

# The **STANDARD BEARER**

A REFORMED SEMI-MONTHLY MAGAZINE

It is that line of the generations of believers which constitutes essentially the historical sphere of the covenant.

... Elect children of believers and reprobate children of believers are born, develop, live, grow up in that same sphere and under the same influences. In that sphere they share all things — except grace. For the elect heirs of the promise all of the above function as a savour of life unto life, while for the reprobate, carnal children all of the above function as a savour of death unto death, and that, too, according to God's purpose.

See "A Historical Sphere of the Covenant?"

page 198

## CONTENTS:

Meditation —	
Armed For Suffering .....	194
Editor's Notes .....	197
Editorials —	
A Historical Sphere of the Covenant? .....	198
A Falling Away of the Saints? .....	201
Taking Heed to the Doctrine —	
The Reformed Doctrine of Reprobation ....	202
Guest Article	
Ask For the Old Paths .....	204
Voice of Our Fathers —	
The Holy Supper of Our Lord Jesus Christ ...	207
The Strength of Youth	
Truly Wise .....	209
My Sheep Hear My Voice	
Letter to Timothy .....	211
Book Review .....	213
Report of Classis East .....	216

## THE STANDARD BEARER

Semi-monthly, except monthly during June, July, and August.

Published by the Reformed Free Publishing Association, Inc.  
Second Class Postage Paid at Grand Rapids, Mich.

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**Editorial Policy:** Every editor is solely responsible for the contents of his own articles. Contributions of general interest from our readers and questions for the Question-Box Department are welcome. Contributions will be limited to approximately 300 words and must be neatly written or typewritten, and must be signed. Copy deadlines are the first and the fifteenth of the month. All communications relative to the contents should be sent to the editorial office.

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**Subscription Policy:** Subscription price, \$7.00 per year (\$5.00 for Australasia). Unless a definite request for discontinuance is received, it is assumed that the subscriber wishes the subscription to continue without the formality of a renewal order, and he will be billed for renewal. If you have a change of address, please notify the Business Office as early as possible in order to avoid the inconvenience of delayed delivery. Include your Zip Code.

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**Bound Volumes:** The Business Office will accept standing orders for bound copies of the current volume; such orders are filled as soon as possible after completion of a volume. A limited number of past volumes may be obtained through the Business Office.

## MEDITATION

## Armed For Suffering

Rev. M. Schipper

*"Forasmuch then as Christ hath suffered for us in the flesh, arm yourselves likewise with the same mind: for he that hath suffered in the flesh hath ceased from sin:*

*That he no longer should live the rest of his time in the flesh to the lusts of men, but to the will of God."*

I Peter 4:1, 2.

That the apostle expected imminent suffering to befall the children of God is evident from the following context. "Beloved, think it not strange

concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you" (4:12). And that he connects this suffering with the

suffering of Christ is also apparent from the same context. "But rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings . . ." (4:13).

Always the believing church of Christ in the world is partaker of His sufferings.

But what does this mean? To understand this phenomenon we must see, in the first place, that there is a suffering of Christ which is quite unique, that is, which He suffered all alone, and which we both cannot and need not suffer. Of this aspect of Christ's suffering the apostle had written earlier (3:18). "For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God. . . ." Obviously this suffering which was in our behalf only He could suffer. When He suffered the torments of hell, when He endured the wrath of God overagainst our sins, He suffered vicariously. He suffered in our stead, in our behalf, so that we would not have to endure this suffering, for we could not bear it.

To this aspect of Christ's suffering the apostle does not refer in the text, nor is it implied, as the translation would seem to indicate. The translation has: "Forasmuch then as Christ hath suffered for us in the flesh. . . ." However, the original text omits the words "for us." Literally, according to the original, the text should read: "Christ therefore having suffered in respect to the flesh, also ye arm yourselves with the same mind. . . ."

This leads us to understand, in the second place, that there is an aspect of the suffering of Christ in which we do partake. Peter has in mind that aspect of the suffering of Christ of which the apostle Paul also wrote: "For unto you it is given in behalf of Christ, not only to believe on Him, but also to suffer for His sake" (Phil. 1:29).

And again it must be understood that the apostle is not speaking of suffering in general. There is indeed much suffering in the world, suffering in which not only the children of God partake, but also the world of the wicked itself. Bodily and mental afflictions befall both the righteous and the wicked alike. Hospitals, mental institutions, and funeral homes are stark reminders of a universal suffering. But the suffering which the apostle has in mind is not general, but very particular — it is the suffering of the believing children of God which is imposed on them by the world of the wicked simply because these believing children of God belong to Christ.

As Christ bore the reproaches, the slander, the maltreatment, and even death at the hands of the wicked, so are we to be ready to suffer. As Christ suffered in the flesh while He was in the midst of the world of the wicked, so are we to be armed with the same idea in mind. There is a sense therefore in which

Christ is the example in Whose footsteps we are to follow; but the apostle has in mind something even more significant. The believers must be prepared for this aspect of suffering because they are in Christ. He has regenerated and sanctified them by His grace and Spirit. Thus in principle they are like Him. They are holy as He is holy; and as He was without sin, so are they in principle. Therefore as the world hated Him, so will the world hate us. It is with this thought that we must be armed. So must we be ready to suffer in the flesh.

Armed with the mind of Christ!

To be armed presupposes that a battle is to ensue. The battle is spiritual in nature, while the combatants are the people of God versus the world of the wicked. Though our warfare is not against flesh and blood, but against spiritual powers in high places, make no mistake about it, that battle is not mythical, nor mystical, but against the forces of evil as it may be found in flesh and blood persons who are governed and arrayed by the power of darkness. Jesus Himself described the nature of the enemy when He said, "a man's foes are those of his own household." In that context He also said, "he that is not willing to leave father and mother, wife and children for My sake is not worthy of Me." And this implies that though our battle is not carnal, nevertheless the battle lines cut through your own flesh and blood. Historically, too, the real battle of the church of Christ is not fought out there in the world, but most generally within the church itself and within our own homes. The wicked therefore with whom we do battle are not those who live on the other end of the world, but they live very close to us, dwelling in our generations. That does not mean that the wicked of the world leave us alone, but always they are joined with the wicked carnal seed as it comes to manifestation in the organic development of the church in the world. This was clearly demonstrated in the case of Christ, for it was Herod, Pontius Pilate, and the leaders of the Jews who were united against Him.

In that battle we are going to suffer in respect to the flesh. In that battle we must be Christ-like, that is, we must be like-minded with Him. And what was the mind, the thought that pervaded the mind of Christ when He was caused to suffer in the flesh? It was this: I am innocent; I have done nothing amiss, and yet they persecute Me. Such is the thought, the mind that must be in us when we are buffeted by the wicked. Let this mind be in you, that he who suffers in the flesh has ceased from sin.

Suffering then in the flesh is proof of the fact that we do not walk in sin. If we would walk in sin and follow after the world and its corruption, we would experience no suffering at all. Then the world would love its own, and even bless you. But as soon as it

becomes manifested that you have ceased from sin, you will have the mind of Christ, and you will needs suffer. Armed then must we be with the mind of Christ!

O, indeed, this cannot mean that when we suffer we sin no more. Nor should we say with the perfectionist we have no sin. This would indeed be contrary both to fact and to Scripture. Does not the apostle John say: "If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness"? (I John 1:8, 9) The former we refuse to say, lest we deceive ourselves, while the latter we continue to confess because we have the consciousness of forgiveness and of cleansing. It means that we believe we are in principle righteous through the forgiving grace and cleansing blood of Christ. It means that though we still sin, we hate it, and though we walk in the midst of the world we do so no more as sinners, but as saints of the Most High. That is the significance of suffering in the flesh because we have the mind of Christ and have ceased from sin.

The end result of this will be twofold. No longer will we live to the lust of men, but we will live the rest of the time to the will of God.

By "the rest of the time" the apostle evidently refers to the time we have yet to live upon this earth. The reference is from the time of our conversion to the time of our death. During that time we live in the flesh, that is, in the present body in which we are still enticed to follow after the lusts of the flesh.

By "the lusts of the flesh" is meant all kinds of lust, probably with the emphasis on sexual lusts, but not these exclusively. They to whom this epistle was directed once lived in these lusts. Then they walked according to these lusts. Since their conversion from paganism, however, this has changed. No longer do they live in lusts. In the verses that follow our text the apostle explains what their former conduct had been, and how now through the grace of God this had changed. So great had the change been that their former companions in evil had noticed and thought it strange. For, says the apostle, "The time past of our life may suffice us to have wrought the will of the Gentiles, when we walked in lasciviousness, lusts, excess of wine, revellings, banqueting, and abominable idolatries." This rather detailed description of their past life not only relates how far the natural man goes in seeking to satisfy his flesh, but also that this desire of the Gentiles is motivated by and closely associated with some form of religion. The latter is implied in the "abominable idolatries." In the service of Bacchus, their idol god, they indulged in all sorts of wild orgies. As the apostle Paul describes it in Romans 1, even the created sexual relations were

abandoned, so that men with men (and we suppose even women with women) left the natural course to do things unseemly and contrary to nature. Homosexuality and Lesbianism of today is not something new, nor is it new that now these forms of lust assume a cultist, religious connection. This wickedness was in the open already in the days of the apostles. And they to whom this epistle is directed lived in these sins.

But the gospel came, and with it the grace of Christ that changed them. So they no longer live their lives in this body of flesh to the lusts of men, i.e., human lusts. By grace they have ceased from sin, and they now live as saints. Not unnoticed are they by their former companions in lust, who not only think them strange, but hate and persecute them. They are determined by the grace of God no longer to live according to the lust of the flesh, but to the will of God.

The mind of Christ with which they are now armed, moves them to seek to do the will of God for the rest of their lives upon the earth. The will of the flesh is brought into subjection to the will of God for their lives.

And what is the will of God for their lives? That they live holily, honoring the law of God which is good, fighting against sin and corruption, revealing the new man which is in Christ Jesus. Yes, even when this entails reproach, mockery, and even persecution unto death.

