volume 1 No. 3

“How rich, therefore, is the Christian who by faith appropriates the Bible as God’s Word. Therein he seeks and finds the answers to the supreme questions concerning God’s dealings with man.”

*What Do We Mean By God’s
Covenant?*

Peter Y. De Jong

“[W]hen an author who calls himself a Christian and is a member of a historically Christian church, when such a person boldly and baldly denies the orthodox faith [I challenge anyone to disprove this contention], it is high time to sound the alarm, for then the enemy is not merely approaching, but like a Trojan horse, is already within the gates.”

“Notice the subtle strategy of Satan, our adversary. We ought not to be ignorant of his devices and stratagems. Simply because a man is a member of a Christian church and teaches at a Christian college we have a tendency not to take his false expressions on Christianity at face value, not to take seriously what he says or has written in denial of the faith.”

Testing the Teachers
Henry R. Van Til

“The heresy that the world loves best of all is the heresy which says that there is no hell. The world wants to believe that all humans will go to heaven. Above all things the world hates the Bible doctrine of eternal punishment in hell.”

God Is Love
Johannes G. Vos

“If the world is to hear a consistent testimony for the Christian faith, it is the Calvinist who must give it. If there is not a distinctively Reformed

method for the defense of every article of the Christian faith, then there is no way of clearly telling an unbeliever just how Christianity differs from his own position and why he should accept the Lord Jesus Christ as his personal Savior.

Needed: A Consistent Witness!
Cornelius Van Til

October - November 1951 Volume 1 No. 4

“Freedom is a much abused word. Christians cannot afford to mishandle the term. The liberty we have in Christ is not the abandonment of restraint. It is not release from responsibility. Strange as it may sound, our freedom lies in a bondservice, a totalitarian service. The Savior who loosed us is our Lord! The secret of his liberty lies in submission to his sovereignty.”

“We are placed in the same relations with unbelievers, engaged in the same employments, busy with them in the market places, associating with them in the business of life. Yet, in these common functions we are taught to act for God. Our association with the world is never to be identification with the world. Always there must be a difference, not necessarily an external one, as in garb or fashion - though on occasion there may need to be - but a difference in character and in nature.”

“Warfield, in 1912, decried the Christless Christianity of his times. In our day we must lament the heartless Christianity.”

Unto Him that Loves Us
Leonard Greenway

“Those who advocate the support of religion for its “values,” moreover, almost never speak of the real, primary benefits of the Christian religion, such as

(continued on page 16)

TEEN SCENE

The Dating Game

“The Dating Game”, now there’s something to grab your attention! It sounds like some daytime game show with Rosie O’Donnel as the host with contestants playing for dream dates or discussions/fights over bad dates people have endured. This may bring back memories for you of junior high when notes were passed around with things like... “does Tommy like me.” Or the gossip among your friends of who is “seeing” whom.

Unfortunately, dating has become some kind of game and many of you feel caught in the middle. You don’t necessarily want to be a part of the game but you would like to date. The next segment I think is some good advice from a young man in my youth group at Cornerstone URC. Read it and see if your dating relationship is described below:

“Throughout the years, love and dating have been such an influential part of our lives. Some consider love as an abrupt and sudden emotion that they feel when seeing that perfect person. No matter what, people have been a part of it and been affected by it in some way or another. I see that in today’s society teens think they have to be involved in a part of the dating scene no matter what the consequences may be.



Prov. 3: 5-6 - Trust in the LORD with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; In all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make your paths straight.

First of all, dating often tends to skip friendship, which is much needed to have a relationship later. There is a large variation between dating and friendship. Dating is an attraction where both people want to get around friendship and quickly get to know each other, and see what happens after that. Friendship is where both people share common interests and want to enjoy them with one an-

other without the worry of getting serious. The ideal time to start dating someone is after they have been friends, or at least known each other for more than a couple of years.

Secondly, dating often mistakes a physical relationship for true love. Often couples feel that just because eyes and lips have met or that hearts have joined that they are in love. Other times they might think that just because their bodies are drawn to each other means that they were meant for each other. I feel that today people feel free to think that the words *love* and *sex* are interchangeable. They often forget about looking at each other as possible lifetime partners, but instead focus on the desires of the present. Most of the time they forget about what God wants but instead fall to the pressure that others put on them.

Third, God’s intention for us is to be physically pure before marriage. God did not want us to have a string of uncommitted dating relationships or physical experiments before marriage.

Another negative thing that dating and having a girlfriend can possibly do is take time away from our relationship with God. We have to be good stewards of our free time and desire to spend more time with God.

Read Genesis 29:1-20 and Judges 14:1-20, and make note of these questions while reading the passages.

What role did the parents take and did it help or hurt the relationship?

Was the here and now more important or a long lasting relationship?

Who seems not to be more concerned with what God wanted for his relationship?

What was the basis for each relationship?

What was the outcome of each relationship?

What is the purpose of Dating? After thinking about this for a few minutes read **Ephesians 5:22-33.**

Now, what are you going to do with your dating practices?

Love and dating can be such a complicated subject for some, and yet it can be so simple for others. We should focus on God and His intentions for us throughout our lives. It's too bad that we are so sinful that we can't live up to everything we say or set before ourselves. Personally, living up to this article could be the hardest and toughest goal I have ever set before myself. Lately, I have learned to rely on Philippians 4:13 which says, "I can do ALL things through Christ who gives me strength".'

By Matt Van Til

I know often teens feel lonely and want to be loved by someone and think dating is the way to find instant love. This isn't how it happens. Just look around and you will see plenty of evidence for that.

The best advice for you is threefold:

1. Have your parents involved in your dating life {they should be already but if they aren't, get them involved}.
2. Put your trust in the Lord {Proverbs 3:5-6}
3. Learn from God's word {a few examples from scripture with questions for your further study is provided in the special section of this article}.

Dating should not be a game. It should be a good experience, done properly and according to God's word.

Mr. Dave Vander Meer

Idellette: God's Helpmate for John Calvin

In July of 1540 John Calvin made a marriage proposal to Idelette de Bure. She accepted. Three weeks later they were married on August 10, 1540. Many wedding couples have an interesting story of how God brought their lives together. The Calvin's marriage is no exception.

