

# The **STANDARD BEARER**

A REFORMED SEMI-MONTHLY MAGAZINE

" . . . If those clothe God with the garment of a tyrant, who refer the hardening of men even to His eternal counsel, we most certainly are not the originators of this doctrine. If they do God an injury who set His will above all other causes, Paul taught this doctrine long before us. Let these enemies of God, then, dispute the matter with the apostle."

John Calvin

See "The Reincarnation of Pighius"

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## THE STANDARD BEARER

ISSN 0362-4692

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, \$10.50 per year. 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

## Righteous in Christ Jesus

Rev. C. Hanko

*Ques. 59. But what doth it profit thee now that thou believest all this?*

*Ans. That I am righteous in Christ, before God, and am an heir of eternal life.*

*Ques. 60. How art thou righteous before God?*

*Ans. Only by a true faith in Jesus Christ; so that though my conscience accuse me, that I have grossly transgressed all the commandments of God, and kept none of them, and am still inclined to all evil; notwithstanding, God without any merit of mine, but only out of mere grace, grants and imputes to me the perfect satisfaction, righteousness and holiness of Christ, even so, as if I never had had, nor committed any sin; yea, as if I had fully accomplished all that obedience which Christ has accomplished for me; inasmuch as I embrace such benefit with a believing heart.*

*Ques. 61. Why sayest thou, that thou art righteous by faith only?*

*Ans. Not that I am acceptable to God, on account of the worthiness of my faith; but because only the satisfaction, righteousness, and holiness of Christ, is my righteousness before God; and that I cannot receive and apply the same to myself any other way than by faith only.*

*Heid. Catechism. Lord's Day 23*



What doth it profit thee?

Pause a moment and reflect. Let it be granted that this is not the foremost question in the mind of the believer. His chief concern is the glory of his God. For whether we eat, or whether we drink, or whatever we do, we should do it all to the glory of God. Yet this in no wise minimizes the importance of the question that confronts us now, "what doth it profit thee that thou believest all this?"

Even this question requires an answer of faith. According to our sinful nature we could very well question the advantage of believing in Jesus Christ. There are times in our lives when we with Asaph of Psalm 73 see the prosperity of the wicked and are set to wondering whether we have cleansed our hands in vain. Measured in dollars and cents we experience the burden of school tuition, church budgets, and other obligations that are involved in the Christian walk of life. And then we have said nothing yet of the scorn and reproach that we must bear as cross bearers after our Lord.

Yet would we for a single moment exchange our faith for the service of sin? Not at all. Even these seeming disadvantages are, upon closer observation, privileges, definite advantages that make all the sufferings of this present time more than worthwhile. All the advantages of our faith in Christ far outweigh our sufferings, and work an exceeding weight of glory.

"All this...."

As believers in Christ Jesus we are confronted with the specific question: "What doth it profit thee that thou believest all this?" "All this" refers back to all that we have confessed with the Heidelberg in the Lord's Days 7 to 22, in which our fathers discussed the Apostolic Creed. "All this" therefore refers to what we confess concerning our God and all His glorious, mighty works as the triune God of our salvation in Jesus Christ. He is our Creator. He sends His Son to be our Savior through the death of the cross, and exalts Him to power and glory in the heavens, from whence He gathers His church, brings His saints to glory with Him and grants us eternal life. We sum it all up in the one confession, I believe in God. Thus the Catechism now confronts us with the personal question: What does this your faith mean to you? And lays upon our hearts and lips a most concise and beautiful answer.

That I am righteous.

Righteousness is that amazing gift of God whereby the guilty and damnable sinner is assured in his heart that he is free from guilt and worthy of the adoption to sons and the right to eternal life.

This places you and me right now before the tribunal of God.

Our conscience condemns us. That inner voice of conscience which is enlightened and instructed by the Holy Spirit of Christ convicts us, on the basis of the Holy Scriptures, of sin and guilt. My own conscience accuses me that I have transgressed, not merely laws laid down by men, but the holy law of the living God. I have defied God and trampled His law under my feet. I have not made myself guilty of transgressing only one command. I realize that when the law is read to me on the Sabbath day, one command condemns me much more than another. But when I search my heart I must admit that I have transgressed all God's commands, even without exception. Still worse, I have grossly transgressed them all. Even so I have not said enough. Honesty compels me to add that I have kept none of them. Besides my sins of commission, there are also a multitude of sins of omission. For I have not loved the Lord my God with my whole being in all that I did, as I am called to do. Nor can I leave it at that. If I should have the opportunity to live the past over again, or if a promise were pressed from me to keep God's law in the future, I would have to admit that I can never of myself improve my way, since the very inclination of my nature is only toward all that is evil continually.

I hang my head in shame, for even now as I stand before the judgment seat of God, who knows my innermost thoughts and all my words and deeds, I stand condemned. I deserve only that He should pronounce upon me the death sentence: "Depart from Me, thou worker of iniquity, into everlasting torment of hell!"

If Thou shouldst mark transgressions, O my God, who could stand? I least of all!

"Notwithstanding...."

Yet the verdict is pronounced every day anew: Not guilty! No condemnation! Even more than that, God declares me righteous in His holy sight! He regards me as one who has never committed any evil deed, nor had any inclination to sin. And, as if that were a small matter, He even declares that I have kept all His commands in perfect obedience, so that I am worthy to be His son and the heir of His inheritance that is laid away in the heavens.

Amazing wonder, that can only fill our souls with humble adoration. I am righteous in the sight of the living God according to His own verdict in my heart. I can also appear before His judgment seat in the great Day of days to receive of Him His own, "Well done, thou good and faithful servant, enter thou into the joys of thy Lord." God justifies the ungodly.

Righteous in Christ.

We cannot be satisfied without asking how this is



possible? For God is not a man that He should lie, nor does He regard the person of men. He is as righteous as He is true. In answer to that question one name stands out in Scripture and before our consciousness: the name Jesus, Who is the Christ. We are righteous in Christ Jesus.

Yet again the question demands an answer. "How can God justify the guilty sinner in Christ?"

Here our Book of Instruction introduces us to a very important word that we must never forget, nor allow anyone to take from us: the word *imputes*. "God imputes to me the perfect satisfaction, righteousness and holiness of Christ." The reference of our Catechism is to Romans 4.

Imputes means to set to the account of someone, especially to set to the account of someone that which he does not have. We lack righteousness completely, yet it is imputed to us as if it were our very own. Briefly it comes down to this: God imputes to Christ all our guilt and, in turn, imputes to us the perfect righteousness of Christ. That is the amazing truth of Scripture and the blessed testimony of the Spirit in the hearts of believers. God so completely justifies us that we can face the devil, the whole wicked world and even our accusing conscience with the challenge: It is God Who justifies. Who is the condemner? Romans 8:33, 34.

We must ask, what is the juridical basis for this verdict of righteousness? For God is just. He cannot, may not, and does not allow the sin that is committed against His Most High Majesty to go unpunished. The answer of Scripture is that the eternal basis rests in God Himself and in His Sovereign election. Take that away and the very basis for our salvation no longer exists. God has chosen His people in Christ from eternity, making them members of Christ's body, flesh of His flesh and bone of His bone. Christ is our juridical Head. Therefore God can and does declare His people righteous on the meritorious basis of the cross.

We can put it this way: God imputed to Christ all our sins, charging those sins to His account and holding Him responsible for them, as if He had committed them. Christ was made sin for us, the very embodiment, as it were, of our sins. He was wounded for our transgressions. He was bruised for our iniquities. He was the perfect Substitute, the Lamb for sinners slain. All His life long He suffered willingly and obediently under the wrath of God. He suffered even torments of hell during the three hours of darkness on the cross to atone for our sins and to merit for us eternal life.

His perfect satisfaction is imputed to us, as if we in our own bodies had borne God's wrath, been nailed to the cross, and suffered under the consuming wrath of God in anguish of hell for our sins.

His righteousness is imputed to us as if we never had had nor committed any sin. Yea, as if we in our own bodies had merited the right to be sons of God and heirs of eternal life.

His holiness is imputed to us, so that we are saints in Christ Jesus, with the Spirit of God's Son transforming us into the likeness of the image of Christ, to bear the likeness of God in covenant fellowship with Him eternally in His glory.

It is all a free gift of God by imputation. Christ atoned, I did not. He merited my salvation, not I. Humbly I confess, I am righteous in Christ. In His cross I glory.

Through faith.

We hasten to add, that we are justified by a true faith in Jesus Christ. Not on account of our faith, nor because we believe or have reached out a hand to receive Christ. If faith were in any sense of the word our work, then there would be a certain merit of ours which would deny the perfect merit of Jesus Christ. It is all of God, purely by grace, in no sense by the works of mere man.

We become deeply aware of that as we daily stand before the tribunal of our God with our conscience accusing us, that we have kept none of His commandments and can keep none of them as we are in ourselves.

God Himself unites us to Christ by a bond of living faith, whereby we become members of His body, living out of Him. As the body cannot exist without the head, nor the head without the body, so Christ and we cannot exist apart from each other. I belong to my faithful Savior, Jesus Christ.

"We, then, being justified by faith, have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ" (Romans 5:1).