As Christ suffered as the innocent One, so be ye armed in your mind to suffer for His sake.

Such indeed have ceased from sin, and live in respect to the will of God.

The time is short. Not long do we have to live in the body of this flesh. Seventy or perhaps eighty years, and we are completely delivered from all the evil lust. But he who lives to the will of God, and has ceased from sin, has the principle of eternal life. Such life has no end, but issues into a most blessed relation with the living God. This is eternal life, that we may know Him through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen!

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## NOTICE!!!

Classis West of the Protestant Reformed Churches will meet in Edgerton, Minnesota on March 7, 1979 at 8:30 A.M. Material for the Agenda must be in my hands thirty days before Classis convenes. Delegates in need of lodging should inform the clerk of the Edgerton consistory.

Rev. David Engelsma, Stated Clerk

## Editor's Notes

*Subscription Price Increase.* The Board of the RFPA informs me that effective March 1 the price of the *Standard Bearer* will increase to \$8.00 per year (\$6.00 for Australasian subscribers). This is an increase of \$1.00 since October, 1968. We have no excuses, only reasons. Frankly, this increase is unrealistic: it does not even keep up with inflation (which since 1968 would have meant a 100% increase) or with legitimate increased costs of production. We have no qualms, therefore; nor have we any fears that our subscribers will forsake us because of this small increase. Meanwhile, we wish to emphasize that well over HALF of our productions costs are met by gifts from congregations and individuals. If it were not for these gifts, I fear our magazine would be priced right out of existence! May I dare to suggest that WE should also inflate our GIFTS? That would serve two ends: 1) Avoid further increase in subscription rates. 2) Enable our Board to engage in increased witnessing via our magazine. May I also urge, as I have so many times before, that YOU make it your personal business to gain new subscribers and readers for our magazine? What have you done lately???

\* \* \* \* \*

*Apologies to Rev. Heys.* There must have been some gremlins at work at our typesetter's shop. In his report from "down under" (Dec. 15 issue) two paragraphs were transposed, with the result that Rev. Heys's report began with "But..." If you were confused, try starting the report with the first two paragraphs of page 141, column one. Then go back to page 140. Sorry, Rev. Heys!

\* \* \* \* \*

*Advance Notice, Western Michigan Readers!* A last minute telephone call before the deadline for this issue asked me to inform you that the Spring Lecture in this area will be held, D.V., on May 2. Reserve the date, please. Did you say "spring"? As I write this, the thermometer reads 2 degrees above zero (F.), and there are some 21 inches of snow on the ground!

\* \* \* \* \*

*Book Suggestion.* Our editorial department has been devoted lately to the subject of the covenant. Would you like to do more of an in-depth study of this important subject? Let me recommend Herman Hoeksema's *Believers And Their Seed*. I recommend the whole book, but especially Chapters 5-11. You can obtain it for \$1.95 in the paperback edition. Write to: RFPA Publications, P.O. Box 2006, Grand Rapids, MI 49501.

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*Covenant Church, Wyckoff, N.J.* Somehow or other a couple of things went wrong with Covenant Prot. Ref. Church's attempt to advertise their bonds. That this little and isolated congregation needs help with their building project, no one can doubt. One way of helping is to respond to their appeal to purchase their bonds (see Dec. 15 issue). At least, write for their Prospectus to find out whether you can help and whether you fit into their plans. Write to: Mr. Clarence De Groot, 176 Prescott Ave., Prospect Park, N.J. 07508. Phone: (201) 278-6791.

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*Reminder.* Questions for Question Box must be signed — and not with a pseudonym. They will not be published with your name, but they must be signed in order to be accepted for publication and answer.

## EDITORIALS

Prof. H. C. Hoeksema

# A Historical Sphere of the Covenant?

We promised to devote separate attention to the matter of the historical sphere of the covenant, an idea which was criticized by the Rev. J. Geertsema in *Clarion*, The Canadian Reformed Magazine, (Nov. 4, 1978), pp. 489, ff. The Rev. Geertsema does not believe that there is such a thing. He writes:

And when Prof. Hoeksema comes with the idea of a historic sphere of the covenant for the reprobate in the church, then I say, "No, I cannot find this in Scripture."

I do not believe that the one child, being baptized, is "in the covenant," and that the other child being baptized is only "in the sphere of the covenant," but not "in the covenant" itself. I do not believe that God assures the one child in its baptism: "I make My covenant with you in Christ"; and that God says to that other child in its baptism: "To you I give nothing. For you your baptism is a fake baptism, an empty form." Can God really do a thing like that? Is baptism meant that way? Then we had better baptize adults who have the certainty that they belong to the elect, and not babies.

Now I have already pointed out in the previous issue that Geertsema imputes to us something that we do not believe when he suggests that we teach that in the case of reprobate children baptism is a fake baptism and an empty form. Baptism is never fake, and it is never an empty form. Neither, however, does baptism say anything individualistic, such as Geertsema suggests, to and concerning a given infant when it is baptized, "I make My covenant with you in Christ." One simply does not find such language in our Baptism Form. If you try to apply the beautiful language of our Baptism Form to every individual

child that is baptized, you not only run completely stuck and run into insoluble problems, but you also will end by making God a liar. The latter, of course, no one wants to do. But to avoid this you have to read the Baptism Form with some kind of mental reservation or some kind of mental parenthetical insertion. The Kuyperians have to insert a "presupposition." The Heynsians and the Liberated have to insert the idea that the promise is only an objective bequest to all which is dependent upon the fulfillment of a condition. The difficulty for both is that the Baptism Form speaks of *facts, realities*. Take, for example, that beautiful prayer of thanksgiving after baptism: "Almighty God and merciful Father, we thank and praise Thee, that Thou hast forgiven us, and our children, all our sins, through the blood of thy beloved Son Jesus Christ, and received us through thy Holy Spirit as members of thine only begotten Son, and adopted us to be thy children, and sealed and confirmed the same unto us by holy baptism. . . ." Notice the strong and factual language. But the moment you try to understand that "us and our children" in such a way that it includes *all* children born of believing parents and *all* children who are baptized, these words will choke in your throat because you know that they are not true. You are compelled to insert something, such as "presupposedly" or "conditionally." But as soon as you make the insertion, all reason for thanksgiving is gone. What this remark comes down to as far as my difference with the Rev. Geertsema is concerned is this: let him explain the Thanksgiving in our Baptism Form *in such a way that it includes reprobate children*. I very boldly say in advance: he cannot do

so! And yet he wants to have God say in baptism to *every* baptized child, "I make My covenant with you in Christ."

But let us return to that question of a historical sphere of the covenant.

First of all, let me point out that this historical sphere of the covenant is not *limited* to the reprobate in the church. Also the elect children, the children of the promise, the seed, are born and grow up in that same historical sphere of the covenant. But there is this difference: the elect children, the seed, are *in* the covenant, while the reprobate are not. The reprobate children are born and grow up in the *sphere* of the covenant; but the promise, "I will be your God," is not for them. Instead, all that they experience in that historical sphere of the covenant functions, and that, too, according to God's purpose, for their hardening and condemnation. The elect children are both in the sphere of the covenant and in the covenant; and all that they experience in that sphere of the covenant functions as a means of grace and for their conversion and their salvation.

In the second place, it is very evident from the paragraphs quoted above that the real objection of the Rev. Geertsema is not to the idea of a historical sphere of the covenant, nor even to the idea of a historical sphere of the covenant for the reprobate in the church. No, the real objection is to the fact that we *do not include the reprobate in the covenant*. Geertsema wants all children of believers, both elect and reprobate, in the covenant. He wants to make them all heirs of the promise. He wants to maintain that God in baptism says to *all*: "I make my covenant with you in Christ." In other words, he wants general grace and a general promise in the sphere of the covenant. At the conclusion of his article he desperately tries to bring in election and reprobation; and in doing so, he vainly tries to find support for his view in the Canons of Dordrecht. But he corrupts the Canons, and actually writes as though the First Head is not First and is not followed by all the other heads of doctrine flowing from that First Head — on divine predestination. And he reminds me of a remark made by an old friend when the condition controversy was raging in our churches in the 1950s (thanks partly to the Liberated), "De genade komt achteraan als een hinkende paard. (Grace lags on behind like a lame horse.)"

But, in the third place, there can be no doubt about the reality, in the light of Scripture, of such a thing as the historical sphere of the covenant. That historical sphere of the covenant coincides with the historical *line* of the covenant, which is always the line of generations. First of all, this is simply history, recounted in Scripture. Permit me to quote from Herman Hoeksema's *Believers And Their Seed*, pp.

86, ff., for a brief summation of this idea:

"Already before the Deluge there is always a twofold seed in the spiritual sense: the seed of the woman and the seed of the serpent. And this twofold people is also found in the line of two distinct generations, that of Seth and that of Cain. It is not thus, that now for a time the Lord establishes His covenant with Seth's generations, in order then to return again to Cain. Nor is it thus, that God always has His children in both generations, and calls them out of both lines. No, the generations of Seth are the generations of God's people, while the generations of Cain are not included in God's covenant. This is so strong that there can be no reasonable doubt but that by the expression "sons of God" the Sethites are meant, while "the daughters of men" refers to children from the generation of Cain.

"Before the flood, therefore, the line of God's covenant runs in the continued generations from Seth to Noah. Indeed, even then not all who are out of Seth according to the flesh are God's people. There are indeed many who fall away, and the line is repeatedly pruned and narrowed down until only eight souls can enter into the ark of salvation. But that does not change the fact that the line runs through in the generations of Seth even unto the flood.

"After the flood it is no different. The line of Shem is chosen by the Lord. In that line God establishes His covenant. Of course, this may never be understood as if after the flood there was never any child of God except in the line of the generations of Shem. This is no more true than that all the fleshly children of Shem were spiritual children of God. Things always develop organically. Also Japheth is out of Noah. And undoubtedly for a time, next to the covenant generations of Shem there were also other lines of children of God, especially from Japheth. But only in Shem's generations does the line run through. In those generations is the main line. With them God establishes His covenant. Presently, out of Shem comes Abraham; and out of Abraham is Israel as the nation to whom pertaineth the covenants and the giving of the law. Out of Israel is Judah; and out of Judah is David; and out of David's house is the Christ of God, the head of God's covenant. Throughout the Old Testament, therefore, the line of God's covenant runs in generations, the continued generations of believers. From Adam to Christ is one unbroken line. Indeed, that line sometimes almost disappears from view; but it is never broken.