Obstacles to Marriage

At least three years prior to the wedding date neither of them were suited for each other. That might sound surprising in light of the fact that both were opposed to the doctrinal and moral decay in the Roman Catholic Church; and both were very serious about their Christian faith. What, then, made them such a mismatch for marriage?

John Calvin had already begun to prove himself as an able preacher, a careful theologian and powerful Reformer. He fought the fight of faith on at least three main battle fronts. First, he defended the truth against false doctrine so prevalent in the Roman Catholic Church. Second, he waged spiritual war against the immoral and antireligious sentiments of the Libertines. They plotted wicked schemes against Calvin and threatened him with violence. Under their influence the city leaders of Geneva would eventually give Calvin this ultimatum: 'Leave Geneva within three days.'

The third flank of Calvin's opposition came from Dutch Reformers who were called the Anabaptists. In reaction to the Roman Catholic Church they 'threw out the baby with the (baptism) water.' According to their assessment all corruption in the Church could be traced back to two

errors—infant baptism and the close connection between Church and State. They despised civil government—insisting that a faithful Christian could not serve in a governmental position. Anabaptists came to be labeled as 'Radicals' because of their fiery zeal and rigorous reaction to the Roman Catholic Church. They criticized Reformers like John Calvin for not having gone far enough with their reforms.

These three enemies: the Roman Catholics, the Libertines, and the Anabaptists, inflicted misery on the great Reformer. No halfhearted man would dare to wage war against any one of them. Yet, John Calvin proves his religious devotion by entering into the conflict with all three.

Idelette's life also reflects a seriousness about her Christian faith. She was born in the Netherlands and eventually came to live in Liege, Belgium. During the time of the Reformation, Liege was not a safe place for a Protestant, like Idelette, to live (*History*, 6:406).

We can safely assume that Idelette would have been among those willing to suffer persecution for the sake of the Gospel—at least as confessed by the Anabaptists. You see, Idelette was married to John Storder, one of the principal leaders of the Anabaptist movement in Liege.

To summarize, there were two obstacles that prevented John Calvin and Idelette de Bure from being suitable marriage partners. First, Idelette was already happily married to John Storder. Second, she and her husband identified themselves with the 'Radicals of the Reformation.' They



were among those willing to be persecuted for their Anabaptistic beliefs – some of which John Calvin stringently objected.

Unsuspected Providence

In the course of time, God's Providence began to rearrange the circumstances in the individual lives of John Calvin and Idelette Storder. On April 25, 1538 the city council in Geneva banished John Calvin and his two colleagues from their Switzerland city. Calvin received urgent letters from Martin Bucer, one of the Reformation pastors in Strasborg, to join him in Germany. Within five months of leaving Geneva, Calvin settled in the city of Strasborg.

Two things should be remembered about Strasborg. First, it took a courageous stand in favor of the Protestant Reformation. The second factor is geographical. At that time in history Strasborg was situated less than 100 miles outside the border of a staunchly Roman Catholic France. These two factors combine to draw attention to God's providential protection for His Church. Strasborg welcomed those who fled the Roman Catholic persecutions in France.

Though Martin Bucer would continue to minister to the *citizens* of Strasborg, John Calvin would begin to minister God's Word to the French refugees. Calvin, a native of France, must have felt at home among the four to five hundred fugitives from his homeland.

One of the families that had fled to Strasborg for safety was the John Storder family which consisted of John, Idelette and their two children. "Bucer, it appears, had introduced Calvin to the family, in the hope, doubtless, of enlightening Storder. Calvin had held private conversa-

tions with him, and the Belgian had been converted to the true Gospel by the ministry of the reformer. Idelette had probably also been converted at the same period" (*History*, 6:406). Already God was preparing John Calvin and Idelette Storder for each other even though neither of them had suspected God's marriage plan for them.

*Just when Calvin
was about to give
up on marriage
the tide of God's
providence turned
in favor of
Calvin's desire.*

Sometime within the next two years an epidemic swept through Strasborg. John Storder contracted the deadly plague and in a short time Idelette became a widow. Both of the obstacles which had made John Calvin and Idelette de Bure unsuitable for marriage were now removed.

Three Proposals and Still a Bachelor

While Idelette was grieving, John Calvin was making plans for marriage. In February of 1539 Calvin penned a letter to his friend and colleague, William Farel, inviting him to the wedding ceremony. According to the Providence of God however, the wedding did not take place.

Nearly one year later Calvin was still a bachelor. At this time international politics threatened to shake Geneva and her Reformers like an

earthquake. Who would even think of pursuing a marriage under such circumstances. "Nevertheless," writes Calvin to William Farel:

"in the midst of such commotions as these, I am so much at my ease, as to have the audacity to think, of taking a wife. A certain damsel of noble rank has been proposed to me, and with a fortune above my condition. Two considerations deterred me from that connection:
-because she did not understand our language,
-and because I feared she might be too mindful of her family and education.

I could not engage myself unless the maiden would undertake that she would apply her mind to the learning of our language, she requested time for deliberation. If it come to pass, as we may certainly hope will be the case, the marriage ceremony will not be delayed beyond the tenth of March."

March 10, 1540 came and went without any reply from his fiancé. By this time Calvin began to think that he would never get married. Soon Calvin would be turning 31 years old. Though Calvin and his friends longed for him to be married he seemed not to despair. Instead he used his age together with his single state to defend the Reformation movement.

Just when Calvin was about to give up on marriage the tide of God's providence turned in favor of Calvin's desire. Dr. Martin Bucer, the other pastor in Strasborg, suggested John Storder's widow to his friend John Calvin. Bucer's promptings must have succeeded. In less than two months, on August 10, 1540, they tied the knot.

In Sickness & in Health

In less than six weeks after their wedding day both John and Idelette became extremely ill. This was just the first bout of sicknesses that would characterize their short nine years of marriage. His interpretation of this first wave of ill-health reveals Calvin's submission to God's Fatherly care. He humbly acknowledged God's providence in this way:

"...it seemed, indeed, as if it had been so ordered on purpose that our wedlock might not be over joyous, that we might not exceed all bounds, that the Lord thus thwarted our joy by moderating it"
(*Selected Works*, vol. 4, Letter October, 1540).