In the midst of a world of sin and death we are kept by the power of God unto an inheritance, incorruptible and undefiled, preserved for us in the heavens (I Peter 1:4, 5). *Soli Deo Gloria!*

*The Standard Bearer  
makes a thoughtful  
gift for the  
sick or shut-in.*



## EDITORIAL

## The Reincarnation of Pighius

Prof. H. C. Hoeksema

On the cover of *The Reformed Journal* (February, 1983) there appear in large letters the words, "A Respectable Blasphemy? PREDESTINATION." The reference is to an article by Thomas Talbott entitled, "On predestination, reprobation, and the love of God" with the sub-title, "a polemic." Mr. Talbott is a professor of philosophy at Willamette University, Salem, Oregon, and in his article identifies himself as a member of the Christian Reformed Church. To him it is not a question whether predestination is a respectable blasphemy, as is the query on the cover, but a fact. His entire article is a blatant and blasphemous (I use the term advisedly.) attack on the doctrine of predestination. He states the main thrust of his article rather adequately in the opening paragraph:

My concern in this article is with a form of theological blasphemy, the Reformed doctrines of predestination and reprobation; and here I use the term "blasphemy" in a very exact sense. The Reformed doctrine of predestination—with or without its corollary, the doctrine of reprobation—is a form of blasphemy in this sense: those who accept the doctrine inevitably attribute Satanic qualities to God; they inevitably confuse the Father in heaven, Whose essence is perfect love, with the Devil himself. But it is also a *respectable* form of blasphemy in that, as is well known, this doctrine can be found in many of the confessional statements associated with the Protestant Reformation and remains part of the official doctrine of many mainline churches, including my own church, the Christian Reformed Church. That this should be so is, for me, one of the great mysteries of church history—though no greater, perhaps, than the mystery of why the Jews, during New Testament times, should have found it so difficult to believe that God's grace also extends to the Gentiles. It seems that a kind of exclusiveness in theology, the temptation to believe that God's grace extends to *us* but not to *them*, to Jews but not to Gentiles, to Christians but not to non-Christians, is one of the more intractable forms that original sin takes in our lives. Indeed, as I shall argue, the Reformed doctrine of predestination is an expression of human rebelliousness; for it is simply not possible, not *psychologically* possible, not even *logically* possible, to love God with all one's heart, to love one's neighbor as oneself, and simultaneously to believe the Reformed doctrine of predestination.

The problem is not that Mr. Talbott does not in-

tellectually understand the doctrine of predestination; he does, and he even quotes Calvin's *Institutes* for a definition. Neither is the problem that Mr. Talbott does not want reprobation only; he deliberately includes all of predestination, although an analysis of his article will show that his hateful darts are aimed primarily at reprobation—but has not history demonstrated a *pattern* of attacking sovereign election by attempting to make the doctrine of predestination hateful by attacking reprobation? Nor is the problem that Mr. Talbott misconstrues the doctrine of reprobation as such; he even recognizes in Herman Hoeksema a consistent exponent of this doctrine. For he writes, p. 13: "If, God forbid, there are such unfortunate persons, if there are some who are not elect, it immediately follows that they are not an object of God's eternal love; and one Reformed theologian who has seen this quite clearly is Herman Hoeksema, who forthrightly admits that the non-elect are an object of God's 'eternal hatred.' Nor is it possible in any way to soften this implication."

No, the simple fact is, as is plainly stated in the opening paragraph (quoted above) that the writer characterizes the Reformed doctrine of predestination as blasphemy, as ascribing "Satanic qualities to God," and as confusing the Father in heaven with the Devil himself.

I have no intention, at this point, of entering into Mr. Talbott's arguments, except to point out:

1) That there is nothing new in his attack. It is nothing but a variation of the old argument—as old as the apostle Paul himself—that sovereign predestination is an immoral doctrine. This argument has assumed various forms, as, for instance, that predestination makes God the author of sin, or that the doctrine of predestination makes men careless and profane. Mr. Talbott's argument is obviously a variation of this same age-old attack.

2) The entire argumentation of Mr. Talbott is *rationalistic*, that is, proceeds from sinful human reason, rather than Scripture. He never mentions or explains the passages of Scripture which plainly teach predestination. He never approaches the whole question from a Scriptural point of view, never attempts a Scriptural argument. As he him-



self states, love of God and the neighbor are psychologically and logically impossible if one believes the Reformed doctrine of predestination.

3) Mr. Talbott's argumentation is all the more shocking—horrifying, in fact—because a) it is brutally blunt; b) it comes from one who, according to his own confession as a Christian Reformed member, is supposed to believe and confess the truth of sovereign predestination. If the doctrine of predestination has supposed friends like Talbott, it surely needs no enemies.

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In the title of this editorial I refer to this as the reincarnation of Albertus Pighius.

Who was Pighius?

To be truthful he is a skeleton in the Dutch closet! His full name is Albertus Pighius van Kampen. Yes, he was a native of Kampen in the Netherlands. He was a Roman Catholic theologian and a friend of more than one pope, as also a fierce foe of the Reformation and especially of Calvin. In his book concerning man's free will he not only sought to establish the free will of man, but also attacked violently the doctrine of sovereign predestination. It was in part against Pighius that John Calvin wrote his "Treatise of the Eternal Predestination of God," at one time published, with his "Treatise on the Secret Providence of God," under the title *Calvin's Calvinism*. But let Calvin himself furnish a description:

Nine years have now elapsed since Albertus Pighius, the Campanian, a man of evidently phrensied audacity, attempted, at the same time, and in the same book, to establish the *free-will* of man, and to subvert the secret counsel of God, by which He chooses some to salvation and appoints others to eternal destruction. But as he attacked me by name, that he might stab, through my side, holy and sound doctrine, I have deemed it necessary to curb the sacrilegious madness of the man. At that time, however, being distracted by various engagements, I could not embrace, in one short space of time, the discussion of both subjects; but having published my thoughts upon the former, I promised to consider, when an opportunity should be given, the doctrine of *predestination*. Shortly after my book on *free-will* appeared, Pighius died. And that I might not insult a dead dog, I turned my attention to other serious matters. And from that time till now I have always found plenty to do. Moreover, as I had already copiously treated of this great point of doctrine, and had set it forth clearly, and confirmed it by solid testimonies of Scripture, this new labour upon it did not seem so absolutely necessary, but that it might safely be suffered to rest for a time.

But since, at the present day, certain maddened and exulting spirits strive, after the example of Pighius, with all their might to destroy all that is contained in the Scriptures concerning the free election of the god-

ly and the eternal judgment of the reprobate, I have considered it my duty to prevent this contagion from spreading farther, by collecting and summarily refuting those frivolous objections by which such men delude themselves and others. Among these characters there started forth, in Italy, a certain one, Georgius, a Sicilian—an ignorant man indeed, and more worthy of contempt than public notice in any form, were it not that a notoriety, obtained by fraud and imposture, has given him considerable power to do mischief....

In the next paragraph of his treatise Calvin further introduces his opponents:

I propose, now, to enter into the sacred battle with Pighius and George, the Sicilian, a pair of unclean beasts (Lev. xi. 3) by no means badly matched. For though I confess that in some things they differ, yet, in hatching enormities of error, in adulterating the Scripture with wicked and revelling audacity, in a proud contempt of truth, in forward impudence, and in brazen loquacity, the most perfect likeness and sameness will be found to exist between them. Except that Pighius, by inflating the muddy bombast of his magniloquence, carries himself with greater boast and pomp; while the other fellow borrows the boots by which he elevates himself from his invented revelation. And though both of them, at their commencement, agree in their attempt to overthrow predestination, yet they afterwards differ in the figments which they advance. An invention of them both is, that it lies in each one's own liberty, whether he will become a partaker of the grace of adoption or not; and that it does not depend on the counsel and decree of God who are elect and who are reprobate; but that each one determines for himself the one state or the other by his own will, and with respect to the fact that some believe the Gospel, while others remain in unbelief; that this difference does not arise from the free election of God, nor from His secret counsel, but from the will of each individual.

I could fill the *Standard Bearer* with appropriate quotations from this treatise of Calvin, but let one more pertinent quotation suffice:

But Pighius and his fellows are not hereby satisfied. For, pretending a great concern for the honour of God, they bark at us, as imputing to Him a cruelty utterly foreign to His nature. (This is precisely what Mr. Talbott does in the course of his argumentation, remember! HCH) Pighius denies that he has any contest with God. What cause, or whose cause is it, then, that Paul maintains? After he had adopted the above axiom—that God hardens whom He will and has mercy on whom He will—he subjoins the supposed taunt of a wicked reasoner: 'Why doth He yet find fault? For who hath resisted His will?' (Rom. ix. 19) He meets such blasphemy as this by simply setting against it the power of God. If those clothe God with the garment of a tyrant, who refer the hardening of men even to His eternal counsel, we most certainly are not the originators of this doctrine. If they do God an injury who set His will above all other causes, Paul taught this doctrine long before us. Let these enemies of God, then,



dispute the matter with the apostle. For I maintain nothing, in the present discussion, but what I declare is taught by him. About these barking dogs, however, I would not be very anxious. I am the rather moved with an anxiety about some otherwise good men, who, while they fear lest they should ascribe to God anything unworthy of His goodness, really seem to be horror-struck at that which He declares, by the apostle, concerning Himself.

Principally, this article in the *Reformed Journal* represents the reincarnation of the Pighius whom Calvin refutes in the treatise from which these quotations are taken.

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But it should not be overlooked that *The Reformed Journal* is the mid-wife at the occasion of this journalistic reincarnation of Pighius.

I am well aware of the fact that its masthead carries a disclaimer to the effect that "The publication of comments, opinions, or advertising herein does not imply agreement or endorsement by the

publisher, editors, contributing editors," etc. *The Standard Bearer* carries a similar disclaimer. Nevertheless, *The Reformed Journal* calls itself "a periodical of Reformed comment and opinion." And while such a disclaimer as mentioned above has its place and function, it surely cannot be used as cover for (not a critical letter or statement of opinion) a full-fledged article which is placed by the Editors and Editor-in-Chief, but which is diametrically and very obviously contradictory of the stated character of the magazine.

Do the editors accept this responsibility? And I have in mind especially such men as Harry R. Boer and James Daane, men who are known for their open opposition to the Reformed doctrine of reprobation.

If not, then let them openly repudiate Mr. Talbott's article; and let them apologize for publishing an article so obviously inimical to the Reformed faith, and that, too, in the name of "Reformed comment and opinion."

## THE DAY OF SHADOWS

### An Extravagant Funeral

Rev. John A. Heys

Having blessed his twelve sons, having gathered his feet into the bed, and having stretched himself out in a relaxed position upon the bed, Jacob gave up the ghost, and was gathered with his fathers. Thus the matter is presented to us in the last verse of Genesis 49.