"Neither is it true that this historical line is broken at the dawn of the new dispensation, as Baptists of every description like to present it. Indeed, the exalted Savior breaks the bonds of Israel's national

existence and gathers His church in the new dispensation out of all tribes and nations and tongues. Nevertheless, it is simply history that also in the days of the New Testament the line of continued generations is drawn through also among the nations. This accounts for it that also the preaching of the gospel follows such a definite line, a line which may be readily traced on a world map. The course of the gospel is from Jerusalem through Samaria to Antioch, presently through Asia Minor to Greece and Rome, from whence it spreads throughout Europe, and in due course crosses the ocean with the generations of God's people to the Western Hemisphere. History is never thus, that here and there a few believers are called, that a few individuals enter into the church of Christ, called out of the darkness of heathendom, in order then to disappear again from those regions. But history is thus, that the church of Christ in the world is established and in various definite places continues to exist in generations. Fact is that even now every particular church in the world establishes itself in the conviction that God will maintain His covenant even to a thousand generations. In that faith believers come together. In that faith they join with one another. In that faith the church is visibly instituted by them, and churches and schools are built by them. After all, they do all these things with an eye to the future. If they were actually of the conviction that the Lord did not establish His covenant with believers and their seed, and that therefore a certain church could simply end with the existing generation, they would not act thus. But now it is different. The Lord establishes His covenant and will perform the work of His grace in the line of the continued generations of believers. Also in the new dispensation the line of the history of God's covenant runs through, even to a thousand generations."

One could enlarge on this idea in connection especially with the history of the old dispensation. Who does not recognize, for example, that the line ran through in the case of Abraham not with Ishmael or the sons of Keturah, but with Isaac? Who does not recognize that in Isaac's case the line was continued with Jacob, not with Esau? Who does not recognize the significant difference between being a member of the nation of Israel and being an uncircumcised Philistine, or a Moabite, or an Edomite?

But remember, secondly, that there is a clear distinction between the "seed" and the generations in which that seed is brought forth and grows up. Scripture itself makes this distinction. I will not now refer to Romans 9, which has much, very much, to say on this subject. I will limit myself to one very simple passage, Genesis 17:7, where God says to Abraham, "I will establish my covenant between me

and thee *and thy seed after thee in their generations* for an everlasting covenant. . . ." Notice already from this text by itself that there is a distinction made between *seed* and *generations*. Those generations include all the fleshly children of Abraham in the line of Isaac, all the physical descendants of Abraham in the line of the covenant in the old dispensation. The "seed" is something different, however. We must not make the mistake of identifying the "seed" with the physical descendants of Abraham. And we have Scripture itself to teach us this. For in Galatians 3:7-9 we read: "Know ye therefore that they which are of faith, the same are the children of Abraham. And the scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the heathen through faith, preached before the gospel unto Abraham, saying, In thee shall all nations be blessed. So then they which be of faith are blessed with faithful Abraham." Or combine the thoughts of Galatians 3:16 and 29. In verse 16 we read: "Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He saith not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, And to thy seed, which is Christ." And in vs. 29 we read: "And if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise." It is plain, therefore, that the "seed" is the believers, those who are Christ's, that is, the elect. And the line in which that seed is continuously found is the line of the generations of believers — generations which contain, indeed, more than that elect seed, contain also reprobate children, but in which indeed that elect seed, the heirs of the promise, are found.

It is that line of the generations of believers which constitutes essentially the historical sphere of the covenant.

But there are many facets which belong to this sphere. To it belongs, for example, training in a godly home and by believing parents. To it belongs the fact that one comes under the preaching of the Word, the fact that one comes under the administration of the sacraments, the fact that one comes under catechetical instruction, the fact that one comes under the exercise of Christian discipline, and a host of other, related, matters. Elect children of believers and reprobate children of believers are born, develop, live, grow up in that same sphere and under the same influences. In that sphere they share all things — except grace. For the elect heirs of the promise all of the above function as a savour of life unto life, while for the reprobate, carnal children all of the above function as a savour of death unto death, and that, too, according to God's purpose.

More, much more, could be said about this subject, particularly about the reprobate in the sphere of the covenant. But let this suffice for the time being.

## A Falling Away of the Saints?

In the same article by the Rev. Geertsema to which we have already referred, he seeks to pile up arguments in favor of the position that the covenant can be broken. In the course of his effort he attempts what, surely, the writer to the Hebrews himself would not have done, namely, in the course of a brief paragraph "to bring the whole epistle to the Hebrews to the readers' attention."

But in the course of this brief paragraph he opens himself to the accusation that he denies the perseverance of the saints.

Now I realize that Geertsema will emphatically deny this, and that he will assert that he believes the doctrine of perseverance taught in Canons V. But let the reader judge.

Rev. Geertsema writes: "This epistle especially speaks about the new and eternal covenant of grace, in which also the Hebrews share, being once for all perfected by the sacrifice of Christ."

However, in the same paragraph he writes: "It is evident that people of the new covenant can fall away." And he adds: "If this is not so, I cannot understand the New Testament in its serious warnings against apostasy and unfaithfulness."

Now I call attention to the fact, first of all, that in the last quoted sentence there is a typically Arminian argument. Arminians love to argue from Scripture's warnings against apostasy and unfaithfulness to the possibility of apostasy and unfaithfulness, and thus falling away, on the part of the saints.

But, secondly, much more serious is the flat statement: "It is evident that people of the new covenant can fall away."

I write this in the light of what the epistle to the Hebrews itself states concerning that "new covenant." We read in Hebrews 8:8-12: "For finding fault with them, he saith, Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah: Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day when I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt; because they continued not in my covenant, and I regarded them not, saith the Lord. For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, saith the Lord; I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts: and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people: And they shall not teach every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord: for all shall know me, from the least to the greatest. For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more."

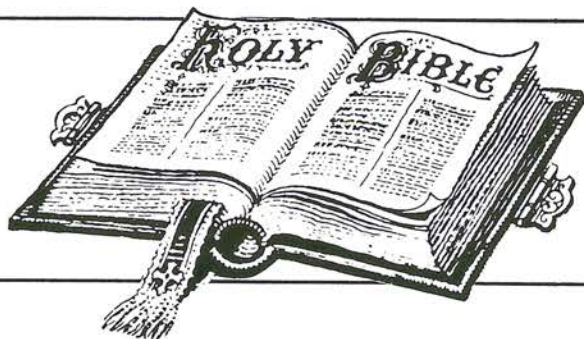
Now it is evident that "people of the new covenant" are people in whose mind are God's laws, in whose heart those laws are written, people to whom God is their God, people who know the Lord, people to whose unrighteousness God is merciful, people whose sins and iniquities God will remember no more. All this is implied in the "new covenant."

In a word, people of the new covenant are saints.

Of such people, and that, too, with reference to Hebrews 10:25-end, Geertsema asserts that they can fall away.

Pure Arminianism!

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## TAKING HEED TO THE DOCTRINE

# The Reformed Doctrine of Reprobation

*Rev. David Engelsma*

### The Relationship between Reprobation and Election (cont.)

One important truth concerning the relationship of election and reprobation in the one decree of God must still be noted. Reprobation is not of equal importance with election, does not stand on one line with election. Election is central and primary, whereas reprobation is subservient and secondary. We repudiate the charge often brought against the Reformed doctrine of double predestination, that it give equal weight to election and to reprobation. Men express this charge by alleging that the defenders of double predestination hold the “equal ultimacy” of election and reprobation (which is not the same as the “equal eternality” or “equal sovereignty” of election and reprobation).

In Scripture, election is prominent, outstandingly so. Election is on the foreground, and reprobation is the dark background that serves to make election stand out in bold relief. The all-important truth is God’s gracious election of Jacob-Israel; wholly subservient is the just rejection of Esau. All the Reformed creeds reflect this Biblical centrality of election.

Reprobation serves election. It illustrates and recommends to believers the pure graciousness of election. The rejection of Esau shows the sovereign grace of the choice of Jacob. The other thief on Calvary serves to outline the sovereign mercy of God in the saving of the penitent thief. The perishing of many around me according to a sovereign decree of reprobation drives home to me the utter grace of my own salvation.

In history, the reprobate serve the elect, as the

chaff serves the grain. The outstanding instance, and example, is Judas Iscariot. That devil betrayed Jesus — a deed that plunged the traitor into perdition. This took place according to the eternal ordination of God (Luke 22:21, 22; Acts 1:16; Acts 4:27, 28). By this, the reprobate served to bring The Elect of God to the cross, so that He might there redeem all that the Father had given Him.

In light of this relationship of election and reprobation, as revealed in Scripture, we must defend the doctrine of reprobation against the attacks made on it today from within the Reformed camp; and the vigor of our defense must be the ardor of our love for election.

### Reprobation Defended

We consider four attacks on reprobation. The first is so hoary with age and has been so thoroughly discredited that one is tempted to ignore it. Yet, since it is part of the offensive against reprobation within Reformed churches, it should be noted, if ever so briefly. It is the familiar charge, so dear to Roman Catholicism and Lutheranism (after Luther!), that the Reformed doctrine of reprobation is nothing but “heathen fatalism,” or “determinism.” By this charge is meant both that reprobation makes God the Author of sin and that reprobation destroys human responsibility and activity, preaching, baptizing, praying, warning, repenting, and doing good works, because “if you are lost, you are lost.” Indeed, those who make the charge like to leave the impression with the people that reprobation teaches that one could desire salvation, but be turned away because he is a reprobate. It is the charge faced by the Canons of Dordt in the Conclusion:

... some ... have violated all truth, equity, and charity, in wishing to persuade the public "that the doctrine of the Reformed churches concerning predestination, and the points annexed to it, by its own genius and necessary tendency, leads off the minds of men from all piety and religion; that it is an opiate administered by the flesh and the devil, and the stronghold of Satan, where he lies in wait for all; and from which he wounds multitudes, and mortally strikes through many with the darts both of despair and security; that it makes God the author of sin, unjust, tyrannical, hypocritical; that it is nothing more than interpolated (altered — D.E.) Stoicism, Manicheism, Libertinism, Turcism; that it renders men carnally secure, since they are persuaded by it that nothing can hinder the salvation of the elect, let them live as they please; and therefore, that they may safely perpetrate every species of the most atrocious crimes; and that, of the reprobate should even perform truly all the works of the saints, their obedience would not in the least contribute to their salvation; ... that many children of the faithful are torn, guiltless, from their mothers' breasts, and tyrannically plunged into hell; so that, neither baptism, nor the prayers of the Church at their baptism, can at all profit by them; and many other things of the same kind ..."