Early in 1542 (their second year of marriage) Idelette became pregnant with their first child. Then in July we read this sad correspondence from John Calvin to his friend and colleague, Peter Viret, who ministered in Lausanne, Switzerland.

"This brother...will tell you in how great anxiety I am at present writing to you. My wife has been delivered prematurely, not without extreme danger; but may the Lord have a care over us."
(*Selected Works*, vol. 4, Letter [July] 1542).

One month later, the premature labor and early delivery of their first child took its toll on Idelette's health. "She is unable to reply [to your letter]," writes Calvin to Peter Viret, "except by [a secretary], and it would be very difficult for her even to dictate a letter." In all of this the great theologian humbly acknowledged the providence of God. "The Lord

has certainly inflicted a severe and bitter wound in the death of our infant son," he penned in his letter. As a pastor and husband we might assume that he consoled Idelette with the same sentiments which he expressed to the Viret family. "But [God] is himself a Father, and knows best what is good for his children."
(*Selected Works*, vol. 4, Letter August 19, 1542).

In their fourth year of marriage John and Idelette experienced the birth and death of their second child. Writing to William Farel on May 30, 1544, John Calvin expressed his concern for his infant daughter. "The pestilence [i.e. the plague] again alarms us, and seems to be on the increase. My little daughter labors under a continual fever."
(*Selected Works*, vol. 4, Letter May 30, 1544). Some time later Peter Viret and his wife received a letter from John Calvin expressing grief over the loss of their infant daughter.

1545 marked the death of yet a third child born to the Calvin's. On August 19, in the closing paragraph to their dear friends, the Viret's, John Calvin writes, "The Lord has certainly inflicted a heavy and severe wound on us, by the death of our little son, but He is our Father, and knows what is expedient for his children."
(*Life of Calvin*, editor's footnote 10, p. 268).

After this third pregnancy in 1545 Idelette would never again be strong enough to bear children. Three years after they buried their third child John Calvin sent greetings to Farel on behalf of Idelette "who [was] in bed from prolonged illness"
(*Selected Works*, vol. 5 Letter August 27, 1548).

John and Idelette Calvin had developed a close friendship with various leaders of the Protestant Reforma-

tion. Judging by the number of letters and their affectionate exchange we get the impression that among their closest friends were Peter Viret and his wife together with the bachelor, William Farel. That is probably why Calvin notified these two households first with this sober announcement: "the death of my wife has been exceedingly painful to me..."
(*Selected Works*, vol. 5 Letters April 7 & 11, 1549). Idelette departed from this life on April 5, 1549.

Idelette's Character

Most of what we know of Idelette and her character must be gleaned from the pen of her second husband, John Calvin. From his comments about her and from inferences made from their life's circumstances I will attempt to categorize her life's testimony under the following texts from Scripture.

Proverbs 18:22 & 31:28-29

The first two passages both come from the book of Proverbs. "*He who finds a wife finds a good thing, And obtains favor from the LORD*" (Proverbs 18:22). "Her children rise up and call her blessed; Her husband *also*, and he praises her: 'Many daughters have done well, But you excel them all'" (Proverbs 31:28-29).

Calvin enjoyed many close and warm friendships. None brought greater joy to his life than Idelette. He had expressed those very sentiments to William Farel just two days after her death. "And truly mine is no common source of grief. I have been bereaved of the best companion of my life." Her ambitions in life so harmonized with those of her husband that John Calvin went on to write, "...had it been so ordered, [Idelette] would not only have been the willing sharer of my [poverty], but even of my death." As far as a



help-mate goes John Calvin testified that “During her life she was the faithful helper of my ministry. From her I never experienced the slightest hindrance.”

As providence would have it Idelette suffered many illnesses in their short nine years of marriage. Yet, Calvin never seemed to be frustrated by any of them. With his own pen he writes, “She was never troublesome to me throughout the entire course of her illness.” What especially struck Calvin about her life was that “she was more anxious about her children than about herself” (*Selected Works*, vol. 5 Letter April 7, 1549).

Many of Calvin’s letter closings give further evidence that she was a faithful help-meet for the great Reformer. For example, in one of his letters to Peter and Elizabeth Viret, Calvin writes, “The Lord preserve you all. My wife dutifully salutes you and your family. Yours, John Calvin” (*Selected Works*, vol. 5 Letter March, 1544).

She likely assisted his ministry in other ways as well. In one letter, for instance, he reports that Idelette comforted a dying man. While Calvin attended many of his other pressing duties on that particular day Idelette faithfully stayed at the bedside of Amy Porral – the borgomaster of Geneva. (*Selected Works*, vol. 4 Letter June 16, 1542).

1Peter 3:3-4

The second passage comes from 1Peter 3:3-4, “Do not let your adornment be *merely* outward – arranging the hair, wearing gold, or putting on *fine* apparel – rather *let it be* the hidden person of the heart, with the incorruptible *beauty* of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is very precious in the sight of God.”

“What Calvin most highly prized in

Idelette was ‘the hidden man of the heart, the incorruptibility of a meek and quiet spirit,’ her modesty.

‘Nothing is more becoming to women than a meek and peaceful spirit,’ he said; ‘we know what kind of creature a bold and obstinate woman is, who, from pride, vanity, and wantonness, is fond of showing herself off. Happy is the woman whose style of dress is modest, who does not go gadding about the streets, but keeps the house because of her love to her husband and her children.’ (*History*, 6:407-408).

“What Calvin most highly prized in Idelette was ‘the hidden man of the heart, the incorruptibility of a meek and quiet spirit,’ her modesty.

1Peter 4:9-10

The third passage comes from 1Peter 4:9-10. “Be hospitable to one another without grumbling. As each one has received a gift, minister it to one another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God.”