There is nothing strange about all this. His death was not unexpected. For that matter no death is really unexpected. We may not expect it in the exact way in which it comes. We may not expect it to come in the place where it occurs. The exact day and hour may take us by surprise. But actually we should not say that a person's death is unexpected. In Hebrews 9:27 we read, "And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment." And how can it be otherwise? We are, as well as David was, "shapen in iniquity" and conceived in sin, as Psalm 51:5 teaches us. "There is none that doeth good, no not one," Psalm 14:3 declares. And Paul speaks the truth when he says in Romans 6:23, "The wages of sin is death." We can and must expect death. By nature we deserve it.

And as children of God we need it. For flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of heaven. What

is more, we need the purifying power of death to be delivered completely and forever from the old man of sin. As Jesus told us, "Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God." And it is death that delivers our hearts from all that is impure; for we leave the old man of sin behind in the grave, and for the first time in our lives have a heart that is pure in more than principle. And therefore we must expect death also in the sense that we look eagerly forward to this moment when the new man in Christ, of whom John declares in I John 3:9 that he doth not and cannot sin, because he is born of God, is freed from the old man who does and can do nothing but sin. That deliverance Jacob had. And that deliverance God gives to all His children through His servant that we call death.

Now the whole passage that speaks of Jacob's death and burial has two elements that are stressed by Moses in the account. First of all, there is the fact that the sorrow, the mourning over Jacob's death, revolves around Joseph. And I do not simply mean that only of Joseph is it said that he fell on Jacob's face and wept upon him and kissed him. This is true. The other eleven brothers are excluded en-



tirely from this notice of the sorrow that followed Jacob's death. But note that verse 7 of chapter 50 speaks again of Joseph going to bury his father. Indeed, verse 8 does speak of Joseph and his brethren and his father's house. The eleven brothers most assuredly went along to Canaan with their father's body to bury it. But again in verse 10 it is mentioned only of Joseph that he made a mourning by the threshingfloor of Atad, which is beyond Jordan. It is not until we come to verse 12 that we read that "his sons did unto him according as he commanded them." Before this, all the emphasis falls on Joseph.

Now it is true that Joseph, although he was not the oldest son among the twelve sons that God gave Jacob, was a political leader in Egypt and did have authority over his brothers. The dream was still in force as far as its meaning is concerned that they must bow down before him. And Joseph it is who must approach Pharaoh through his servants to get permission to go to Canaan and to bury his father there. Yet that first verse in the chapter that speaks only of Joseph showing his love for his father and deep sorrow at his death, and excludes even one word about the other sons—who were all there and had just heard the blessings pronounced by their father—when it would have taken little effort on Moses' part to change it from Joseph to Jacob's sons, is revealing to say the least.

I do not at all mean to imply that the other sons did not feel the loss. It may not be said that they had no love for their father. It was Judah, way back in chapter 44, who made such a passionate plea for his father and showed deep concern for him. We cannot picture him here by his dead father as one unmoved and cold about it. Certainly Benjamin, who was so dear to his father's heart, especially after Joseph had been sold into Egypt, never showed any of the cruelty that the other brothers did when they lied to their father about Joseph. But it is evident that no one was touched as deeply as Joseph. In a situation such as this his political power over his brothers did not give him the right to bar them from doing as he did. And deep love would disregard all this. Yet we do not read of one of them doing so.

It is quite plain that the other brothers did not love their father as deeply as Joseph did. And the ten or more years of separation from his father, because they occurred in the way that they did, namely, by his forced separation from a father he loved dearly, may account for this.

But the other element is the extravagant funeral arrangements and procession to the burial spot. The embalming in this instance was quite necessary. Since they had to make a long journey through an extremely hot climate, the body could not be taken without the embalming. Otherwise to

embalm a body in order to keep it with you is not according to the Scriptures. We are taught to sow it in the ground as a seed with the hope of a glorious harvest.

But note for a moment the extravagant funeral arrangements and procession. The details reveal an extravagant funeral arrangement. We read in Genesis 50:8 of "the house of Joseph and his brethren, and his father's house." This is understandable and to be expected. But then in verse 7 it had already been stated that "all the servants of Pharaoh, the elders of his house, and all the elders of the land of Egypt" went along to Canaan to bury Jacob. What is more, in verse 9 we read that there went up with Joseph "both chariots and horsemen; and it was a very great company."

The time of deep mourning likewise was over an unusually extended period of time. There were the forty days of mourning during the embalming. This was followed by several days of travelling to Canaan. At the threshingfloor of Atad there was another period of seven days. And we read that "there they mourned with a great and very sore lamentation." That makes at least, and most likely more than, fifty days of deep mourning.

Now remember that this is the burial of an aged, feeble little-known stranger who was the father of a group of shepherds. To be sure, he was the father of the man next to the king of Egypt. And that means that it was out of respect for Joseph, rather than for Jacob who had died, that explains this large company that travelled to Canaan for the burying. The Egyptians did not feel the loss, and would not miss Jacob, who had been quite far removed from them in the land of Goshen. It was not love for this man, who came out of Canaan with all his family to escape the ravages of the famine, that explains their presence. They were ordered by the king to accompany the bereaved family. And yet the Canaanites, in verse 11, because of the presence of these elders and those chariots and horsemen called it "a grievous mourning to the Egyptians." It was formality and outward show, not true sympathy and loving concern.

Do we need all that? Do we need unbelievers at our funerals? What can they add that counts? Can they bring us true comfort? They come not with the Word of God which alone has comfort for the bereaved. Will they come with the Word of God that speaks of His Son being (as we read in Romans 4:25 in the Greek) raised *on account of* our justification? Will they point us to God's promises and the truth Paul expresses in Philippians 1:21, that to die, for the believer, is gain?

And did it have to be with such a display of pomp and outward show that Jacob's request, that



stemmed from faith in God's promises, should be carried out in this way? Would Jacob have wanted it? He did not ask for anything like that. He only requested being buried in the land of promise. Besides, all these unbelievers could only pour salt into the wounds, and touch the flesh of the bereaved who felt the loss, by saying that it was too bad that it happened, and by expressing sympathy for a loss, and leave it there. There would be no mentioning of Jacob being gathered unto his brethren in heavenly glory.

The chariots and horsemen in a sense were the least extravagant part of the whole funeral procession. Protection along the way may have seemed necessary. Yet Jacob and his family came without it. For God is our refuge and our strength, a very present help in time of need. And He showed this, not only when Jacob came with his whole unarmed family, but also some 400 years later when He brought about two million people, descendants of Jacob, out of Egypt and into Canaan along *the same* route that this funeral procession took. This procession was prophetic.

But all that weeping and deep mourning over a period of fifty days, did that stem from faith? For the unbeliever who has no hope, and has no promises from God, there is room for weeping until he dies. For the believer there is joyful reassurance of a reunion before the throne of God, and a peace-

bringing conviction that the departed believing loved one is in heavenly glory. And though fifty days—and even fifty weeks—after the separation, he may still shed tears, the Word of God will have taken hold of him so that he speaks with more emphasis upon the departed believer's gain than his own loss.

But once again let us note that by God's appointment the chaff serves the wheat. It pleases God to use the wicked for the good of His church. As the dead body of Jacob entered the promised land with the help of unbelievers, to whom God gave no promises of blessings, and who would die in their sins, so through men who were grinding their teeth in anger, God brought His Son to the cross to open the way for our dead bodies to leave the grave and enter the heavenly Canaan in the day of Christ's return. As the dead body of Jacob, the elect child of God, was furthered in its crossing of the literal Jordan to enter the typical heaven with the help of spiritual Esau, so our dead bodies will be brought over the Jordan of death and the grave into the coming kingdom of heaven with the help of bitter enemies. For although the unbelievers are striving to bring forth the kingdom of the Antichrist, they are being used to prepare the way for the Christ to return, when all the believers will enjoy the resurrection of their bodies and heavenly glory with body and soul.

## MY SHEEP HEAR MY VOICE

### Letter to Timothy

March 15, 1983

Dear Timothy,

In my last letter to you I began to discuss with you what a truly Christ-centered sermon actually is. You will recall, I think, that I mentioned, first of all, that a Christ-centered sermon was one which had as its pulsebeat the perfect and efficacious atoning sacrifice of our Lord Jesus Christ. This truth must not be tacked on the sermon somewhere—perhaps at the very end; nor must it be mentioned from time to time in the sermon. It must be the truth from which the whole sermon flows. It must be the heartbeat of the sermon. It must be a truth woven into the very fabric of the whole sermon.

I also mentioned that this truth in turn implies

that a truly Christ-centered sermon is a sermon which begins and ends with God. I will never forget that near the beginning of my ministry an old elder, a veteran of many fierce and bitter battles for the faith, said to me: "Dominee, if you want to preach sermons that are really Reformed then you must always preach so that God is everything and man is nothing." (I wonder if it is still true today that elders take it upon themselves to speak to their ministers about these things. I had elders like that. I look back upon them with deep thanksgiving to God.) A truly Christ-centered sermon is a God-centered sermon, because Christ is the revelation of God Who is the God of our salvation.

All of this I talked about last time.

There is another element, though in a Christ-cen-



tered sermon that I want to discuss with you in this letter. This is perhaps a bit more difficult to express, but it is of critical importance and badly needs saying. A truly Christ-centered sermon is an *Antithetical* sermon. This means several things.

If a sermon is truly antithetical, then, first of all, it has as an integral part of it the truth of election and reprobation. One almost feels compelled to hasten to add that this does not mean that the truths of election and reprobation have to be specifically mentioned in every sermon, much less that they must be explained and developed. That, of course, is neither desirable nor possible. But once again: just as Christ Himself as Savior is woven into the very fabric of the sermon, so must the truths of sovereign predestination be implicit in every sermon which is truly Christ-centered.