The Canons repudiated this charge as a detestable error: "which the Reformed Churches not only do not acknowledge, but even detest with their whole soul." They laid it in the grave, not merely by their disavowal, but by their thorough, careful explanation of predestination in all its connections. Now G.C. Berkouwer exhumes the old allegation: the confession that God gives faith to some and withholds faith from others according to His eternal decree "makes it impossible to distinguish predestination from fate (*het noodlot*);" reprobation views "God as cause" of unbelief ("*Vragen Rondom De Belijdenis*"). And Harry Boer, that he might come behind the calumnies of the Arminians in nothing, refers to reprobation as "so sinister and doomful a teaching," caricaturing it as "a sovereign wrath that damns men to an existence of everlasting death without regard to any demerit on their part" ("Gravamen").

Against the charge of determinism, we maintain that predestination is not the fixed, blind fate of heathen philosophy that shuts men up to resignation. Rather, it is the wise, good, gracious, and righteous will of the living God. God realizes His counsel of predestination in such a way, although incomprehensible to us, that He establishes and maintains the full responsibility of man and the significance of human history. "And truly the Son of man goeth, as it was determined: but woe unto that man by whom he is betrayed!" The place and importance of preaching, baptizing, praying, repenting, believing, using the means of grace in the Church, and doing good works are not jeopardized in the least. As

regards reprobation, no one is ever refused salvation who turns to God for mercy; not even the weakest member of the congregation — the smoking flax and the bruised reed — who persists in the use of the means of grace should be alarmed at the mention of reprobation. Also, the reprobate go on in their sin, deliberately and wickedly, so that their final condemnation is strictly on the basis of their own guilt.

We have a question for those who hurl against reprobation the charge, "determinism": If an eternal decree of rejection is determinism, is not an eternal decree of election also determinism? And if the counsel of predestination is determinism, must not a counsel of providence, by the same token, be determinism? Is it not the ambition of those who are crying, "determinism," that men, not God, shall control their own destiny in time and eternity?

Another attack is the profession of reprobation, while viewing it only as God's act in history of punishing the wicked who stubbornly refuse the call of the gospel and impenitently disobey the law. "This means that any doctrine of reprobation is illegitimate by biblical standards *except that which biblical teaching sanctions*: that he who rejects God, God rejects" (James Daane, *The Freedom of God*, p. 200). Reprobation is the judgment of God upon the wicked that is described in Romans 1. Not Romans 9, as the Reformed have always supposed, but Romans 1 is the classic passage on reprobation. This is a denial of reprobation as an eternal decree.

There certainly is a dreadful judgment of God upon the wicked in time and history, because of their unbelief and disobedience. Reformed preaching must thunder this. Nor does the doctrine of reprobation as an eternal decree in any way minimize this judgment, much less annul it; reprobation exactly declares God to be an awful avenger of sin. But this act of God in history is not reprobation. Romans 9 teaches a rejection of Esau in hatred *before* he was born or had done good or evil; a hardening of certain men in time and history according to a will that *preceded*; a *raising up* of Pharaoh for the purpose of showing God's power in him; and a Divine *fitting* of some vessels unto destruction.

We have a question for those who make reprobation God's rejection in time of those who reject Him: Why does not God reject us all? Are we not all alike totally depraved, incapable of believing and capable only of rejecting? On the principle, "he who rejects God, God rejects," are we not shut up to the terrible conclusion, "therefore, God rejects *all*?" But Scripture reveals that some believe and are accepted by God, whereas others go on in the unbelief that is common to human nature and are cast away. Why? Why do some believe and find grace, whereas others do not? Scripture answers this question. Those who

believe do so because they were ordained to eternal life, i.e., they were elected (Acts 13:48). Those who do not believe do not because they are not of Jesus' sheep, i.e., they were reprobated (John 10:26). Must not the answer of those who deny reprobation as an eternal decree be that some members of the human

race distinguish themselves from others in believing, in not rejecting God? Is not their answer that God is wholly dependent on the sinner, not only in rejecting, but also in choosing?

(to be continued)

## GUEST ARTICLE

# Ask for the Old Paths

*Rev. R. G. Moore*

In this article, I would like to consider the truth as given to us by our God in a particular text of Scripture. It is a Word of God that is especially appropriate to consider in the days in which we are called to live. The text is Jeremiah 6:16: "Thus saith the LORD, Stand ye in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls. But they said, We will not walk therein."

This text is addressed to the children of God in the day of great apostasy; and it is addressed to the church in a day of impending judgment. It was a day then to be likened with the day in which you and I live. The apostasy that runs rampant in our age is without measure, and has never been seen in this measure before. O! there has been great apostasy before. In the old dispensation in Judah the apostasy was so great that God brought them into captivity. But then the church had been gathered through one line (Israel). The church was gathered organically from the Israelites; the other nations were heathen. And that particular people walked in such a way that their apostasy was a type of the final apostasy that befalls the church in our day. Today the whole world has come under the influence of the gospel of Christ, and apostasy in our day is final. Many fall away, the love of many wax cold! And also today it speaks of impending judgment of our Holy God.

It is in those days that Christ strongly admonishes His church that they follow not the way of apostasy

unto judgment and damnation. It is then to this sounding forth of the Word of God that we now turn our attention. Thus saith Jehovah: stand in the way; ask for the old paths.

We have a glimpse of the occasion for the word of our text if we read a portion of Jeremiah 1:14ff. "Then the Lord said unto me, Out of the north an evil shall break forth upon all the inhabitants of the land. . . . And I will utter my judgments against them touching all their wickedness, who have forsaken me, and have burned incense unto other gods, and worshipped the works of their own hands." It is obvious the occasion for our text is the impending captivity of Judah as the judgment of God upon their wickedness. The judgment was severe, as it really was the end of Israel as a nation. God brought this judgment against Israel because of her wickedness and abominations. As we noted in the text quoted above, Israel had forsaken God. They had left off serving Him; they turned away from serving God and turned from His Word. The result was that they followed their own craftiness and their own understanding. This resulted in further sin: they burn incense unto other gods. This is always the way of apostasy and sin. They served gods of their own making. This indeed is the way of natural man!

When we come before that Word of God in natural strength, the result is the same. The Word says it is right and good to serve God, but by nature we say, No, it is right to serve our own need and will. The

Lord says it is right to sanctify the Lord's Day — that the day is to be set aside for the worship of God and is to be used for our seeking Him for the hearing of His Word. But we would say, no! it is a day for our leisure. Oh, we might go to church for awhile or once in awhile, but basically the day is ours. It is for our ease; we will use it to watch the football or hockey game on T.V. We will use that day for our pleasure and ease.

But understand, when one so turns from the commands of God, then it is necessary to change the Word of God. Man desires to have no longer a God that judges his activity, but rather a God of his own making, and reason. He no longer desires the God of Scripture. When the God of Scripture says to us that we are to walk before Him in such a way that the covenant relation of God to His people is to be reflected in our relationship of man to woman, then by nature we say No! We walk in sin and say the woman must be equal to man, she must have equal say, equal place in all things, her speech must be heard in the church. And then we depart and seek after other gods! God will not condone such ungodly heresy and sin. The examples could be multiplied by many. But so had Israel reasoned and sinned. They departed after other gods.

Further, we read in Jeremiah 2:5ff: "Thus saith the Lord, What iniquity have your fathers found in me, that they are gone far from me, and have walked after vanity, and are become vain, Neither said they, where is the Lord that brought us up out of the land of Egypt. . . ." The Word asks, has your God given you the occasion for departing? Then lay your charge before God! God calls our attention to the fact that He has not forsaken His ways. And it is not true that the people did not know. It is not true that the people of Israel in their history did not see that the merciful God delivers from sin, and that God by grace alone led them from captivity, led them through the wilderness, and brought them into the land of Canaan, overflowing with milk and honey, a land that typically looked forward and spoke of glory! He has revealed mercy and grace.

But what is so is that they have forsaken to rehearse the history of that gracious and merciful work of God. They ceased to talk of God's judgment against the wicked. They did not want a God who judged — a God Who would destroy every man, woman, and child in Canaan because they had filled their cup of iniquity. Rather, they wanted a god who loved all men. They despised the Word of God that spoke of an antithetical walk, a Word that demanded that they have no part with the world. They filled their heart with a new word, one that taught that we must infiltrate the world in order to make it like us. The result is very predictable, because it is always the

same. They began to worship Baal, they did not instruct their seed in the faith once delivered unto their fathers. They took the Word of God and counted it of none effect. They changed it wherever they willed and however it pleased them. This is natural man! This is you and I by nature! Do not do this with God's Word, beloved!

It is for this reason too that we need to hear the Word of our God. In this day of apostasy, in this day when judgment is impending, we need to hear. Jehovah tells us in this day as He told the church in the day of Jeremiah, Stand ye in the ways and see, and ask for the old paths, wherein is the good way. We are to stand in the way and ask for the old paths.