When John Calvin and Idelette returned from their honeymoon—if they had one—they entered a full house. Their house was more like a boarding school than a home. At least two of Calvin’s siblings lived with them for a while—his brother Antoine and his stepsister Marie. Claude Defray, who had become a good friend of John Calvin, rented one of their rooms. Claude was a

school teacher who also had two students renting rooms in John’s house.

There were others who also enjoyed Christian hospitality at the Calvin home. In 1548, for example, Monsieur and Madame de Falais were living with the Calvin’s on 11 Canon Street in Geneva for an unknown period of time.

Hebrews 12:1-2

The final passage comes from Hebrews 12. “Therefore we also, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares *us*, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of *our* faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God” (Heb. 12:1-2).

Idelette demonstrated a deep trust in God’s Fatherly care for her children. Calvin told this touching story regarding the closing days of her life.

“As I feared these private cares might annoy her to no purpose, I took occasion, on the third day before her death, to mention that I would not fail in discharging my duty to her children. Taking up the matter immediately, she said, ‘I have already committed them to God.’ When I said that that was not to prevent me from caring for them, she replied, ‘I know you will not neglect what you know has been committed to God.’” (*Selected Works*, vol. 5 Letter April 7, 1549).

Idelette also demonstrated a deep trust in God regarding her own salva-

tion. Again, John Calvin recorded her own testimony which she spoke from her death bed.

“About the sixth hour of the day, on which she yielded up her soul to the Lord, our brother Bourgouin addressed some pious words to her, and while he was doing so, she spoke aloud, so that all saw that her heart was raised far above the world. For these were her words: ‘O glorious resurrection! O God of Abraham, and of all our fathers, in thee have the faithful trusted during so many past ages, and none of them have trusted in vain. I also will hope.’ These short sentences were rather ejaculated than distinctly spoken. This did not come from the suggestion of others, but from her own reflections, so that she made it obvious in few words what were her own meditations. I had to go out at six o’clock. Having been removed to another apartment after seven, she immediately began to decline. When she felt her voice suddenly failing her, she said: ‘Let us pray: let us pray. All pray for me.’ I had now returned. She was unable to speak, and her mind seemed to be troubled. I, having spoken a few words about the love of Christ, the hope of eternal life, concerning our married life, and her departure, engaged in prayer. In full possession of her mind, she both heard the prayer, and attended to it. Before eight she expired, so calmly, that those present could scarcely distinguish

between her life and her death” (*Selected Works*, vol. 5 Letter April 11, 1549).

Based on Calvin’s testimony we get the strong impression that she lived by the same convictions of faith with which she died. Such oneness in Jesus Christ would have harmonized their marriage and would have made Idelette a most suitable helpmate for the great Reformer—John Calvin.

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Sound Bites

(continued from page 11)

forgiveness of sins, deliverance from the wrath of God and eternal punishment, joy in the Holy Spirit, a hope that maketh not ashamed, and an inheritance of eternal glory. On the contrary, the benefits for which people are told to be religious are often at best only secondary by-products of Christianity, such as a happy home life, the attainment of personal poise and balance, the preservation of democracy and civil liberty, the solution of personal, social, and economic problems, the furtherance of human “brotherhood,” and so forth. In short, what is advocated is religion for the sake of human welfare. The stress is usually on religion rather than on God; when God is mentioned, he is regard solely from the standpoint of human welfare: the question in mind is not “How is man to glorify God?” but rather, “How can God meet man’s needs?”

“Religion is not a means to an end; it is itself the supreme end of human life. Religion does not have a purpose; it is itself the purpose for which every thing human exists.”

The Value of Religion
Johannes G. Vos

Rev. Ken Anema



Preaching and the Elders

We are living today in a highly critical age.

People no longer are afraid of attacking anything or anyone. Even the Lord of heaven and earth is openly criticized and blasphemed as if He were mere man.

And surely if they fear not God, they have lost all respect for the Word and the service of the Lord. It need not surprise us therefore that one of the fashionable parlor-games of our generation is the criticism of the ministers of the Word. And although some of it may be justifiable, those who desire honesty and justice and love will admit that most criticism in this field is petty, abusive and false.

There is, however, a sort of criticism which although exceedingly rare ought to be assiduously cultivated in the church of the Lord Jesus Christ. In spite of the unsavory aroma which clings to the term "criticism", we should remember the original meaning of the word. It is derived from a Greek word which means "to judge." Hence a critic, properly speaking, is "one who expresses a reasoned opinion on any given matter, involving either a judgment of its value, truth or righteousness, or an appreciation of its beauty or technique."

A critic, therefore, is a person who is able to judge. He possesses for himself and is aware of and able to employ certain basic standards. In the light of these alone he seeks to make an adequate judgment, by which he assesses in how far any given object under consideration approximates the ideal for that subject.

Now in this sense of the word all God's children must be critics. "Beloved, believe not every spirit, but

prove the spirits, whether they are of God; because many false prophets are gone out into the world." (I John 4: 1)

Everyone who has received the anointing of the Holy Spirit is in duty bound before God to assess the "spirits", that is, those who speak in the name of God as led by His blessed Spirit. John appropriately warns the young Christians of the danger of being misled. Many in his day, and also in ours, speak in the name of the Lord without being truly guided and led by Him. These are the false prophets whose end is destruction and who draw away with them into this judgment many unwary souls. Therefore John insists that the believers shall act as "critics". They are to evaluate very carefully the words which they hear. And the standard by which these words are to be compared is the Word of God. Only then will the hearers enjoy the assurance that the spirits which they follow are of God.

Now this general task of all believers finds a specific and concrete expression in one of the tasks which is laid upon the eldership. They are to be the "critics" par excellence in the congregation. Never may they take for granted that what they hear is of God, but as the responsible rulers of the congregation they in their official capacity must prove the spirits. This is their great and grave responsibility of safeguarding the pure preaching of the Word in the church allotted to their charge.

The Importance of Preaching

Of all the duties of the eldership none begins to compare in importance with their task of supervising the pulpit.

This follows directly from the important place which Scripture assigns to preaching in the New Testament congregation. We are to remember first of all that the administration of the Word is the heart of public worship. The service is incomplete without it. All the other elements are to a greater or lesser degree dependent on and subordinate to the proclamation of God's Word.