It is not so easy, I suppose, to demonstrate exactly how this must take place, for how this is done involves a minister's style, rhetorical method, homiletical approach, and such like things; and these differ from minister to minister. But, if we look at it from a negative point of view, a sermon which lacks this emphasis is a sermon which is so broad and general in its address that it could refer to any one, either in the audience or in the whole world. A sermon always has an address, you know. What the minister says is not simply speaking to the wind; yelling at the skies; a vague and undefined address which makes a sermon preachable almost anywhere. It must have an address. It is certainly true that, in part, the address is very broad and general, as the gospel is preached "promiscuously"; the general address of the gospel is the command which comes to all men who hear the gospel to repent of sin and believe in Christ. But this command of the gospel can never be the sole content of the gospel. It is not all that the gospel has to say. It is not even the main thing which the gospel has to say. The gospel is "good news." A command or demand to repent of sin can hardly be called good news. The command of the gospel is not *in itself* the content of the gospel. That is why our Canons in II, 5 connect inescapably this command of the gospel with the proclamation of the promise: "This promise, together with the command to repent and believe, ought to be published promiscuously. . . ."

It is also true that when the gospel is publicly preached, Christ Jesus as the only Savior is set forth and proclaimed in the gospel so that all who hear, hear also Christ proclaimed as the only Savior from sin.

But it is here where we come to the nub of the matter. For when I say that a truly Christ-centered sermon is also a sermon which has as its heartbeat sovereign election and reprobation, this means that Christ is proclaimed in the sermon as the One Who

saves *His people* from sin. How important this is. Never for a moment must the gospel ever leave the impression, either by direct statement or by implication, that the promises of the gospel are to all who hear the preaching. Never must the gospel come in such a way that the people who hear are left with the idea that the gospel is a statement of God's love for all, God's longing to have all come to Christ, God's purpose and desire to save all. The gospel is always a very particular promise which God makes only to a select number of people. If there is to be truly Christ-centered preaching, the preaching must always have this truth as an integral part of it.

It is true, of course, that the gospel preached does not always specifically refer to God's people as God's elect. The Scriptures do not do this either. Oftentimes the Scriptures speak of God's elect people by using their *spiritual* names: weary and heavy laden, thirsty, those who believe, those who call upon the name of the Lord, etc. As you know, oftentimes the texts which use these expressions are appealed to in support of the fact that the promises of the gospel are meant for all. But this is not the case. Scripture often addresses God's people by their spiritual names or characteristics—and does this because the preaching is always worked in the consciousness of God's people by the Holy Spirit through Whose sovereign efficacy the internal call is irresistibly effected. By the operation of the Spirit, the truth of the gospel is reflected in the very consciousness of God's saints.

But even while Scripture often addresses God's people by their spiritual characteristics—and the preaching ought to do the same—it is also clear that Scripture ascribes even these spiritual characteristics to the work of grace by the Spirit only in the hearts of the elect.

Especially under the influence of Puritan preaching, many teach that there are certain spiritual characteristics which are a general fruit of the preaching, but which are not a part of salvation. When a sinner, unregenerated, hears the gospel preached, so it is said, that gospel has a certain effect upon him: he comes under the conviction of sin, realizes how great a sinner he is, is tormented by the consciousness of sin and guilt, even longs to a certain extent to be delivered from this misery, sometimes even lifts up his tortured soul to God in prayer. All this is an effect of the gospel apart from regeneration; in fact, a person who experiences all these things may eventually not be regenerated at all, but go lost. In the light of this conception of the preaching, many have spoken of a general address of the gospel to these suffering and struggling souls which speaks of God's love, the sufficiency of the cross, God's desire to see them escape from their troubles and find salvation and happiness in Christ.



But this is contrary to Scripture and our Confessions. The Canons of Dort specifically brand this as Arminianism and a doctrine to be rejected by those who hold to the Reformed faith: "The Synod rejects the errors of those who teach: That the unregenerate man is not really nor utterly dead in sin, nor destitute of all powers unto spiritual good, but that he can yet hunger and thirst after righteousness and life, and offer the sacrifice of a contrite and broken spirit, which is pleasing to God. For these are contrary to the express testimony of Scripture. 'Ye were dead through trespasses and sins,' Eph. 2:1, 5; and: 'Every imagination of the thought of his heart are only evil continually,' Gen. 6:5; 8:21.

"Moreover, to hunger and thirst after deliverance from misery, and after life, and to offer unto God the sacrifice of a broken spirit, is peculiar to the regenerate and those that are called blessed, Ps. 51:10; Mt. 5:6."

Overagainst such a position, therefore, the preaching must always be antithetical, i.e., must be addressed in such a way that the promises of the gospel are directed to God's people alone.

These points bring up another point which is important in understanding what antithetical preaching is. When the doctrines of election and reprobation form the warp and woof of the preaching, then it also follows that preaching always emphasizes that salvation is all of grace and of grace alone. This, too, must be not only explicit in every sermon, but must be the starting point, the approach, the fundamental perspective of every sermon. Never must this be left to the imagination; never must the minister say that he did not talk about this because, after all, it is presupposed; never must he simply assume that the congregation will understand that he certainly believes in this. It must be

the spiritual perspective of the whole sermon. If it is not, the sermon is not Christ-centered.

This truth of sovereign grace is the truth that all salvation is worked by God through Christ and by the instrumentality of the Holy Spirit. And because this is true, this grace is a grace of God shown only to the *elect*.

But, it ought to be clear by now that all this also implies that the preaching must set forth these truths overagainst false doctrine and the lie. This too is antithetical preaching. A minister must not shy away from exposing error, warning against false doctrine, instructing the people of God of the truth of Scripture specifically as it stands opposed to all the lies. He must do this sharply, clearly, precisely, and in such a way that the people of God are told that their salvation and blessedness lies only in the truth—that the lie is a trap to ensnare the unwary and rob them of the joy of salvation.

Always the defense of the faith lies here at this point. One of my colleagues in Seminary mentioned to me just the other day that it is after all only rarely in all the history of the church that the church has held firmly and consistently the truths of sovereign grace. Even after major battles have been fought and won in defense of this truth, soon once again the very truth for which the church struggled begins to slip away. How true this is. But without it there cannot be Christ-centered preaching.

Now I must close. In another letter we can give some concrete instances of Christ-centered preaching—from different parts of Scripture.

Fraternally in Christ,  
H. Hanko

## GUEST ARTICLE

### Barren

I am a barren woman. A barren woman nearly past the age where I must forever give up the hope of bringing forth God's covenant seed and the joy of ever holding in my arms my very own baby. Barren—a word full of emptiness. Empty arms, empty home, empty heart. Barren—a lonely word, full of longing for what can never be. For several years now I have been thinking of writing an article on this subject. Why? Certainly not for sympathy.

Your sympathy will do me no good. Neither will it dispel my barrenness. I do not need nor do I want your sympathy, because this is the way God, in His infinite wisdom, has chosen for me and my dear husband to walk. Why then? For two reasons. Perhaps it may be some help to the couple who has just received the devastating news that they can never be parents. That they (especially the wife) may know that others have lived with emptiness; not



just stoically lived with it but joyfully. Yes, as impossible as it seems, joyfully lived with it, giving thanks to God daily that He is directing your life, and not you. This joy does not come easily nor quickly, but it is a peaceful sort of joy that comes through much prayer and time, through the working of God's Spirit. I would not have believed this myself not so very long ago. The other reason? That you to whom God has given the wonderful privilege of raising His covenant seed may understand your sisters for whom God has given a different path to walk and so that you may more intelligently pray for their needs.

The first reaction to the news of your doctor that you and your husband can never be parents is one of disbelief. (Things like this do not happen to you, they happen to other people.) Then as each month goes by and you see that you are not pregnant this month, nor the next, nor the next, then comes self-pity and a sort of helpless rebellion which can very easily, and often does, turn into bitterness which eats away at the container in which it is stored—you. Worse than this, it is sinful rebellion against none other than God.

The thing that the Christian barren woman has that the worldly one does not have is some place to go with her bitter sorrow. We can go to our loving heavenly Father and lay it at His feet. And we do this, but our problem is that when we finish praying we do not leave our burden there. We sinfully pick it up again. Instead of humbly praying, "Lord, behold thy handmaid. Do unto me what seemeth good in Thy sight," the cry of Rachel to Jacob is wrung from our souls, "Give me children or else I die." And when heaven seems impervious to this plea we ask, "Why?" Oh, my sister, be careful of this question. Perhaps the reason for your childlessness will be harder to live with than living without children. Do not press this question too far, or the Lord may show you why and you will wish you never knew. You will wish that you had had the faith to accept God's answer to Paul, "My grace is sufficient for thee." We have been taught from childhood to trust in God, for He directs our feet only in the paths that are good for us. This is all easily done when God's paths are paths that we ourselves would choose, but, oh, so hard when God's path is just the opposite from what we want. Now is the time to put our faith into practice. We must learn to trust His way, knowing that He knows the end from the beginning and the very best way for us to reach that end by keeping obstacles from our path that may cause us to stumble. How having children could possibly cause me to stumble I do not know. But I know that God knows, and His wisdom is far above mine, which only sees one day at a time, not my life as a whole, nor the place for which I am being fitted in glory by

the events of this life.

I would like to offer some advice for the barren women of our denomination. Advice I wish I had had when I was younger. Do not stay home from church on a Sunday when there is to be baptism. I know it is hard to listen to sermons on the wonderful privilege of mothers to devote their time to the high calling of bringing forth and raising God's covenant seed. I know it is hard to sing Psalter #360, the 3rd verse: "Joyful children, sons and daughters, shall about thy table meet. Olive plants in strength and beauty, full of hope and promise sweet." This is not easy for you, but do not stay at home. Instead, pray for grace to rejoice with the parents and the church that a new soul has been added to God's church. Pray also for the parents, especially if they already have a large family and this new child may not be quite so welcome as the first one. Do not sinfully think only of your own empty arms. This is the Devil's way of causing us to sin against the tenth commandment. "I can't do this," you say. Then you have not yet discovered the power of God's grace. Pray for His grace that will allow you to rejoice and not weep. It took me many years to change my prayer from, "Give me a child also" to "Help me to rejoice with these parents." When my prayer changed, so did my attitude.