What is that way, and what are the old paths? A way or a path is that which leads from one point to another. That is evident. You know that figure well! When you walk in a path it takes you somewhere. When you are on a way it implies you have a goal. The way includes always the end of the way, the goal. And you are to stand in the way. In that, you are to strive to attain the end of the way. And understand, there are two different ways which one might traverse. And there are only two! The one path is, according to Christ, a broad way. It is a way easily traversed for the flesh. It is a way that brings no ridicule in life. It never limits you, it is a way that causes the parent never to say to the child — you may not! It is a way that never keeps you from obtaining your hearts desire. It is a broad way and an easy way. But, Christ says that that broad way leads to destruction!

There is another way — it is a narrow way. That narrow way is so narrow that it becomes very hard for the flesh. It is a way that we do not like by nature. For if we walk that way by the grace of God, our activity is limited, our thoughts are limited, our friends are limited, our entertainment is restricted, our work is limited. We can not obtain the high wages of the union laborer, for instance, for we are restrained by God's grace from joining ourselves in an ungodly union. That narrow way brings upon us mockery, and ridicule from the ungodly. It is a hard way for the flesh. But Christ says it is the way that leads into the fellowship of our God.

Our text concerns which way you will walk. However, it does not imply that you will make the right decision naturally. Because if it were a question of our natural choice of walk, there is no question which way we would take. Don't be so foolish to think that you would take the narrow way. You or I would never do that. There is not one of us so holy! No! if it were up to us, we know which way we would go. Oh, I know that — too much I know that! Is that not our confession?

But we have a strong and efficacious Word of God. There is no condition here. But God says, "Stand ye in the way and ask for the old paths." That is the command of our God! It is the powerful command of Christ to His church! Walk in those ways. By grace that Word takes hold of the child of God. It overpowers him. It gives him strength to fight the battle of faith.

What more specifically are those ways? The covenant youth asks the question in Psalm 119:9 "How shall a young man cleanse his way? by taking heed thereto according to thy word." It is a question that we all are concerned with, and its answer is our only comfort. The way? The old paths? That which leads into the blessed fellowship with our Father in heaven? It is the path of God's Word! God gives us His Word, and when we walk in the way, we walk in His Word. It is the remembrance of God's way, of God's law, of His deliverance, whereby we have been delivered by the blood of Christ.

We are to follow the old paths. But, today man wants everything new. And the church man wants everything new. That is why he doesn't follow the old paths any longer. The sound preaching of the Word must be replaced with something more appealing to the masses, to the youth. A little story with a moral slant will suffice. They say we want more participation in church service. We need longer liturgy. Further, the old ways offend, say they, for according to the old way we close our church service to half of the congregation. It offends when women are not able to vote or have offices in the church. We may not follow these ways, say they. And the doctrine of the old ways makes division. Much better to draft new statements of faith that will not offend, but will rather bring together all. Thus the result is that there is not rehearsed before the children the old paths. The way of salvation through the blood of the Lamb also is silent. That alone which can deliver from bondage and bring into the land of rest becomes dead. They sought new and exciting ways — a new and exciting God. The church is filled with apostasy and becomes dead!

Beloved, in that day, in this day, ask for the old ways, do not ask for the new ways, ask for the old

paths! Stand in the faithful creeds, and upon the faithful translation of the Scriptures (The King James) which is tried and found to be true over the years by our fathers. Ask for the faithful preaching of the catechism, and of the Word. Ask for the faithful labors of elders and deacons. Thus saith Jehovah.

Understand, this is not *my* word, but thus saith the *Lord*. God says this; it is His command. Oh, you may say to yourself: that is just the Bible, I will not hear. But you cannot do that. Oh, you may think that you can, but you may not without sure judgment! You may not do this and walk as God's faithful child.

Christ's word comes with power. And it strikes the child of God in his heart, and causes him to turn! The Word says, stand in the ways. From II Cor. 1:24 it is evident that faith stands so. Faith given His child by God causes one to stand in the way. And as God admonishes us to that faith, he nourishes it and strengthens it, and we shall stand and ask for the old ways. Beloved, God teaches us the means of grace that so enable faith to stand. He does so in Eph. 6:11-15. We shall stand with our loins girt about with the truth, and with our feet shod with the Word of God, having on the breastplate of righteousness. God admonishes the child of His grace to stand upon His Word and the righteousness alone in Christ.

And our text says, "and see. . . ." Not to stand founded in the faith of our fathers, upon the Word of God, is not to see. It is to dwell in darkness, and to lose all comfort of salvation. But standing by faith in the ways of God we see, and taste the blessedness of Father's fellowship in Christ Jesus our Lord. There is peace, joy, and comfort.

Thus the Spirit admonishes us to ask, to dig deeply. The same admonition of our Lord comes to us when He admonishes, "Seek ye first the kingdom of God and His righteousness." It refers to our whole walk. May God give us the grace to hear and obey. Then we shall be satisfied with the old ways. The result is peace and salvation. There is rest for your soul. The reason is that in those ways is the blood of Christ, the cross, grace, the grace to walk in the fellowship of God! Surely, then, our desire shall be to stand and to ask for the old ways and paths, to walk therein.

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## VOICE OF OUR FATHERS

# The Holy Supper of Our Lord Jesus Christ

*Prof. Robert D. Decker*

"We believe and confess that our Savior Jesus Christ did ordain and institute the sacrament of the holy supper, to nourish and support those whom he hath already regenerated, and incorporated into his family, which is his church. Now those, who are regenerated, have in them a twofold life, the one corporal and temporal, which they have from the first birth, and is common to all men: the other spiritual and heavenly, which is given them in their second birth, which is effected by the word of the gospel, in the communion of the body of Christ; and this life is not common, but is peculiar to God's elect. In like manner God hath given us, for the support of the bodily and earthly life, earthly and common bread, which is subservient thereto, and is common to all men, even as life itself. But for the support of the spiritual and heavenly life, which believers have, he hath sent a living bread, which descended from heaven, namely, Jesus Christ, who nourishes and strengthens the spiritual life of believers, when they eat him, that is to say, when they apply and receive him by faith in the spirit. Christ, that he might represent unto us this spiritual and heavenly bread, hath instituted an earthly and visible bread as a sacrament of his body, and wine as a sacrament of his blood, to testify by them unto us, that, as certainly as we receive and hold this sacrament in our hands, and eat and drink the same with our mouths, by which our life is afterwards nourished, we also do as certainly receive by faith (which is the hand and mouth of our soul) the true body and blood of Christ our only Savior in our souls, for the support of our spiritual life. Now as it is certain and beyond all doubt, that Jesus Christ hath not enjoined to us the use of his sacraments in vain, so he works in us all that he represents to us by these holy signs, though the manner surpasses our understanding, and cannot be comprehended by us, as the operations of Holy Ghost are hidden and incomprehensible. In the meantime we err not, when we say, that what is eaten and drunk by us is the proper and natural body, and the proper blood of Christ. But the manner of our partaking of the same, is not by the mouth, but by the spirit through faith . . ."

Article XXXV, *The Belgic Confession*

Because Christ instituted the Lord's Supper along with Baptism as the two sacraments for His church it follows that our *Confession*, having discussed Baptism, now speaks of the Lord's Supper. The two sacraments are related as far as their meaning and significance are concerned. Baptism is first because it is the sign and seal of the believer's entrance into the covenant of God, into the spiritual family of God. The Lord's Supper follows, for it is the sign and seal

of the believer's abiding within the fellowship of that covenant, his being nourished and sustained in God's household. For this reason Baptism is administered but once while the holy supper is celebrated repeatedly. Still more, this is also the reason why Baptism is administered to children in the line of the covenant, while confessing believers partake of the Lord's Supper. All this the *Confession* emphasizes: "We believe and confess, that our Savior Jesus Christ

did ordain and institute the sacrament of the holy supper, to nourish and support those whom he hath already regenerated, and incorporated into his family, which is his church." The supper is instituted for regenerated believers, those already incorporated into the family of God which is His church.

While the *Confession* refrains from polemics and presents the truth concerning the Lord's Supper positively, it does, nevertheless, stand against the errors which have arisen in the church with regard to this sacrament. Roman Catholicism teaches the actual physical presence of our Lord's body and blood. This according to Rome is accomplished by the miracle of transubstantiation at which time the elements of bread and wine are changed into the very body and blood of the Lord while their properties, appearance, texture, taste, etc. remain unchanged. Thus Christ is on the altar and sacrificed in an unbloody manner. This our Heidelberg Catechism rightly calls an "accursed idolatry." But from this it follows that the grace imparted by the sacrament is received automatically and that too by all who partake whether they be believers or unbelievers. The error of Lutheranism which is called by the name, consubstantiation, is somewhat more complicated. Briefly, Lutheranism teaches that the bread and wine are not literally changed into the body and blood of our Lord, but the body and blood of Christ are "in, with, and under" the bread and wine. Principally this is no different from Roman Catholicism. Zwingli went to the opposite extreme and taught that the sacrament is not really a means of grace, but merely a memorial meal. The church celebrates the Lord's Supper merely to remember the Lord's death. There is no grace communicated to the believer through this celebration.

Overagainst these errors stands the teaching of the Word of God concerning the sacrament of the Lord's Supper. This teaching is beautifully set forth by the *Confession*. The *Confession* begins its discussion by speaking of the need of the sacrament. This need is spoken of from the point of view of the two-fold life of the regenerated elect. There is the natural life. This life is common to all men. It is received from the first or natural birth and it is a life which is temporal and corporal. For the support of this "bodily and earthly life" God has given us "earthly and common bread, which is subservient thereto, and is common to all men, even as life itself." The regenerated also have a spiritual life. This is the heavenly life which is given them in their second birth. This life is "effected by the Word of the gospel, in the communion of the body of Christ, and this life is not common, but is peculiar to God's elect." For the support of this spiritual and heavenly life which belongs to believers God has sent "a living bread, which descended from

heaven, namely, Jesus Christ, who nourishes and strengthens the spiritual life of believers, when they eat him, that is to say, when they apply and receive him by faith in the spirit."