Moreover, the preaching of the Word constitutes the normal diet for our soul. For us it is the chief means of grace. Indeed, there are unique and precious spiritual blessings which we receive from the Spirit in the use of prayers and songs and sacraments, but all of these derive their significance from the Word by which they are interpreted. The reason why so many churches are empty on the Lord's Day must be found in the tragic neglect of the pure preaching of the Word.

And finally, supervision of the preaching is foremost among the tasks of the eldership, because all the other duties assigned to those in this office will remain undischarged if there is failure here.

Surely there is no need of guarding the sanctity of the sacraments, if the purity of the Word is not prized. Nor will there be any appreciation for the spiritual supervision of the flock in doctrine and conduct, if the supervision of the pulpit is neglected. Unless the Word announces how God's People are to think and live, the elders will have no standard by which to assess the spiritual development and health of the believers. Nor will there be any sense in trying to ward off the wolves from the sheepfold of Christ, if the Word does not first of

all plainly tell us who are sheep and who are wolves in the sight of the Lord.

Only when we are deeply convinced of the single importance of the pure preaching of the Word for the health of the church and the glory of God, will we be able to understand the reason why our Reformed fathers centuries ago insisted that the first duty of the elders is “to maintain the purity of the Word.”

Supervising the Preaching

But what, you may well ask, is involved in this task of safeguarding the purity of the Word?

We are to remember that this deals with the actual content of preaching first of all. Here we believe God’s revealed will is to be explained to His people. And every explanation of that divine will necessarily involves interpretation. Hence the duty of the elders is to judge critically and officially whether the interpretation is pure, that is, in harmony with the teaching of the Scriptures.

This, of course, is by no means an easy task.

It involves first of all a rather comprehensive and intelligent understanding of the whole Bible. The elder must be a man who with all his heart loves the Word and lives by it. Without this chief qualification he is unfit to exercise his office.

However, an elder does not function alone. He is one of the body known as the consistory. His office he discharges in fellowship with other elders in such a way that no elder may lord it over his fellow elders. And the whole consistory as well as the entire congregation has expressed itself as agreeing with the confessions. In these our churches have set forth what we believe the Scriptures

plainly teach on all salient doctrines. Hence in connection with this task of supervising the preaching we must not forget that all sermons in our churches must reflect the teaching of the confessions. We do not believe that these constitute a standard next to or independent of the Bible. Much rather, we as Reformed churches have bound ourselves to them because we are convinced that they set forth in brief compass the teachings of the Word in an orderly, comprehensive and balanced way. No one who is not in agreement with the confessions has the right to belong to our churches; much less to act as elder; least of all to preach from our pulpits.

We must not forget that all sermons in our churches must reflect the teaching of the confessions.

But beside knowing the Bible and the teachings of the confessions, the elders in order to supervise the preaching of the Word must understand what a sermon is.

What is Reformed Preaching?

Although this does not mean that they must be able to pass a course in Homiletics (the art of preaching), it is essential that our elders understand what Reformed preaching is.

Let us at the outset disabuse our minds from the erroneous idea that any discussion of the Bible from the pulpit on the Lord’s day is a sermon. The sermon differs radically from a talk or address. It is not to be com-

pared with a declaration or an oration, even if in outward appearances it seems somewhat to partake of this quality. It is not an essay on some Biblical doctrine or authorized practice.

Rather, preaching according to Reformed believers is the official proclamation of the Word in the name of Christ by a recognized ambassador in the midst of the congregation under the supervision of the elders.

It is proclamation of the Word! Here is to be declared the full counsel of God as He has sufficiently and infallibly given it to us in the Bible. The words of Scripture must be thoroughly expounded, that is, the congregation must know what the Lord says in His Word. That Word speaks to the Lord’s children in their need. Hence the Word must be living, dynamic and relevant. It must be applied to their lives. Hence preaching is not merely a discussion of some doctrine or historical incident or religious law. Rather, it is the declaration of the will of the Lord for the whole of human life as it is lived by His people. It appeals to the mind but also to the will; it stirs up the emotions but also incites to deeds. Such a message comes with the authority spoken of by our Savior, when He said, “He that heareth you heareth me; and he that rejecteth you rejecteth me; and he that rejecteth me, rejecteth him that sent me.” (Luke 10:16)

From all this follows very emphatically, and well may our present generation become aware of this truth, that the essence of preaching lies not in its polished form. Much as this may be desired and ought to be appreciated, it is very subordinate. For surely our spiritual sensitivity is in no wise dependent on our aesthetic appreciation.

The question is simply whether first of all the minister is a recognized ambassador of the Lord Jesus Christ, lawfully called and ordained by the congregation.

Thereupon, we are to take note whether that minister knows himself in his preaching as fully bound by the revealed Word. He is not to lecture on some interesting subject. Rather, he is to take a part of the Holy Word and in language which can be understood by the average member of the congregation, explain its meaning, and show its significance for daily life.

And the elders are called upon to test whether the message of the preacher is of God.

Theirs is not the duty of asking whether the people liked or did not like the sermon. Nor should they be concerned about their personal reaction to the message. They are to act officially and corporately. As a consistory they are to decide whether the message which the congregation heard was the authoritative and living Word of the Lord. Naturally, this is a most delicate and difficult task. It involves the Bible and one who is recognized by the church as an official proclaimer of the truth of that Bible. Here we are dealing with the sacred; with the rich provisions which our heavenly Father has made for the spiritual development and prosperity of His church on earth. It behooves each one of us to move with utmost caution — minister and elders and congregation.

Let the minister prepare each message as a proclamation of the glad tidings of grace, an exposition and application of the Word of life to the congregation, a vital, dynamic and relevant message of the rich Christ for the poor sinner.

Let every congregation submit to the authority of the Word, realizing that the content of the message is far more essential than its form and therefore hungering to be fed with the Bread from heaven.

And let the elders earnestly, conscientiously and reverently test the message in the light of the proper standards. Is it true to Scripture? Is it in harmony with the confessions? Is it a sermon, the exposition and application of the text to the whole life of the believing church?