May I add a note here to our ministers. Please remember the barren woman in your congregation who, after listening to all that the Lord has withheld from her (and no doubt, we who do not have children tend to see only the joys of motherhood and not the many sorrows and trying times in the raising of a family) may sinfully be feeling very sorry indeed for herself. I have often felt the need of more than the brief exhortation added to the end of the sermon that if the Lord has not given us the covenant seed to raise we must be content knowing that God does all things well. I know this and I take my comfort from this; for without this I do not believe I could carry this burden. My heart also goes out to the single women at this time. Try to make your sermon as meaningful for us as for the parents of the congregation.

There are the times that are hard for the couple without children, such as the hours between supper and bedtime. With children, there does not seem to be enough time, but without children there is much time that hangs heavy. But we may not waste these hours. We must use them wisely. God has given us this "extra" time. We can use it to prepare for Society and for the Sabbath. We can use it to develop the talents God has given us. So often we tend to think of talents as only being artistic or musical, but God has given other talents as well. The wonderful talent of comforting the sick and troubled in the church. We who do not have chil-



dren have the time to do this, and we may not waste this talent. The talent of cooking and baking we so often think we cannot use to its full, because who will eat all the things we cook and bake? How about families in the church in which the mother is sick? I don't mean only from a hospital stay. The flu can keep a mother from preparing good meals, and I am sure that a meal and perhaps prepared lunches for husband and children to take to work and school the next day would be welcome. Let it be known that it would be a joy and a privilege for you if mothers would feel free to call on you in times of sickness.

Are you good with children even though the Lord did not give you any of your own? How about offering to babysit so that the parents may attend Society?

Often times the barren couple's life is made more barren still because they are not included in much of the social life of the church. They do not have children in school, and so do not attend PTA, nor do they know much about what the school's activities are and so do not have much to contribute to the conversation on this and other child-related subjects which make up much of the life of the couple with a family. There is something you can do about this. Join the Mother's Circle of your school. You may not be a mother, but you are interested in the school, and they are always ready to welcome new members to help with their projects. This will give you something in common with the parents and will help you to feel you are not so much of an outsider. Offer to teach Sunday School, or perhaps return to college and become a teacher in one of our Christian Schools. I know of one woman who did this; and she has told me that even though this was the farthest thing from her mind when she was younger, she has always been glad that the Lord opened this door for her. She has come to know and love many children, and, much to her surprise, they have returned her love. It has also made her life more like the lives of her friends in the church. She now has PTA to attend when they do and can talk with friends about the same things they do. Of, if you think you cannot teach, offer to drive the school bus. This also gives you more in common with your friends.

Do not become irritated when you invite friends to visit and they say, "You come here. It is much easier for you to come here. You do not have to lug any kids along." Tell them that you like to visit in their home, but that you like to entertain in your own home as well. Buy some toys and books and have a place for the children to play. Sometimes it goes better when you ask more than one family at a time. The children then have each other to play with.

Holidays do not have to be dreaded because you do not have a family to celebrate with. Invite other families to celebrate with you. Again, it is sometimes better to ask more than one family so the children have others to play with.

One thing a husband without children feels more strongly than his wife is that this branch of the covenant seed ends with him. There is no one to carry on the family name in the church. We must trust God's wisdom in this matter also. He is the One Who builds His church. My husband and I did not adopt children. This did not seem to be the way the Lord had for us. I have talked to couples who have adopted children, and they have been very happy that they have done so. Their adopted children have given them much joy, but some have also caused them terrible heartaches. But this is true of natural children also. I highly recommend adoption if, after prayer, it seems that the Lord has someone else's child or children for you to raise. Bear in mind that this can often be more difficult than raising your own natural child, simply because of heredity. The experts tell us that the way a child develops is due 85% to heredity and 15% to environment. Yet I believe that God uses this means to bring His covenant seed into the church.

The barren couple has one thing that the couple with children do not have. We have the time and opportunity really to get to know each other. We have the opportunity to do things together and to find joy in one another's company. Often one hears of the couples with children who, during the children's growing years, grow apart—she busying herself with the children, he busying himself in his job; and when the children are grown and out of the house the husband and wife find themselves with nothing in common. It is my belief that the barren couple come to love each other more than couples with children simply because of the time they have alone together. As I said before, this time should be used wisely. It must not be wasted in self-pity or in selfish pursuit of pleasure or wealth. There are opportunities God opens for us: perhaps the opportunity of traveling and seeing the marvelous wonders of His beautiful creation, perhaps the opportunity to help financially in Kingdom work.

As I said at the beginning, a barren woman can lead a life filled with joy when she lives out of the knowledge that God's blessing does indeed rest upon her and her husband, remembering always God's promise in Isaiah 41:10, "I am thy God: I will strengthen thee; yea, I will help thee." The secret is in those last four words. Then we can say with the Psalmist, "The lines have fallen unto me in places large and fair. A goodly heritage is mine, marked out with gracious care." Yes, with God's gracious care—graciously keeping us on the path He has so



wisely chosen for us. Do not sinfully long for the other path of your own choosing, for He has carefully marked out this one for us in His love and wisdom which is far above ours.

Name Withheld

[Editor's note. The article submitted was not anonymous, but

in this instance I exercised my editor's power to respect the wish of the author not to include her name. The reason was not that she or I wished to kindle your curiosity and have you engage in a guessing game. That will be futile. The writer's expressed wish was that every minister consider the possibility that the author is a barren woman in his own congregation.]

## ***SIGNS OF THE TIMES***

### **The Days of Noah (3)**

*Rev. Wilbur Bruinsma*

Last installment we considered that in the days of Noah the mighty and noble men of this wicked world had developed God's good creation in the service of sin and Satan. The world had developed greatly in her technology and industry; in fact, civilization had reached the very height of its development. Jabal, Jubal, and Tubalcain, the wicked sons of evil Lamech, had made it their aim and goal to make this world useful for themselves, and useful in such a way that they might fulfill their own lusts and passions. Their purpose in life was not to subdue the earth in the service of God but rather to set up an earthly kingdom without God where man reigned supreme. So it was that their wicked descendants became the geniuses of entertainment, industry, and technology.

Does this advancement in entertainment and technology of Noah's day sound familiar? It should. Remember Jesus' words in Matthew 24:37, "But as the days of Noe were, so shall the coming of the Son of man be." The events of Noah's day are even now unfolding before our eyes, including that development in worldly arts and industry.

If you recall, Jabal was the "father of all such as dwell in tents, and of such as have cattle." He was the beginning of those that accumulate unto themselves the treasures of this world. He and his spiritual descendants were those characterized by the love of money, and who were, therefore, high-minded, trusting in their uncertain riches and laying up in store for themselves wealth and prestige upon earth. They cared not for God's kingdom but instead they fell into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts which drown men in destruction and perdition (see I Timothy 6:9-19).

Is it not true that this is exactly what we find transpiring about us today too? You and I live in the midst of a materialistic world. There is a mad dash

in our day after money and all the luxuries and pleasures it can buy. So much is it the order of the day that even God's children, without sometimes even realizing it, fall into the same pattern. How often we find those, even within the church of Christ, constantly discussing new and better ways of increasing their wealth. Sometimes it even becomes so bad that they begin to judge one's Christianity on the basis of how many dollars and cents one is worth. In fact, such a craving in the church after the accumulation of earthly wealth often sees the causes of the kingdom of Christ suffer. Surely, the world about us has gone crazy over the almighty dollar and all of the conveniences and extras in life that dollar can bring.

Along with this craze of the modern day world, and hand in hand with it, is the extreme longing to indulge in all the earthly sensual pleasures that this world affords. Remember, Jubal was the "father of all such as handle the harp and organ." He and his descendants had taken God's wonderful creation of music and utilized that also in the service of sin and Satan. They composed the notes and added the words which resulted in the lustful strains of sin and immorality. That was true in the days of Noah, and such also will be true of the days prior to Christ's coming! And it is too! The Apostle Paul tells Timothy in II Timothy 3:1-4, "This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come, for men shall be . . . lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God." It can hardly go without saying that we live in a "pleasure-mad" and a "fun-crazy" world. That reveals itself, first of all, in the very music we hear as it flows forth from the modern day "harp and organ." Just quickly turn the tuner of our car radios or stereos and we find that the vast majority of stations that the tuning needle touches blast out the distorted and corrupted "music" of this world. We hear music that delights in rebel-



lion, drugs, sex, and blasphemy against God and His Word. We hear of murder, adultery, and Satan worship; and that, not only in the acid rock and punk music of the day, but also in the more accepted country music of the day. Even the distorted and twisted notes of music support such lustful and immoral thoughts.

But neither does the entertainment craze begun by Jubal stop with music. There are those places that thrive in the night hours, the theaters and bars and discos. The world sets up its movie stars and celebrities as gods and worships them. Gossip papers have become a thriving enterprise. And all this has its effect upon the church too. The love of God and His Word has grown cold, to be replaced by a love of pleasure. Many in the church of Christ, if not indulging in the blatant corruption which we have just mentioned, nevertheless live to see how much fun they can get out of life. They become lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God. No doubt in our day there is a repeat of the same cravings and desires that characterized the world of Noah's day! The last days are upon us!

Finally, we must not forget Tubalcain and his spiritual descendants. Tubalcain was an "instructor of every artificer in brass and iron." He and his descendants were the giants of industry and technology. They labored to develop the natural products of God's creation to suit their own needs and comforts. They did not attempt to serve God by means of the great knowledge and skill God had given them, but they rather attempted to create a world of technology where they could become their own gods.

Is it possible for the godly man of today to be blinded to the similarity of Noah's day with ours? Surely not! Just look at the great advances in technology today. Man has conquered the sea and air and space. By the touch of a few buttons we can talk to someone on the opposite side of the earth. Or, if we wish, in a matter of hours we can sit next to them and visit them. Think of the nuclear threat to the world; so far advanced has man become in his knowledge that he can destroy himself with only the push of several buttons. Observe the great strides man has made in medicine and surgery. Who ever heard, thirty years ago, of organ transplants or mechanical hearts! Who ever thought of staying alive by means of a steady diet of pills! Take note of the many little conveniences we now have: from potbelly stoves to microwaves, from horse and buggy to computerized automobiles with reclining seats, from a quiet night spent around the Monopoly board to the excitement of Pac-Man and Space Invaders. And all of this in a matter of a few years time! Surely the beast out of the earth which "doeth great wonders, so that he maketh fire come

down from heaven on the earth in the sight of men and deceiveth them that dwell on the earth by means of those miracles which he had power to do in the sight of the beast" (Rev. 13:13-14); surely, this beast is already making his appearance in the world today!