To represent to the believer this spiritual and heavenly bread, Christ Jesus, Christ has instituted an earthly and visible bread as a sacrament of His body, and wine as a sacrament of His blood. These the believer must eat and drink with his mouth as the sign and seal of his receiving Christ by faith, the "hand and mouth of our soul." The elements, therefore, of the Lord's Supper are signs and seals. These elements are the bread and the wine which are the signs and seals of Christ's body and blood. This is literally the Scriptures: "And he (Christ) took bread, and gave thanks, and brake it, and gave unto them, saying, This is my body which is given for you: this do in remembrance of me. Likewise also the cup after supper, saying, This cup is the new testament in my blood, which is shed for you." (Luke 22:19, 20) Furthermore, belonging to the elements of the supper are the breaking of the bread and the pouring out of the wine, and the communion of the saints gathered about the table. These are signs because they point to spiritual and invisible realities. The bread and wine stand for the body and blood of our Lord. The breaking of the bread points to the breaking of Christ's body on the cross and the pouring out of the wine to the shedding of His blood. Taken together, therefore, the broken bread and poured out wine point to the vicarious and meritorious suffering and death of Jesus Christ on the cross. The gathering of the saints about the table points to the fellowship of the saints in the body of Christ. These elements are seals because they are visible pledges or guarantees of God that He will actually give that which is signified.

As to the eating and drinking of the bread and the wine the believer does not literally eat and drink the body and blood of Christ. Some think the *Confession* teaches this when it says: "In the meantime we err not, when we say, that what is eaten and drunk by us is the proper and natural body, and the proper blood of Christ." We must not fail to note, however, that the *Confession* goes on to say: "But the manner of our partaking of the same, is not by the mouth, but by the spirit through faith." The believer really eats and drinks the body and blood of Christ, but he does so by faith which is "the hand and mouth of our soul." This means that by faith the believer lays hold on Christ and all the blessings of His cross and makes them his own. This is accomplished by the operation of the Spirit in his heart and through the Word brought by the minister, which Word is the Word of Christ Who is the host at this spiritual banquet. This operation of the Spirit "surpasses our understanding, and cannot be comprehended by us, as the operations

of the Holy Ghost are hidden and incomprehensible.”

The blessings received by the believer through the Lord's Supper are many and rich. His spiritual life and faith are nourished and fed by these visible signs and seals. Our Lord Jesus Christ Himself Who is in heaven comes to the believer and makes him partaker of Himself and all His blessings. The *Confession* puts it beautifully when it says: “Christ gives us there to enjoy both himself, and the merits of his sufferings and death, nourishing, strengthening and comforting our poor comfortless souls by the eating of his flesh, quickening and refreshing them by the drinking of his blood.”

Finally, the *Confession* speaks of the proper partakers of this sacrament and of the necessity of true self-examination. There is a two-fold operation of the sacrament. The believer who partakes in faith is blessed; he receives the grace of salvation and life through the means of the sacrament. The unbeliever is condemned, condemned the greater for having partaken. As the creed says: “Furthermore, though the sacraments are connected with the thing signified, nevertheless both are not received by all men: the

ungodly indeed receives the sacrament to his condemnation, but he doth not receive the truth of the sacrament.”

Proper self-examination is, therefore, necessary for the believer. The Scripture says: “But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup. For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself, not discerning the Lord's body.” (I Corinthians 11:28, 29) This self-examination must be to discover whether we are in the faith and walking in the right way of sanctification before the face of God. This includes the knowledge of our sins and our sinful natures. The believer must know that by nature he is a sinner who is incapable of doing any good. He must know whether he is truly sorry for these sins and weaknesses and earnestly desirous to fight against them and walk in the way of God's commandments. He must learn to seek his salvation outside of himself in Christ Jesus. Thus in godly sorrow and in true repentance the believer humbly draws near to the table of the Lord to be nourished up unto everlasting life.

## THE STRENGTH OF YOUTH

# Truly Wise

*Rev. Ron Van Overloop*

Do any of you remember the first question and answer of the Essentials catechism book?

The first question of Lesson One is, “What is above all things precious?” The answer is, “The knowledge of the true God through Jesus Christ Whom He has sent. John 17:3.”

A couple of months ago we wrote about how well we know the Scriptures. There is a reason why it is so important that we have a good grasp of the Scriptures. That reason is given in the second question and answer of Lesson One. “Why is this knowledge so precious? Because it is necessary for the

possession and enjoyment of the highest good. Psalm 144:15.” The next question and answer tell us that the highest good is covenant-fellowship with the ever-blessed God.

(Did you look up John 17:3 and Psalm 144:15? Do you see how they are proof?)

Do you know of other passages of the Word of God which also prove that a knowledge of God is necessary for salvation?

Assuming to be true that to know of our salvation it is necessary for us to know God, we ask, How can one know God?

We know God only because He has revealed Himself to us. The Bible is God's revelation.

We may then say that to know of our salvation it is necessary for us to know God as He is revealed in the Scriptures. This is proven by II Timothy 3:15, "... the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus." The Scriptures are able to make you to know your salvation.

\* \* \* \* \*

Do you ever think about whether the Bible is true? Or whether God really is?

Do you wonder whether you are a child of God? Are you absolutely sure you are elect? Or is it a matter of little concern?

If you do wonder and are not absolutely sure, then the answer is simple: READ THE SCRIPTURES. Read them AGAIN. And AGAIN. And then do it again. Do you think it is sufficient to read the Scriptures only once a day? Remember: they are able to make you wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus.

The unbeliever is "ever learning and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth." (II Timothy 3:7) But he who comes to the Scriptures with faith in Christ Jesus is made wise unto salvation.

\* \* \* \* \*

There is only one state and condition which is joyful, peaceful, and truly blessed and happy. That is SALVATION. In it one is free from guilt. He enjoys the blessedness of being right with God. He is already delivered from the power of sin. He receives the grace to repent.

The way to this state is the holy Scriptures. In Psalm 19:7 we read, "The law of the LORD is perfect, converting the soul: the testimony of the LORD is sure, making *wise* the simple." And in Psalm 119:98 we find more proof: "Thou through thy commandments hast made me *wiser* than mine enemies: for they are ever with me."

The holy Scriptures have this power because "all scripture is given by inspiration of God." (II Timothy 3:16)

God moved and directed men so to write His Word that He alone is the author. The Almighty used a living, thinking, reasoning, knowing man to write. The Only Wise One had each writer of the holy Scriptures born at a certain time and place, possessing specific gifts, equipped with a definite kind of education, undergoing specific experiences. The Holy Spirit prepared each man and moved him to pen with his own style the exact words God desired.

Therefore the holy Scriptures are without error and contradiction.

They are of absolute authority. They and they alone determine what is right and what is wrong, not our imagination, nor our desires. They alone determine what we must believe and how we must live. With Martin Luther we must hold to them alone.

They are sufficient. They give to us all we need to know for belief and life. We need nothing more than what God has given to us in the Bible.

They interpret themselves. With a few, useful aids such as a concordance and dictionary, we are able to gain an understanding of the Scriptures.

\* \* \* \* \*

What do we learn which makes us wise unto salvation through faith?

Briefly we learn: 1. God is a sovereign God Who created and upholds all things. 2. God is jealous of His love and loves only those in Jesus Christ. They alone are made happy. 3. Man deserves no blessing, for he is conceived in sin and of himself only daily increases his guilt. 4. Jesus alone is the ground for salvation because He bore the curse due to us and satisfied God's justice. 5. Jesus Christ calls us to the power of the gospel, raising us from spiritual death and giving us life by His Spirit. 6. He is coming again to make all things new and establish a kingdom of glory and joy.

The holy Scriptures teach us that we are saved by grace alone. Therefore we must live in conformity with God's will. We must live at peace with God and our neighbor within the law of love. The Scriptures teach obedience in the place of rebellion, honesty in place of the lie, holiness instead of lust, love rather than hate.

\* \* \* \* \*

Do you doubt? Are you afraid you are not elect?

Then do something about it! Read and study the holy Scriptures.

Know them and believe them.

They are able. They have the power. The power is activated by faith which is that gift of God by which we believe.

Therefore, read them again and again. Memorize a verse every week. We all did that in Christian grade school because we had to do it. Now let us do it because we want to do it — because we want to be wise.

Do not think that through the more reading of the Bible salvation comes. Salvation is not brought about in a mechanical fashion. Without faith it is impossible to please God.

But . . . the knowledge unto salvation through faith is strengthened and assured by reading and studying the holy Scriptures. There is no way it can get into

your heart except through your head.

\* \* \* \* \*

A world-wide problem in the Church today is the appalling ignorance.

The demise of the Protestant Reformed Churches (which I earnestly pray never will come) will come because of a lack of knowledge of the holy Scriptures.

“My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge: because thou hast rejected knowledge, I will also reject thee . . . seeing thou has forgotten the law of thy God, I will also forget thy children.” Hosea 4:6.

“Behold the days come, saith the Lord GOD, that I will send a famine in the land . . . of hearing the words of the LORD: and they shall . . . run to and fro

to seek the word of the LORD, and shall not find it.” Amos 8:11, 12.

Therefore, “buy the truth and sell it not.” Proverbs 23:23.

Jesus says, “Receive my instruction, and not silver; and knowledge rather than choice gold. For wisdom is better than rubies; and all things that may be desired are not to be compared to it.” Proverbs 8:10, 11.

“Wise men lay up knowledge: but the mouth of the foolish is near destruction.” Proverbs 10:14.

Are you wise?

Do you want to be “wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus”? The holy Scriptures are able to make thee wise.

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## *MY SHEEP HEAR MY VOICE*

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# Letter to Timothy

February 1, 1979

Dear Timothy,

We have finished our discussion of the whole question of women in the office of deacons, and must now finish our discussion of this office which Christ has instituted in the Church. It is not my purpose to discuss the office of deacons fully. If you are interested in a much fuller discussion of the office, or if you wish to have your deacons study this office more in detail, I recommend P. Y. De Jong's book, “The Ministry of Mercy for Today.” Our purpose is more limited: to give some of the more fundamental principles of the office — as we have done in our discussions of the other offices.

Before we make some remarks about the principles of the office of deacons, it might be well to have before our minds what our Church Order and our liturgical forms have to say about the office. Articles 24-26 of the Church Order speak specifically of the

work of deacons. These articles read:

The deacons shall be chosen, approved, and installed in the same manner as was stated concerning the elders. —Article 24.