There is great danger that the elders precisely on this point neglect their task.

Indeed, they will be able to detect gross heresies. And should any preacher have the temerity to preach one of these, he would be summarily dismissed from the Christian Reformed Church. However, when the devil attacks the church with false doctrine, he comes not in wooden shoes but on soft-soled slippers. Insidiously, so that often even the ministers and elders are not aware of the change of emphasis, a new type of preaching so-called arises. The emphasis becomes topical instead of exegetical; man-centered instead of God-glorifying; aesthetically soothing instead of spiritual vital.

How fine it would be if the elders in full consistorial session would talk over the preaching of the Word with the minister. How much easier preaching would become for the minister, if he were informed by the elders what they also felt the congregation needed at any given season. How much deeper would be the love of the elders for a conscientious and faithful minister of the Word, if they would hear from his lips what he aims to do in the preaching of the Word for the people of God. How much stronger the elders would stand

over against those people whose petty and unjustified criticisms of the sermons spread like pestilential poison throughout the congregation, and threaten to kill the spirit of the preacher. The question is not whether people like the sermons or whether they measure up to man-made standards of what sermons should be. The sole question is whether the message brought is called a sermon by the living Christ who is Head and King of His church.

When the elders understand their duty of safeguarding the purity of the preached Word and defend the preacher who proclaims the gospel purely, both they and the whole congregation will be delivered from the false standards set by men and grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

Rev. Peter Y. De Jong

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Reformed Evangelism— An Oxymoron?

(With this article I am beginning a new series of articles on the subject of Reformed evangelism. The following article is intended to serve as a kind of introduction to the articles that will follow, D.V. Though I can make no claim to be an expert on the subject, it seems to be one that demands the attention of Reformed believers today. Though Reformed believers are often keenly aware of the problems with much that goes under the name of 'evangelism' today, they are not nearly so adept when it comes to providing a responsible, biblical alternative.)

Several years ago an acquaintance of mine made a troubling observation about Reformed churches and believers that has stuck with me. He remarked that evangelism is the “Achilles heel” of many Reformed churches. Though Reformed believers have a good reputation for their emphasis upon expository preaching, God-honoring worship, and careful adherence to the teaching of God’s Word, they are laggards at best when it comes to reaching the lost with the gospel of salvation through Jesus Christ. Reformed churches do many things well, but evangelism is not one of them. If you want to find a church which has a keen interest in reaching others with the gospel and enfolded them into the fellowship of the church, you will have to look elsewhere than the Reformed community.

Now it would be relatively easy to dismiss this observation. You could say that it is a “generalization” to which there are many exceptions. Is it fair to paint all Reformed churches with such a broad-brushed stroke of criticism? After all, there are Reformed churches and denominations that have distinguished themselves by their work in world missions and evangelism. Furthermore, the history of the Reformed

churches suggests that many of them have been deeply and intensely involved in communicating the gospel to the nations. To say in such a general and unqualified way that Reformed churches have been remiss in this respect betrays a lack of appreciation, even an ungrateful ignorance, of so much that has been done and is being done by them.

Or you might reply by arguing that the criticism reflects too narrow and unbiblical a view of evangelism. Admittedly, many Reformed churches may not do well in reaching people for the first time with the gospel and bringing them into the fellowship of the church. But they do often manage to communicate the gospel by Word and sacrament to believers *and their children*, maintaining the covenant of grace from generation to generation. To be sure, if evangelism means, narrowly considered, reaching the lost, those outside the fellowship of Christ and His church, then many Reformed congregations are not very active or successful in this area. But if by evangelism we mean, broadly considered, the preaching of the gospel to and discipling of the nations (Matt. 28:16-20), then many Reformed churches have experienced a rich measure of the Lord’s blessing in communicating the gospel from one generation of believers to another. Who can calculate how many people have been saved as the Lord gathers the church by His Spirit and Word *in this manner*?

Sometimes it is also maintained that Reformed churches find their niche, not so much in bringing people to Christ for the first time, but in nurturing believers in the more rich and solid food of God’s Word. Though evangelical and charismatically-inclined churches may be instrumental in reach-

ing people with the gospel initially, it often happens that, as believers grow in their knowledge of the Word, they find their way into a Reformed church where there is a richer diet of solid doctrinal preaching and teaching. Thus, the Reformed churches’ contribution to missions and evangelism is to provide a kind of “second level” Christian experience, one characterized by a more richly confessional and theological form of teaching. If you want your Christianity “lite,” you go to an independent Bible church or charismatic fellowship. If you want your Christianity “heavy,” you go to the local Reformed or Presbyterian church. Among the smorgasbord of churches in North America, you pick the church of your choice according to your tastes. If it happens to be Reformed, it is likely because you enjoy a more intellectual form of Christian experience.

No doubt the beginnings (but no more!) of a defense of the Reformed churches against this complaint could be made along these lines. However, I am not interested in attempting such a defense at this point. Rather, I am interested in taking a careful look at the complaint, which requires that we listen carefully to the way it is articulated by those who find the Reformed churches lacking in this area. Rather than being defensive and apologetic about it, I would like to see why this judgment is often made about the Reformed churches. For, if it is true, it represents a rather serious defect in the life and ministry of the church. Churches which pride themselves on being “true churches” may not avoid taking a hard look at themselves in this mirror. For if there is evidence of unfaithfulness in this area, then the only biblical recourse is the way of repentance and reformation of life.



Clarifying the Terms “missions” and “evangelism”

Before taking a closer look at some of the reasons suggested for the failures of Reformed churches in the area of evangelism, I need to pause a moment to clarify some terms. In traditional discussions of this subject, a distinction has often been made between “evangelism” and “missions.” Evangelism is customarily conceived of as the bringing of the gospel to the unsaved who are near at hand, who live within the reach of the church. Missions, on the other hand, is thought to have to do with the bringing of the gospel to those who are at a distance from the church. According to this distinction, evangelism is something the local church does in its neighborhood, missions is something the church (or churches) does at a distance, often in another part of the world. Furthermore, what often distinguishes evangelism from missions is that, in the case of the former, a church already exists, but in the latter a church needs to be planted for the first time.