The point is, of course, that all of this is an indication to God's children who are waiting and watching for Christ's return that Christ is coming quickly and will soon appear on the clouds of heaven. As witnesses of all that is transpiring about us in this world we are called to be sober and watch. That means we must beware lest we fall into the same snare and temptation of the wicked and lose sight of our goal, the kingdom of God and its righteousness.

So it was that, because of the amalgamation of the church and the world, mighty men of old were born, men of renown. And these mighty men developed the world in civilization. They monopolized God's creation and subdued it in the service of Satan. Furthermore, we learn in Genesis 6:11-13 the outcome of all this: "The earth was corrupt before God, and the earth was filled with violence. And God looked upon the earth, and, behold, it was corrupt; for all flesh had corrupted his way upon earth. And God said unto Noah, the end of all flesh is come before Me, for the earth is filled with violence through them; and behold, I will destroy them with the earth." Because ungodly men developed their riches, entertainment, and technology with the purpose of serving themselves and not God the world became utterly corrupt and filled with violence. Noah's day was a time of abounding lawlessness! And the underlying reason for this was the total depravity of mankind. In Genesis 6:5 we read, "And God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually."

To understand this development of the world in Noah's day it is necessary that we consider for a moment the fall of man into sin. Prior to the fall Adam was formed after the image of God. "The Canons of Dordrecht" in the Third and Fourth Heads of Doctrine, Article 1 describe for us what was true of Adam in the state of perfection: "His understanding was adorned with a true and saving knowledge of his Creator, and of spiritual things; his heart and will were upright; all his affections pure; and the whole man was holy." Surely, the description given us here of Adam before the fall is the exact opposite of the description of man given in Genesis 6:5. This sudden change of man's heart can be ascribed to the fall of Adam into sin. In the fall Adam "forfeited these excellent gifts" described for us in the "Canons" and instead



became corrupt in all the imaginations of his heart. And since Adam was the father of the whole human race, all men in him were born dead in trespasses and sin. The description of man given us in Genesis 6:5 "that every imagination of the thought of his heart was only evil continually," was true of every fallen man born out of the loins of Adam. Now, we also learn from Scripture that out of this entire mass of fallen depraved men God, by His grace, has saved unto Himself a people in Christ. In these people, whom He has chosen from eternity, God works, delivering them from this spiritual bondage of sin. To them has been restored the image of God with all the excellent gifts Adam

possessed in Paradise before the fall. But in Noah's day these elect became fewer and fewer; there remained only a small remnant of those in whom God had worked salvation from the depravity of sin. As for the rest of mankind, God had given them over unto a depraved mind. Now the prediluvian world had become densely populated with them. It was upon this reprobate world that God looked and, "behold, it was corrupt; for all flesh had corrupted his way upon the earth."

Next time, the Lord willing, we will consider how this corruption of the world resulted in a society filled with violence and lawlessness.

## BIBLE STUDY GUIDE

# I Timothy — Advice for Office Bearers

*Rev. J. Kortering*

We now begin our study of the three letters which Paul wrote between his two imprisonments in Rome. They are called "Pastoral Epistles" because they were written to two individuals who functioned as pastors, namely Timothy and Titus. While Paul wrote these letters to these men, he also intended that the letters should be read to the churches, hence they are instructive for the church of all ages. The order in which they were written is I Timothy, Titus, and II Timothy. The first of them deals especially with the institution of the church, including the labors of the office bearers, the ministers, elders, and deacons.

### THE HISTORICAL SETTING

If we examine the three Pastoral Epistles from the point of view of the places and travels referred to in them, we soon learn that they deal with a time in Paul's life quite different from the events recorded in the Prison Epistles, which coincided with the events recorded in the Book of Acts.

To illustrate this point, we quote from the book, *New Testament Survey* by Tenney. "The chronological relations of the Pastorals to the Prison Epistles seem clear from their reference to Paul's companions. Many of these are identical with those of the Prison Epistles, but are located in places which show that they had left Paul's immediate vicinity. Timothy had been left at Ephesus while Paul was en route to Macedonia (I Tim. 1:3), whereas on the last trip that Timothy took with Paul the order of

procedure was from Macedonia to Asia (Acts 20:4-6), and Timothy did not remain in Ephesus. Demas had deserted Paul (II Tim. 4:10), whereas the Prison Epistles included him among the group at Rome (Philemon 24). Titus was left in Crete (Titus 1:5) and then went to Dalmatia (II Tim. 4:10), but on none of the journeys in Acts did Paul go to Crete, nor did he have Titus with him when he finally did go there during the voyage to Rome. Mark was in Asia (4:11) where Paul had recommended him in one of the Asian letters (Col. 4:10). Luke was still with him (II Tim. 4:11), Tychicus had gone on his errand to Ephesus (4:12). Paul himself had visited Ephesus (I Tim. 1:3), Crete (Titus 1:5), Nicopolis (3:12), Corinth (II Tim. 4:20), Miletus (4:20), and Troas (4:11), and was presently located in Rome (1:17). He was in prison (1:16) and was quite sure that the end of his life was not far away (4:6, 7). Altogether the situation was very different from that described by the Prison Epistles."

The question then arises, to what time in Paul's life do the Pastoral Epistles refer? The answer is given this way: Paul wrote the Prison Epistles during his first imprisonment in Rome. After this period of time, Paul was released for approximately two or three years during which he travelled extensively and wrote these three Pastoral Epistles. He was once again captured and confined to a prison for a brief time after which he was beheaded.

Hendriksen, in his *Bible Survey*, suggests the following chronology in the life of Paul.



1. Immediately after his release, Paul sends Timothy to Philippi with this good news (Philippians 2:19-23).

2. Paul himself started on his journey toward Asia Minor, and on the way to that destination he leaves Titus on the Island of Crete to bring to completion the organization of the churches which had been established on that island (cf. Acts 2:11 and Titus 1:15).

3. The apostle arrives at Ephesus, travels on until he reaches Colosse just as he had intended to do (Philemon 22) and returns to Ephesus.

4. At Ephesus he is joined by Timothy, who brings news from the congregation of Philippi (see 1 above). Paul asks Timothy to remain at Ephesus, which was in need of his ministry (I Tim. 1:3, 4).

5. Paul himself goes to Macedonia, just as he had planned (Phil. 2:24; I Tim. 1:3). He expects to return to Ephesus at a later date (I Tim. 4:13). From Macedonia he writes two epistles which resemble each other very closely: I Timothy and Titus (This is just a possibility. There are many who think that Titus was written a little later, and from Ephesus).

6. The apostle journeys to Nicopolis (in Epirus), located on the east coast of the Ionian Sea. Here he spends the winter and is joined by Titus, Titus 3:12.

7. Paul (and Titus?) journeys to Spain, Romans 15:24.

8. Having returned to Asia Minor (see 5 above), he leaves Trophimus sick at Miletus, south of Ephesus (II Tim. 4:20).

9. At Troas he visits Carpus, at whose house he leaves his cloak (II Tim. 4:13). He is rearrested. Cruel Nero was reigning. This was the monster of iniquity who murdered his step-brother, his own mother, his wife Octavia, his tutor Seneca, and many others. Christianity had become a forbidden religion. Accordingly, sometime between A.D. 65 and 68 the apostle was again made a prisoner, probably at Troas.

10. By way of Corinth, where Erastus remained (Rom. 16:23; II Tim. 4:20), Paul is brought to Rome. His second imprisonment was severe and brief (II Tim. 1:16, 17; 2:9). He was condemned to death and beheaded on the Ostian Way, about three miles outside of the capital. Just before he died he wrote II Timothy, death already staring him in the face. His shout of triumph was, "For I am already being offered, and the time of my departure is come" (II Tim. 4:6).

#### AUTHORSHIP AND DATE

Following the above chronology, Paul was released from his Roman prison between A.D. 64 and 67. Allowing time to travel to Macedonia, he must

have written the letter some time around A.D. 65.

It is interesting to note that the Pauline authorship has been and is today questioned not only from the liberal higher critics, but also from conservative quarters. It has not gained acceptance, nevertheless they do make considerable noise.

You may ask, what possible arguments can be produced to question the authorship of Paul? Let's briefly review the line of thinking, outlined in Harrison's *New Testament Introduction*. 1. Certain historical data cannot be fitted into Paul's labors prior to his journey to Rome—e.g., he left Trophimus at Miletus (II Tim. 4:20) and he left books and cloak at Troas (II Tim. 4:13), which cannot be harmonized with his journey to Jerusalem (Acts 20). 2. Paul emphasized in his other letters that the Lord would soon return. Here the author stresses the need for organizational unity in the church, as if the church will continue for a long time. 3. The style and language of these letters is different from Paul's writings. Here they point out style of argument, difference of vocabulary, etc. 4. It is suggested that the doctrinal emphasis is different from Paul's. Many great themes of Paul are omitted here and the author deals with a heresy, Gnosticism, which did not arise in the early church until the second century.

What do these critics suggest? Two possibilities: one is that Paul wrote certain fragments and someone else filled in the details; the other is that some other writer took Paul's name for himself in order to have the prestige and authority of the apostle. Such a person lived during the second century and thereby allowed for its inclusion in the canon of the Bible.

The answer to this is obvious. First, we accept divine inspiration which attributes authorship to Paul: "Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the commandment of God our Saviour, and Lord Jesus Christ, which is our hope; unto Timothy, my own son in the faith" (I Timothy 1:1, 2). Secondly, we have the testimony of the early church fathers. Quotations of these Pastoral Epistles as being written by Paul appear in the early writings of Irenaeus, Tertullian, and Clement of Alexandria. The same is true of Polycarp and Clement of Rome. Besides this, the Holy Spirit led the early church to include these books in the canon of inspired Scripture, and our Reformed confessions ascribe them to Paul (Netherland's Confession Article 4).