The office peculiar to the deacons is diligently to collect alms and other contributions of charity, and after mutual counsel, faithfully and diligently to distribute the same to the poor as their needs may require it; to visit and comfort the distressed and to exercise care that the alms are not misused; of which they shall render an account in consistory, and also (if anyone desires to be present) to the congregation, at such a time as the consistory may see fit. —Article 25.

In places where others are devoting themselves to the care of the poor, the deacons shall seek a mutual understanding with them to the end that the alms may all the better be distributed among those who have the greatest need. Moreover, they shall make it possible for the poor to make use of institutions of

mercy, and to that end they shall request the board of directors of such institutions to keep in close touch with them. It is also desirable that the diaconates assist and consult one another, especially in caring for the poor in such institutions. —Article 26.

Concerning the meetings of deacons, the Church Order says:

The deacons shall meet, wherever necessary, every week to transact the business pertaining to their office, calling upon the Name of God; whereunto the ministers shall take good heed and if necessary they shall be present. —Article 40.

In the Form of Ordination of Elders and Deacons we read:

Concerning the deacons: of the origin and institution of their office we may read, Acts 6, where we find that the apostles themselves did in the beginning serve the poor, "At whose feet was brought the price of the things that were sold: and distribution was made unto every man, according as he had need. But afterwards, when a murmuring arose, because the widows of the Grecians were neglected in the daily ministrations," men were chosen (by the advice of the apostles) who should make the service of the poor their peculiar business, to the end that the apostles might continually give themselves to prayer, and to the ministry of the Word. And this has been continued from that time forward in the Church, as appears from Rom. 12, where the apostle, speaking of this office, saith, "he that giveth, let him do it with simplicity." And I Cor. 12:28 speaking of helps, he means those, who are appointed in the Church to help and assist the poor and indigent in time of need.

From which passage we may easily gather, what the deacon's office is, namely, that they in the first place collect and preserve with the greatest fidelity and diligence, the alms and goods which are given to the poor: yea, to do their utmost endeavors, that many good means be procured for the relief of the poor.

The second part of this office consists in distribution, wherein are not only required discretion and prudence to bestow the alms only on objects of charity, but also cheerfulness and simplicity to assist the poor with compassion and hearty affection: as the apostle requires, Rom., chap. 12; and 2 Cor., chap. 9. For which end it is very beneficial, that they do not only administer relief to the poor and indigent with external gifts, but also with comfortable words from Scripture.

In the exhortation addressed to deacons, the following is said:

And, ye deacons, be diligent in collecting the alms, prudent and cheerful in the distribution of the same: assist the oppressed, provide for the true widows and orphans, show liberality unto all men, but especially to the household of faith.

We need not repeat what we said already about the qualifications of deacons, the manner of their call, the origin of their office, and the relationship between their office and the other special offices in the Church.

But it is evident from a consideration of all the material which we find in these passages that the deacons also occupy an office of *authority* in the Church. They, along with the ministers and elders, possess an authority with which they are clothed by Christ. Also with respect to the deacons, that authority is, first of all, the authority of the *office* itself. Every office in the Church (indeed in all of life) is a position of authority. That is the nature of the office. But, in the second place, that authority which is so integral a part of their office is an authority of the *Word of the Scriptures*. Christ alone has authority in the Church. And that authority is exercised only through the Word of Christ which we find in the Scriptures. No man can exercise the authority of his office whatever it may be except he come with the Scriptures. Only when he speaks what the Scriptures speak does he speak in the name of Christ and does he exercise the authority of Christ. The authority of the office is inseparably connected with the authority of the Word of the Scriptures which he brings.

There is an old prayer found in Reformed liturgy which is the opening prayer for the meeting of Deacons. It reads:

Bestow upon us also the grace we need, not only to relieve want by means of external gifts, but also to instil the comfort of Thy Holy Word in hearts afflicted with misery. Truly, man lives not by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds out of Thy mouth. We pray, therefore, that Thou wilt bless our ministrations and wilt multiply the bread of the poor, to the end that both they and we may have reasons to praise and thank Thee. —Quoted from The Ministry of Mercy for Today.

Yet, although the office of deacons is also the office of the *Word*, the deacons are nevertheless called to bring that Word in connection with the peculiar work of their own office. To them is entrusted that noble and glorious task of the care of the poor within God's Church. And in connection with that work they must bring the Word.

It ought to be remembered by us that it is important to recognize the blessedness which belongs to the Church because of the presence of the poor. We so often have a misconception of this. There are churches which give thanks to God that they have no poor. Apparently the idea of such thanks is that God's blessing rests especially upon a congregation where none are poor. This is a sad mistake and exactly the opposite of the true nature of things.

Christ informed the disciples at the time when Mary anointed His feet: "The poor ye shall always have with you." This must not be interpreted to be nothing more than some kind of accurate prophecy; it is rather a *promise* which the Lord makes. He says: "I personally will see to it that there are always poor in the Church." And this can only mean that Christ considers it most essential that, for the welfare and spiritual blessedness of the Church, there be always poor in her midst. Without the presence of the poor the church lacks something essential to her full life as a congregation of Jesus Christ. Without the poor there are blessings which Christ gives His Church which that congregation does not receive. If a congregation is to live a full life as the Church of Christ and receive all the blessings of Christ it is essential that she also have poor in her midst.

It is in connection with this work of caring for the poor that the deacons must bring the Word of God. The ministers bring that Word in the preaching and the administration of the sacraments. The elders bring that Word in connection with the rule and discipline of the Church. The deacons bring that Word in connection with the care of the needy.

It stands to reason that there is then going to be a certain overlapping of the work between the offices. We talked about this last time in connection with the whole question of deaconesses, but it is well to emphasize this once again. There are periodically questions which arise in connection with the work of the deacons concerning this matter. Some have said that the work of deacons ought to be so sharply circumscribed that they are limited exclusively to bringing alms to the poor and reading (and perhaps explaining) a pertinent passage of Scripture. If they in any way go beyond this they are trespassing on the office of their fellow elders and ministers. Thus, if they come to a widow who has no immediate needs, they may do nothing but bid her farewell. If they

come to a family which is, at the moment, in need, but which is in need because this family fails to live as good stewards of God's gifts, they may perhaps help in the immediate need, but they may not admonish the family concerning its calling. If there are families which are not paying their budget, they may perhaps inquire concerning whether this failure to pay the budget is because the family is in need, but if they find that this is not the case, they must keep their mouths shut about anything else, and simply go on their way.

We must not take such a narrow view of the office. There may be, in all these cases, specific work for the elders or the minister, but the fact remains that the deacons must bring the Word of God wherever they have the calling to do this.

It is from this point of view that the office of deacons is somewhat more broad than we often conceive of it. In connection with the ministry of mercy, the deacons have a broader calling to visit the widows and orphans not only, but to play a larger role in the ministry of mercy to the sick and afflicted. There is no question about it that this must always be a work in connection with the specific needs of alms which the people of God have; but, if I may use the term, the deacons who are faithful in their office, are much more *aggressive* than we often think.

I hope all these things help in an understanding of the offices in the Church. It is important that we hold fast to these things in these days when the offices are being relegated to the dustheaps of history. Just because Christ rules in the Church and does all the work in the Church, we must hold to those offices through which Christ is pleased to work. And only then will the blessing of Christ continue to rest upon His Church.

Fraternally in Christ,  
H. Hanko

## Book Review

**ALL TRUTH IS GOD'S TRUTH**, by Arthur F. Holmes; Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1977; 145 pp., \$3.95 (paper). (Reviewed by Prof. H. Hanko)

This book is really a kind of introduction to a Christian course in logic and epistemology. The main thesis of the book is that truth is always God's truth no matter where it is found. In demonstration of this thesis the author examines the whole question of knowing, the relation between knowing and faith, the

basic principles of all knowledge, the validity of inductive and deductive reasoning, and many related subjects. His whole thesis is firmly rooted in the contention that there is, in God, an objective standard for all truth, and his last chapter is a strong statement on the relevance for truth in all areas of life — especially in the fields of education and the arts. For all these reasons, the book is well worth reading, and, in fact, ought to be must-reading for logic and philosophy students.

There are, however, points at which we disagree with the author; and these disagreements are by no means peripheral. They really go to the heart of a Christian theory of knowledge. There are especially three areas of disagreement which ought to be mentioned and briefly discussed.

The first point of disagreement lies in the author's firm commitment to common grace. He makes the matter of common grace a central thesis of his theory of knowing. And this has serious consequences for his entire view. Common grace teaches that the unregenerated man is still capable of much good. As applied to the theory of knowing, the result is that both from a formal and from a material point of view, man's ability to know is not seriously impaired by sin.

From this follow several conclusions which Holmes develops. In the first place, the cultural mandate is still in force not only, but even fallen man is capable of fulfilling that mandate in some measure. In the second place, there is a great deal of truth to be found in almost every place. Such truth can be found in pagan philosophy and worldly culture: "we find fragments and degrees of truth in all sorts of surprising places" (p. 51); and thus it is not necessary to be regenerated in order to develop the truth. There is a problem here, of course, and we shall return to it in a moment. In the third place, the theory of common grace makes it possible to teach that man, even after the fall, retained some elements of the image of God. And the result of this is, according to Holmes, that some error is not necessarily due to sin but only to human limitation; that it is this retention of some of the image which is responsible for man's ability to produce good; and Holmes seems to say that even knowledgeable refusal of the truth is not necessarily a matter of the will: "His difficulty has more to do with his limited access to evidence and arguments than with moral turpitude or willful rebellion against God." (p. 52).