Though this distinction may have a relative usefulness — there is a significant difference between proclaiming the gospel to people in your own language and culture, for example, and proclaiming the gospel to an as-yet largely unreached people in a significantly different language and culture—I will work with a rather simple view of evangelism. Evangelism is the proclamation of the gospel. Evangelism is the work of the church in teaching and preaching the gospel of Jesus Christ, making disciples of the nations, baptizing believers (and their children) into the name of the Triune God. J. H. Bavinck, in his still useful volume, *An Introduction to the Science of Missions*, defines missions this way: “Missions is that activity of the church — in essence it is nothing else than an activity of Christ, exercised through the church — through which the church in

this interim period, in which the end is postponed, calls the peoples of the earth to repentance and to faith in Christ, so that they may be made His disciples and through baptism be incorporated into the fellowship of those who await the coming of the kingdom.”¹

If evangelism has to do with the proclamation of the gospel to the lost and aims to enfold believers into the fellowship of Christ’s church, what accounts for the fact that Reformed churches and believers are lacking in this respect? What kinds of reasons are often given for the uneven track record of Reformed Christians in evangelism and missions?

Though this is a difficult question to answer, there seem to be two general kinds of reasons offered for this lack. The first kind has to do with various confessional and theological obstacles that are allegedly detrimental to the work of evangelism. The second kind has to do with a more subtle and sensitive matter: cultural and ethnic barriers to effective outreach with the gospel.

Confessional and Theological Obstacles

It is often argued that the reason Reformed churches lag behind in their zeal for and practice of evangelism stems from important features of Reformed faith and theology. According to this argument, it is no accident that Reformed churches are often ineffective in evangelism. This ineffectiveness is a natural and inescapable consequence of some of the distinctive features of the Reformed faith.

For example, it is sometimes alleged that the Reformed emphasis upon God’s sovereignty, particularly as it is expressed in terms of the doctrine of unconditional election, serves to diminish a proper appreciation for human responsibility. If salvation is

wholly of the Triune God, from its design within God’s pretemporal decree to its application by the irresistible working of the Holy Spirit, then it seems to follow that we ought not to emphasize too much the responsibility of Christian churches or believers to evangelize. J. I. Packer, in his *Evangelism and the Sovereignty of God*, describes this allegation as follows:

There is abroad today a widespread suspicion that a robust faith in the absolute sovereignty of God is bound to undermine any adequate sense of human responsibility. Such a faith is thought to be dangerous to spiritual health, because it breeds a habit of complacent inertia. In particular, it is thought to paralyze evangelism by robbing one both of the motive to evangelize and of the message to evangelize with. The supposition seems to be that you cannot evangelize effectively unless you are prepared to pretend while you are doing it that the doctrine of divine sovereignty is not true.²

When Reformed believers stress the sovereignty of God, they insist that the salvation of sinners is *God’s work, not ours*. And since God will undoubtedly realize His sovereign designs for the salvation of sinners, no failure or inactivity on our part will frustrate or imperil this work. Moreover, since sinners are totally depraved, incapable of doing any spiritual or saving good, there is no basis for seeking to bring sinners to faith and repentance by any other means than simply “waiting upon the Lord.” The Lord will save His own in His own time and manner, regardless of the church’s failures or the sinners incompetence. Indeed, the less we attempt to do in this area, particularly in resisting all of the “measures” employed by Arminians in seeking to

persuade sinners to believe and repent, the better.

But it is not only the doctrine of God's sovereignty that inhibits a vigorous pursuit of the work of evangelism. It is also argued that there is a problem with the Reformed view of the gospel message in respect to its content and the manner in which it is presented.

If as a Reformed Christian, for example, you believe the doctrine of limited atonement, then you will be uncomfortable, even opposed, to any gospel presentation that addresses *all* with the message of God's love and grace in Christ. Because Christ's atoning work was designed and accomplished only for the elect, it cannot be indiscriminately presented to sinners as a work which is available to or suited to their need. It would be wrong to say to all sinners, without discrimination, that Christ died for them or that His blood could benefit them, were they to respond to the gospel's summons. Because the audience for the gospel is a mixed company of elect and reprobate persons, the *gospel promise* of salvation to all who believe and repent cannot be addressed to all sinners in the same manner. For, in the strictest sense, there is no good news, no promise, that may be addressed to reprobate sinners.³

Thus, when the proclamation and administration of the gospel is viewed from the standpoint of election and reprobation, the preacher of the gospel finds himself in a difficult spot—he does not know who is elect or reprobate and, therefore, finds himself unable to speak forthrightly of God's love and grace for sinners in Christ. The indiscriminate preaching of the gospel to all sinners is thereby hindered, because of the fear that Christ's atoning work may be made to seem universal and indiscriminate in its design. Thus, the warrant for responding to the *gospel*

pel summons ("believe on the Lord Jesus Christ *and you shall be saved*") gets complicated by the perplexity regarding whether this warrant holds for all to whom the gospel is spoken. After all, the hearer may be someone whom God reprobates, so that this gospel is not addressed to him as a word of grace or mercy in Christ.

For similar reasons, the proclamation of the gospel in a Reformed setting is rendered problematic in terms of its manner of presentation. May we speak of a gospel "offer" or "invitation" that is extended to all sinners, head for head? Or is this a subtle form of "Arminianism," suggesting the idea that it depends finally upon the sinner's believing and repenting whether he be saved? For fear of the error of Arminianism, then, the Calvinist is reluctant to offer Christ too freely through the gospel.⁴ The Calvinist preacher or Christian is cramped and constricted in his presentation of the gospel call. Rather than risk offering Christ too openly and energetically, with too much earnestness and entreaty, the Reformed believer is the one who would prefer the safety of preaching the gospel only to the already saved.

So too as we become too fixed upon the ways and means of getting the gospel across to sinners, we not only risk assuming prerogatives that are God's alone but we also reveal a spirit that is too generous and liberal toward all sinners. If God hates the reprobate and has purposed not to save them, and if (as some infer) this means that He does not even "desire" in any sense that they should turn from their wicked way, then we should act similarly. Rather than desiring the salvation of all sinners without exception, and earnestly inviting them in Christ's name to believe so as to be saved, we are obligated to present the gospel in a more indifferent manner, allowing God to make it a

savor of life unto some, a savor of death unto others.