#### THE OCCASION

When Paul left Timothy behind at Ephesus, in order that he might continue the work in that congregation, and Paul went on into Macedonia, two things must have given rise to his writing Timothy this letter.



First, Paul was Timothy's spiritual father. He knew Timothy needed encouragement to face the difficulties that were in the church of Ephesus. Since Paul could not return immediately (I Timothy 3:14 and I Tim. 4:3), the letter had to suffice for the time being.

Let's review some things that contributed to the close working relationship that Paul and Timothy enjoyed.

1. Timothy was born in Lystra of a Jewish mother and a Greek father. He was taught the Holy Scripture from his youth by both his mother and grandmother (II Tim. 1:5 and II Tim. 3:15).

2. Upon the recommendation of the church at Lystra, Paul took Timothy along on his second missionary journey. Timothy became Paul's student and was thereby groomed for the ministry (Acts 16:1-3).

3. Timothy assisted Paul in the ministry in Macedonia, Achaia, and Ephesus, for three years (Acts 19).

4. He was delegated to the Jerusalem conference and accompanied Paul to the city (Acts 20:4).

5. Timothy was with Paul in Rome during his first imprisonment (Col. 1:1 and Philemon 1).

6. After Paul was released from prison, Timothy stayed in Ephesus while Paul went into Macedonia.

7. He probably joined Paul at Rome during his second imprisonment (II Tim. 4:11, 21).

This indicates that there must have been a wonderful working relationship between Paul and Timothy. Now that Paul realized he might not be able to assist Timothy much longer, he committed to writing advice for young Timothy and through him to the church of all ages.

Secondly, the circumstances in the church at Ephesus demanded attention, and Timothy had to be encouraged to deal with them. From the epistle itself (I Tim. 1:4, 6, 7, 20 and 6:20), we take note of doctrinal errors that were there. Timothy needed personal encouragement for he tended to be timid (II Tim. 1:6, 7) and even suffered physical discomfort (I Tim. 5:23).

## GUEST ARTICLE

# The Use of Our Creeds (II)

*Rev. R. Hanko*

In discussing some of the different ways in which our creeds can be used we have attempted to show how the creeds can and must be the living confession of the church as she draws her life out of the Word of God. In pointing out these various uses of the creeds we have made no claim to be exhaustive, but have simply tried to distinguish some of the more important ways in which we maintain our Reformed heritage as it is given us in the creeds. Our purpose in doing this has been to encourage the use of the creeds, since we believe that the only alternative is ecclesiastical chaos.

So far we have distinguished three ways in which the creeds can be used: the constitutional, the juridical, and the apologetic uses. In speaking of the constitutional use of the creeds we referred to the fact that the church of Jesus Christ in her creeds confesses her faith in the Word of God over against all those who do not believe as she does, and thus separates herself from them. By doing so she also establishes a basis of unity with all those who are of like faith. In connection with the juridical use of

the creeds we attempted to show that the creeds, in setting before us the work of the church of the past, have a place in guiding the affairs and settling the disputes that arise in the church. When we spoke of an apologetic use we meant that the creeds are very well adapted to be used in the defense of the faith over against all errors of false doctrine and godless living that creep in.

These first three uses have to do, more or less, with the organization and institution of the church. In the remainder of this article we want to show how the creeds also have a place in the worship and personal life of the church and her members. In this connection we distinguish five ways in which the creeds can be used: the liturgical, homiletical, catechetical, pastoral, and devotional uses of the creeds. As we look at these different uses we will see that to some degree they overlap one another.

When we speak of a liturgical use of our creeds then we refer to the fact that they are used in the public worship of the church. In this way the con-



fession of the church becomes an act of worship as the church stands before her God. When we recite the Apostles' Creed, either in unison or together in our hearts, then, as part of our worship, we are confessing our faith in God Triune as the God of all our salvation. And the Apostles' Creed, both because of its conciseness, and because it is a personal confession written in the first person, is especially well adapted to this use.

There are, however, also other "Forms" which are used in the worship of the church in connection with the sacraments, the ordination of office-bearers, etc. These forms are also creeds in that the church uses them to make confession of faith concerning the ordinances which Christ has established and instituted in the church. In connection with the administration of the sacraments, for example, the forms which are read with the sacraments are the church's confession that she desires and intends to administer the sacraments in harmony with the command of Christ in the Scriptures. Another example is our form for the ordination of elders and deacons. This form reminds us at the very beginning that it is "a short declaration from the Word of God concerning the institution and the office of elders and deacons."

The Scriptural warrant for the liturgical use of creeds is first of all the testimony of the Word that we are to confess our faith before men always and everywhere. We have already looked at some of these passages. There are also, however, certain parts of Scripture which seem to be liturgical statements that were used in the public worship of the early church, such as I Timothy 3:16. Here Paul introduces a beautiful statement of faith with a word which means "by confession" (translated "without controversy" in the KJV), indicating that this confession was well known and often used in the church.

Closely connected with this liturgical use of the creeds is the homiletical use. By this we refer to the use of the creeds in the preaching. We have already seen as part of the juridical use of creeds that they stand in the church as regulators and guides for sound and faithful exposition of God's Word. But the creeds ought not only stand behind the preaching, they ought also to be part of the preaching. In Reformed circles there is a long standing tradition of preaching from the Heidelberg Catechism or the Westminster Catechism. This is never done, of course, apart from the Scriptures, but has great advantage in that the people of God receive regular and systematic instruction in the principle doctrines of Scripture. Thus the believers are firmly established in the faith, are equipped with the wisdom of salvation and furnished unto every good work.

Good use can also be made of the creeds in preaching by regular reference to them. The creeds are helpful in many respects when used in this way: they show the biblical foundation of the doctrines that are taught in the church; they set forth the truth very clearly against the errors which are so prevalent in the church and against which the saints must be warned; and very often they give sound practical and personal application of the Word of God. Such practical application is found again and again in the Heidelberg Catechism, which asks many questions such as that of Lord's Day XXIII: "But what doth it profit thee now that thou believest all this?"

But just as the creeds are used for instruction in the preaching, so they can also be used for instruction and study in the Bible Classes, Catechism classes, and other similar activities of the church. This use of the creeds we can call the catechetical use. Especially important here is the instruction of the children of the church, and our creeds are admirably suited to bring this instruction. Some creeds, such as our Heidelberg Catechism and its Compendium, were written in question and answer form especially for the purpose of instructing new converts and the children of the covenant and ought to be so used.

The advantage of using the creeds in instruction is their systematic form. When the truth is taught systematically it is most easily grasped and remembered. This is also in harmony with the truth of the covenant with its obligations and responsibilities as taught in Psalm 78:1-8, and Genesis 18:17-19. In this way each generation receives the truth as an inheritance from the church of the past and is more aware of the abiding unity of the church of all ages. It is the great curse of the church today that she deliberately severs all connection with the church of the past, and thus also from the Spirit Who works in the church. Through this use of the creeds the church comes to understand the confession of the Psalmist in Psalm 16:6; "The lines are fallen unto me in pleasant places; yea, I have a goodly heritage."

Somewhat different is the pastoral use of the creeds and confessions of the church. Here, of course, we mean to say that the creeds can be used in the pastoral work of the office-bearers; that of comforting and helping those who are in distress, admonishing the wayward, and strengthening and encouraging all the saints. That the creeds can be used in this way certainly shows that the charge that the creeds are cold and barren expositions of doctrine is absolutely groundless. Those who say such things only show that they are completely ignorant of the content of the Reformed creeds.



There are endless examples that could be given in this regard. We mention here just a few to illustrate the point. In the Canons there is a very beautiful application of the doctrine of election to those who lack assurance, in the first Head of Doctrine, article 16. The Belgic Confession very properly explains the calling of believers with regard to the church in Article 28, something which is often misunderstood and a source of trouble in the church. Then there is the peerless explanation of the office of believers in Lord's Day XII of the Heidelberg Catechism, which begins with the soul-searching question, "Why art thou called a Christian?" In the Westminster Confession of Faith we have an explanation of the Christian's calling with respect to religious worship and the Sabbath Day that is unequaled in any other Reformed creed (chapter 21). And so one could go on picking examples almost at random. But the point is that the office-bearers of the church are well advised to use our creeds in their work, both by way of preparation for the work, and in the actual work of feeding the flock, warning the unruly, comforting the feeble-minded, supporting the weak, and labouring diligently among the sheep of Jesus Christ (I Thessalonians 5:12-14).

Finally, there is what we may call a devotional

use of the creeds. The creeds also have a place in the personal, spiritual life of the members of the church. There are many examples of this that can be given. The Heidelberg Catechism, for example, in its exposition of the Lord's Prayer certainly gives to each of us both help and encouragement for prayer and ought to be read often by us. The article in the Belgic Confession on the sacraments, and the Form for the Administration of the Lord's Supper can very properly and profitably be used and read by way of preparation and self-examination before coming to the Lord's table. These are only examples, but they show that the creeds do have a place in private meditation and study of the Word, in family devotions, and in preparation for all the different spiritual activities in which we are called to take part.

All this is meant to show, however, not only that our creeds *can* be used in all the life of the church, but that they *must* be used. A church which does not use her creeds is a church without creeds, and a church without creeds has gone far on the road that ends in ecclesiastical chaos. Let us remember our heritage both in word and deed and not be ashamed of it, for it is "a goodly heritage . . . marked out with gracious care" (*The Psalter*, number 27, stanza 5).

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## FROM HOLY WRIT

# Believing All the Scriptures

*Rev. G. Lubbers*

### Chapter V

#### The "seven dispensations" of Scofield's Bible

Have you ever heard, my dear reader, of Dr. C. I. Scofield? Do you know that he added certain "explanatory notes," which must serve as interpretation and guide in reading the King James Version of the Scriptures? Did you know too that this Bible has been instrumental in leading thousands and hundred thousands in the error of Dispensationalism? Whether you know this or not it will serve you well as a believer of all the prophetic Scriptures to read what I and many others before me have said to refute this error of "dispensationalism" with the sword of the Spirit, the Word of God.