There is a point here which Holmes does not take into account. And this brings me to the second point of criticism of his book. It is a generally recognized fact that man is able to *know* anything only as it stands in relation to other things. And the more one understands the relationship in which one given thing stands to other things, the more one understands the thing itself. Take, e.g., a leaf of a tree. One cannot know that leaf isolated from all other creatures in the creation. Any knowledge which he could conceivably acquire of that leaf would have no meaning at all. He knows that leaf only in its relationship to all other things. If, e.g., he knows the constituent parts of that leaf and the chemical processes whereby that leaf manufactures sugar, he has gained some knowledge of that leaf. If, further, he knows the relationship in which that leaf stands to the branch on which it hangs and the tree as a whole of which it is a part, he

has come to know that leaf better yet. If he then examines the relationship in which that leaf, say of an oak tree, stands in relationships to the leaves of maple trees, cherry trees, pine trees, etc., he has again added to his knowledge of that leaf. But even then he can increase his knowledge by investigating the relationship between that leaf and other plants in the kingdom of plants, the relation between that leaf as a part of the tree and the inorganic soil, the relation between that leaf and the animal kingdom and man himself. And even here, he can learn to know that leaf better if, e.g., he examines all the uses to which that leaf can be put: as shade from the sun, as compost when it falls to the ground, etc. And so we could go on.

But all these relationships are merely formal relationships. They are important for knowing that leaf; but they are nevertheless formal relationships which any person can discover whether he be regenerated or unregenerated. Ungodly men can know all these things and write very learned books about them which can be used for textbooks in a school.

But there is one other relationship in which that leaf stands which is the most important of all. In fact, it is really true that no full and true knowledge of that leaf is possible without understanding the relationship in which that leaf stands to *God*. For the lack of a better name, we can call this the material relationship in distinction from the formal. But this is fundamental. Nothing can be truly understood apart from this most basic relation of all. And this is the most basic relation because that leaf is, in a most basic sense, a Word of God which stands in relationship to all other creatures as other Words of God and to God Himself Who spoke that Word and formed that leaf.

Now it is here that the central problem arises. For this relation is exactly the one denied by unregenerate man. Do not be mistaken about this. Even unregenerate man cannot ignore this material relationship of the leaf. But because he hates God, he will not admit that that leaf stands in relation to God. And so he invents other gods who are his own inventions. And he attempts to explain that leaf in its most basic relationship by imaginations of his own sinful heart. Perhaps he makes evolutionary processes his god to explain this relation. Whatever the case may be, it is precisely here that the spiritual question enters in. Sinful man not only does not admit the relationship between that leaf and God, but he *cannot* do this, for he is depraved and opposed to God with the whole of his nature.

Now the result of this is that he really cannot know anything at all in any true sense of the word. His refusal to confess God in relation to that leaf so vitiates his whole knowledge of that leaf that he has only a certain formal knowledge of it which is not

really of any significance. And it is not of any significance because he uses all his formal knowledge which he acquires to sin against God and to build a kingdom from which he can, in his judgment, banish God. Thus, at bottom, his knowledge is, after all, the lie.

We must make a further distinction here which is of some importance. The question is asked (if I may be permitted to get at the matter in this rather left-handed way) in connection with Christian instruction in a Christian School: how is it possible to teach, e.g., mathematics from a distinctively Christian point of view? Teachers readily see that history, the natural sciences, the social sciences, etc., can be taught from a distinctive Christian perspective. But they have difficulty with a subject like mathematics — or logic. Well, this is understandable, for mathematics is not like other subjects. Mathematics is not, in itself, a subject which has to do, as such, with God's creation. It is what may perhaps be called, a helper subject. It is a subject which deals not with specific *things* in God's creation, but with the *relationships* between these things. There is no value or purpose in mathematics itself, taken by itself. (Other than perhaps its being some kind of mental discipline.) Its purpose and value is in helping to understand one aspect of the relationships in which various parts of the creation exist. So mathematics belongs to the *formal* aspect of knowledge — to formal relationships.

Now because all these things are part of the formal relationships which exist among creatures, the ungodly are able to discover them. And from a *formal* point of view they are correct. And because they are correct, the child of God is able to make use of them also even though they have been discovered by unbelieving men.

But two things must be remembered. The one is that this discovery of formal relationships between things does not require regeneration — or common grace. One does not have to be curbed in his sin in any way to discover these facts. The simple fact that, even after the fall, man remains man is sufficient to enable him to know all these formal relationships. The second point to remember is that, because sinful man will always introduce the wrong *material* relationship (because he is a rebel of God) the Christian will have to be very careful, when he takes the formal facts as his own, both to sift out all the wickedness which the unbeliever has integrated with these facts, and to put these facts into the true perspective of Scripture. And this requires no little skill of a spiritual kind. We may find an illustration of this in the field of geology. When a believer reads a book on geology which is written by an unbeliever he will find that, because the unbeliever is a man addicted to evolution, this evolutionism has distorted oftentimes what ordinarily

would be only fact. The fact is, e.g., that there is no place in the whole world where one finds the so-called geological column of which evolutionists make so much and which they palm off as proved fact.

But whatever the case may be, just as soon as you have made this distinction — and this brings me to the third point — you have introduced a moral and spiritual dimension into the discussion. And then you have to talk about faith.

Although Holmes talks about the relation between faith and knowing, his discussion is altogether inadequate. He admits that faith has an intellectual aspect, but then almost makes faith synonymous with historical faith. And for the rest, he speaks only of faith as trust. (p. 71 ff.) But this will not do.

Faith is, above all, the living bond of fellowship and friendship between the elect and Christ. It is by faith that the life of Christ is imparted to God's people. But this very life of Christ is also the destruction of sin's power and the spiritual power of a new life by which one lives in relation to God. It is, therefore, the power whereby all man's opposition to God is destroyed and man is made spiritually able to confess God as He has revealed Himself in Scripture. Thus it is only by faith that one receives the *material* relationship in which all things stand to God. And all this is revealed only in God's infallibly inspired Word.

But when one has this faith, then one has also that true knowledge which gives meaning and content to all other merely formal knowledge. It is after all, according to Scripture, by *faith* that we *understand* (not merely believe in the sense of trust) that the worlds were framed by the Word of God so that things which are seen were not made from things which do appear.

This faith needs not empirical or rational proof in the accepted meaning of those terms. This faith is the power to put us in fellowship with God through Christ. And this faith needs no more proof for the existence of God than I need to prove the existence of my wife when she is sitting at my side and I have my arm around her. The fact that we are talking together is proof of her existence which transcends any other proof. The fact of our love, daily experienced, is proof which nothing can alter. So is faith. It is itself proof of God as that faith receives the Holy Scriptures as God's Word and brings us into God's fellowship.

But this is the possession of the child of God alone. Also in this area, the antithesis is complete and total. Also in the area of knowledge there is no common ground between believer and unbeliever. Also here Christ can have no concord with Belial, nor light with darkness. If a true Christian theory of knowledge is to be developed, these are the truths which have to be maintained.

## REPORT OF CLASSIS EAST

January 10, 1979  
Southwest Prot. Ref. Church

Classis East met in regular session on January 10, 1979 at Southwest Church. All the churches were represented by two delegates. Representing for the first time their respective churches of Faith and Southwest were Revs. Bruinsma and De Vries. Also in attendance were Revs. Lubbers and Veldman. Rev. Van Overloop led in opening devotions, Rev. Woudenberg chaired the meeting.

The minutes of the previous session were heard, the appointment of the necessary committees was made, and reports from the Stated Clerk and delegates *ad examina* were given.

Southeast requested classical appointments. The following schedule was adopted: January 28 — Joostens, February 4 — De Vries, February 18 — Bruinsma, February 25 — Van Baren, March 11 — Van Overloop, March 25 — Woudenberg, April 1 — Bruinsma, April 8 — De Vries, April 22 — Van Baren, April 29 — Joostens, May 6 — Van Overloop.

Classis was also asked to turn its attention once again to the organization of a congregation in Skowhegan, Maine. These brethren once more appealed for our help and expressed sorrow over not hearing from the committee appointed by the May Classis to which they had given an invitation to visit them. Classis decided: 1) That its previous decision not to organize a congregation there would stand and 2) That an apology be made to these people for the failure of our committee to communicate with them.

Several matters were brought by local consistories. Faith presented an overture to the Synod of 1979 asking for the revision of Article 7 of the Constitution of the Theological School. Faith proposed that this article be changed to read that lifetime tenure be given to seminary faculty after four years thus, allowing a faculty member to consider a call from one of our churches after six years (A 2-year waiting period was established by the Synod of 1962, Art. 261) rather than waiting nine years as presently is the case. This overture was forwarded to Synod of 1979

with the disapproval of Classis on the following grounds: 1) Article 7 of this constitution treats the appointment and tenure of faculty and not eligibility for call, and 2) Change to present policy should be made by overture to Synod to alter its decision of 1962, Article 261.

Hope presented a request for permission to contact the churches in Classis for help, in the form of collections, for the financial support of Mr. and Mrs. Andrew Young of Christchurch, New Zealand. Mr. Young will be attending our seminary next fall, and since the United States Immigration and Naturalization Service does not allow foreign students or their wives to work, Mr. and Mrs. Young will need our financial support. This request was granted and a request to Synod of 1979 to make a similar appeal to the churches in Classis West was approved.

Classis busied itself for some time with voting matters. Revs. Van Overloop and De Vries were elected to serve three-year terms as *primus* and *secundus* delegates *ad examina*. Revs. Van Baren and C. Hanko were chosen as church visitors with Rev. Veldman as alternate. The following were chosen as delegates to Synod of 1979: *Ministers — Primi*: C. Hanko, M. Joostens, G. Van Baren, R. Van Overloop; *Secundi*: W. Bruinsma, A. den Hartog, M. De Vries, J. Heys; *Elders — Primi*: J. Buiter, C. Doezeema, J. Huisken, G. Pipe; *Secundi*: H. Boer, K. Bylsma, E. Miedema, G. Van Overloop.

The Finance Committee reported expenses of \$404.98. 1980 subsidy requests from Kalamazoo for \$9000.00 and from Covenant for \$8000.00 were approved and forwarded to Synod.

After the questions of Article 41 of the Church Order were asked and answered, Classis adjourned. The next meeting will be held on May 9, 1979 at Faith Church.

Respectfully submitted,  
Jon J. Huisken, Stated Clerk