A Cultural and Ethnic Covenantalism

In addition to these alleged confessional and theological obstacles to vigorous evangelistic activity among the Reformed churches, there are also factors that are more subtle in their consequence for evangelism. These factors are best described in terms of what I would term a "cultural and ethnic covenantalism."

Reformed believers are known, not only for their emphasis upon divine sovereignty in salvation, but also for their emphasis upon the covenant. The Triune God of the Scriptures administers His grace in Christ *covenantally*, that is, through the preaching of the gospel promise, accompanied by its sacramental signs, to *believers and their children*. Accordingly, Reformed churches oppose the kind of individualism that often marks evangelical churches. The goal of gospel preaching is not the salvation of an individual here, and another individual there. It is not enough to snatch a few "brands from the burning" by calling individuals to a "personal" faith in Jesus Christ. Rather, Christ gathers by His Word and Spirit a "community" of believers, united in the true faith, and joined in a common covenantal inheritance. The growth of the church is, therefore, an organic reality, gathering believers from one generation to another into a distinctive covenant community.

In the actual practice of this covenantal understanding of the gospel's communication, however, something happens that often inhibits the preaching of the gospel to the lost. What occurs is that the gospel promise is *restricted* to believers and their children, and it is not communicated as well to others. To use the language of the apostle Peter's

sermon at Pentecost, the reach of the gospel is limited to those who are already embraced by the promise and it is forgotten that it is intended also “for all who are far off, as many as the Lord our God shall call to Himself” (Acts. 2:39). Often, out of an understandable (but misguided in its application) conviction that the covenant people of the Lord must be radically separated from the world, Reformed churches develop an ethos in which sharp lines are delineated between those who are “inside” and those who are “outside” of the fellowship. And because the gospel is often communicated along generational lines, the idea begins to live that this is the common, if not exclusive, manner in which the church is gathered.

Furthermore, when this rather restricted view of the reach of the gospel’s promise is intermixed with cultural and historical factors—such as common ancestry, national background, ethnicity, differences of language and history—it often produces a doctrine of the church that has *naturalized* the gospel and lost a vivid sense of its *spiritual power* to gather more and more people into the fellowship of Christ.

Lest I be misunderstood, let me put this in rather candid terms. As a Reformed Christian who was nurtured within a largely *Dutch* Reformed church, I have often met believers who seem to believe that the church is a kind of an extended *natural* family. Their Reformed identity is frequently so linked to their cultural and ethnic identity that it becomes virtually impossible to distinguish these two. Attitudes and practices are adopted that, though not intentionally designed for this purpose, inevitably alienate those whose membership in the church is not by reason of family history or background. Language (“outsiders”!) is used to describe those who are gathered into the church

by evangelism that betrays a seriously distorted conception of Christ’s church. And when those who may be gathered into a Reformed congregation leave for another congregation, it is often explained with the lame excuse, “but they were of a different background and culture.” Seldom is it imagined to have been the result of sinful indifference and inhospitable attitudes on the part of the “insiders.”

The point here is not, of course, that any Christian should apologize for his or her cultural and historical identity. Within God’s providence, differences of culture, history, and ethnicity, are not to be denied but celebrated. But what is often lamentable is the *introversion*, the being-turned-in-upon-itself character, of many Reformed churches, especially those of a particular historical and ethnic tradition. When this serves to hinder an eagerness to reach out, to embrace in the name of Christ, those lost sinners whom He is gathering to Himself by His Spirit and Word, there is a deformed and less-than-biblical form of Christian practice.

Conclusion

Now I do not mention these claims regarding Reformed churches and believers to indicate that I agree with them in every particular. I mention them because they are serious claims which require our attention. They also demand our careful consideration of the Reformed faith and its implications for evangelism. Does the Reformed faith, in its genuine and proper expression, truly hamper the work of evangelism? Or does it call for a pattern of conduct that, though unlike many improper evangelistic efforts, is serious and urgent in its communicating of the gospel to the lost? To these questions we will have to turn in future issues.

Dr. Cornel Venema

Endnotes

¹(Trans. David H. Freeman; Philadelphia, PA: Presbyterian & Reformed, 1960), p. 62.

²(Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity, 1961), p. 10. Immediately after this statement, Packer goes on to argue that this allegation against the Reformed faith is “nonsense.” Though Packer is correct from a confessional and theological point of view, it is the case, sad to say, that some Reformed Christians employ the kind of logic that plays God’s sovereignty off against our responsibility. In my own pastoral experience, I can keenly remember church members who protested any serious attention to evangelism by noting, “but, pastor, the doors of our church are not locked. If God wants to bring ‘them’ in, He will do so!”

³Readers familiar with the “love of God” controversy in the Christian Reformed Church in the 1960’s will recognize in this the gist of professor Harold Dekker’s argument. Dekker, who was at the time associate professor of missions at Calvin Theological Seminary, started the controversy by arguing that the doctrine of limited atonement impairs evangelistic activity. Cf. Harold Dekker, “God So Loved — ALL Men!” *Reformed Journal* 12/11 (Dec., 1962), 7: “The doctrine of limited atonement as commonly understood and observed in the Christian Reformed Church impairs the principle of the universal love of God and tends to inhibit missionary spirit and activity.”

⁴Lest it be too quickly argued that this could not occur, it should be noted that some “hypercalvinists” have taken this position. For example, among the “particular baptists” in England, there were many who rejected any presentation of the gospel that actually summoned sinners to faith and repentance. Termed a preaching of “duty faith,” this sort of gospel presentation was carefully avoided. For two recent studies of this kind of hypercalvinism, see: T. E. Watson, “Andrew Fuller’s Conflict With Hypercalvinism,” in *Puritan Papers*, ed. D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian & Reformed, 2000), vol. 1, 271-82; and Iain H. Murray, *Spurgeon v. Hyper-Calvinism, The Battle for Gospel Preaching* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1995).

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