The Scofield Bible was first published in 1909, some seventy years ago. And its influence for evil has been very great, as an evil leaven in the body of the truth of the gospel. Scofield and his assistants

manipulate with the terms: Gospel, Covenant, Dispensation, Church, kingdom and other related concepts which deal with the salvation of the "Israel of God," the church in the world. And the method employed by Dr. Scofield is that, instead of writing his notes in a separate Commentary, he places his notes in key positions in the Bible, so that his readers will read the Bible through the spectacles of Dr. Scofield. (Compare Dr. L. Boetner's *THE MILLENNIUM*, pages 369-373.)

We desire the reader to keep in mind that we are not interested in giving a history of Dr. Scofield's work, dating about from 1843, (which incidentally is a time when such heresies as Christian Science, Mormonism, and Seventh Day Adventism appeared) but we are interested in some of the basic teaching and constructions, which are today the structural teachings of Dispensationalism in America.



We have another interest, a more pinpointed interest.

Our interest centers on the question whether the presentation of Dispensational Premillennialists squares with the pattern of sound doctrine which is unto godliness, as revealed in all the prophetic writings, as these are in turn interpreted infallibly by Christ and by His Spirit in the holy Apostles.

Such is our interest. To this task we have set ourselves. And therefore we ask the question: does Dispensationalism really teach the pattern of sound doctrine that the church is the *temple* of the living God, the dwelling-place of God by the Spirit, and that His temple is the "true temple" (Heb. 8:2)? Does Dispensationalism teach that both Jew and Greek have the same right to enter into this temple as reborn children of God, belonging to Christ, and therefore are both Abraham's seed (Gal. 3:26-29)? When Dr. Scofield advocates the "seven dispensations," and likewise teaches that there are "seven covenants" and differentiates in such a way that he virtually teaches that there is not one only Gospel, but that there are "four gospels," is that rightly dividing the Word of truth? You must know that the text in II Timothy 2:15 has been made by Dispensationalists a veritable slogan. They prate as such who rightly divide the word of truth when they divide the history of the world into "seven dispensations." It is averred that we who do not thus interpret the Scriptures do not rightly divide the truth. And, incidentally, since the days of John N. Darby, the outstanding leader of the "Plymouth Brethren," a man who labored about 1830, it has been affirmed that now the new light and new and proper insight was afforded by the Spirit to the church; things which had been hid from the faithful spouse of Christ for well-nigh nineteen centuries after Christ, now suddenly were revealed!

Now we are given the burden to show that this "new light" is not any new light at all, but that it is a preaching contrary to the pattern of sound doctrine, as this is the warp and woof of all the prophetic Scriptures, fulfilled in Christ's death and resurrection.

And so we repeat the question: Does dispensationalism really cling to Christ, the Head over all things in heaven and on earth, in the eternal Commonwealth of Israel (Eph. 2:14, 15)? Do Dispensationalists, in the very structural truths which they teach, teach the full counsel of God concerning the purpose of God with the earthly Canaan, earthly temple in relationship to the "better country" (Heb. 11:16) and of the earthly temple which "Moses pitched" in relationship to the "perfect tabernacle, which the Lord pitched and not man"? In their insistence that "Israel" only refers to the

Old Testament Jewish nation, and in their teaching that this earthly temple will be rebuilt in the time of the future "Millennium" for a restored earthly Israelitish Commonwealth, do they teach the pure doctrine of the Gospel of grace, and of justification? Is this teaching not an evil leaven that leavens the entire lump of the truth in Christ?

We believe it is an evil leaven.

We believe that here we touch on the crux of the whole matter. It is not a building on the only foundation which is laid, and besides which no other foundation can be laid, which we find in the teaching of Dispensationalism, with its "seven dispensations."

It is asserted by Dispensationalists that when one rejects their brand of "literal interpretation" of the Scriptures, there is but one option left, namely, that we fall into what they denominate as being "allegorization" of the Word, a certain erroneous "spiritualizing" of it. When one teaches that the Old Testament tabernacle was not a "true tabernacle" but was only a type and picture of it, and that the transactions in the sacrifices were parabolic figures of the real sacrifice at Calvary, that is "spiritualizing" it. I ask in all candor: what of it? Does not Scripture itself speak of putting spiritual things with spiritual (I Cor. 2:13, 14)?

When dispensationalists speak of "literal interpretation" they apply this their "hermeneutic" especially to those prophecies which speak of "Israel," "Judah," "temple," "David," etc. Literal Israel means historic, Old Testament Israel, while to speak of the church as "Israel" is not speaking literally. The term Israel is used, however, by the Holy Spirit, in Galatians 6:16, to denominate to the church. "Israel," there, is the spiritual name of the church, the true descendants of Father Jacob, as he received his new name at the brook Jabbok (Gen. 32:24-32). That is the entire point of the Holy Spirit in Romans 2:28 and 29 and in Romans 9:6b where we read, "For they are not all Israel which are of Israel"!

We will, therefore, not be stampeded into retreat by the bald and repeated assertions that we are using the "allegorizing" method of interpretation when we say that according to Scripture the true Israel refers to both Jew and Greek, as they are reborn saints, born from the power of the promise, and, therefore, are free-born sons of Sarah. Any literal interpretation which is used to deny that "Israel" in the Old Testament was not the Jewish nation *per se*, but that it referred to the believing Seed of Abraham is set in the service of Satan's lie (John 8:38, 39). Such literal interpreters contradict Jesus' word, and reject the truth which makes men free (John 8:32-34).



In the light of the foregoing we can now pass judgment on the attempt to teach "seven covenants," "seven dispensations," and "four gospels."

We will for the time being limit ourselves to the question of Scofield's "seven dispensations." These are included in the "Explanatory Notes" in the Bible going by his name. Now, it is really a sacrilegious thing to speak of any *man's* Bible. God forbid that any should call the Bible by my name. But we will quote it in quotation marks.

The "seven dispensations" of which Scofield speaks are the following: Dispensation of "Innocence" (Gen. 1:28); of "Conscience" (Gen. 3:23); of "Human Government" (Gen. 8:20-11:9); of "Promise" (Gen. 12:1); of "Law" (Ex. 19:8); of "Grace" (John 1:17); of "Kingdom" (Eph. 1:10).

Let it be understood that these dispensations are really a new and essentially different way of God's dealing with man, each time as a means of "trial," wherein man must live up to certain conditions. Thus the dispensation of "Law" has no "Grace" in it, and the Dispensation of "Grace" has no "Law" in it. Grace was, according to this view, not revealed under the time of the shadows and types in the Old Testament tabernacle. Should grace be revealed in the time of the "law" then the Law would not be a law, and the dispensation of law would not be a distinct "dispensation," a time and peculiar method of God in dealing with men. This "dispensation" extends from the time of Israel at Sinai till Calvary, from Exodus to the Cross.

Now this manipulating with the term "dispensation" is far from correct, neither is it innocent; it is a plain contradiction of the plain and explicit teaching of Scripture on this point. This term is em-

ployed only by the Holy Spirit through Paul. The term is in the English virtually the Latin translation of the Greek term *oikonomia*. The Latin term as given in the *Vulgate* translation is *dispensatione*. Paul speaks of this "dispensation" in Ephesians 1:10; 3:2; Colossians 1:25. In each of these passages Paul speaks of the peculiar office which God gave him in connection with the preaching of the Gospel to the Gentiles, as a fulfilment of the promises made to the father. He must according to this dispensation of the grace be a preacher in all the world under heaven (Col. 1:23). This is the dispensation of the time that fills all other periods of time before in the Old Testament Dispensation. Hence, it is called the "dispensation of the fulness of times." This is the time in which, through Christ's glorification at God's right hand, all things are now placed under one Head: Christ (Eph. 1:9, 10, 11)! This is made known according to the mystery of God's will. And in Ephesians 3:2 the term is used in connection with the ministry of Paul, which is such that the Gentiles are fellow-heirs, and of the same body with, and fellow-partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus through the Gospel (Eph. 3:6). This is the mystery spoken of by Jesus in John 10:16: "And other sheep I have which are not of this fold (stable); them also I must bring and they shall be (become = *geneesetai*) one flock and one Shepherd." In passing we would remark that this reference from John 10:16 precludes and excludes the teaching and contention of some Dispensationalists, that theirs is a "Gospel of Paul" in distinction from the Gospel of Jesus. There is but one gospel: the glad tidings that the promises of God, *all* the promises, are yea in Christ, and in Him Amen to the glory of God.

(will be continued)

## Book Reviews

**COMMENTARY ON GALATIANS**, by F. F. Bruce; Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1982; 305 pp., no price given. (Reviewed by Prof. H. Hanko)

This book is part of the New International Greek Testament Commentary, edited by I. Howard Marshall and W. Ward Gasque. The following quote from the jacket will give some idea of the goal of the editors in this commentary series.

This new commentary series is established on the presuppositions that the theological character of the New Testament documents calls for exegesis which is sensitive to theological themes as well as to the details

of the historical, linguistic, textual, and critical context. Such thorough exegetical work lies at the heart of these commentaries, with general comments on sections and sub-sections being followed by a detailed verse-by-verse treatment of the text.

An important aim of the authors is to interact with the most significant results of the New Testament research published in recent articles and monographs. This serves as a background for their own contributions to the ongoing effort to explore in greater depth the meaning of the biblical text.

The text on which these commentaries are based is the 1973 UBS Greek New Testament, edited by Kurt



Aland and others. While engaging the major questions of text and interpretation at the appropriate level of scholarship, the authors will bear in mind the needs of the beginning student of Greek as well as the pastor or layperson who may have studied the language at some time but does not now use it on a regular basis.

It is difficult to evaluate a commentary properly in a short review of this sort. There is no doubt about it that F. F. Bruce, who has published many works in the field of New Testament studies, is certainly one of the great scholars of modern times. His commentary reflects his great abilities and his wide knowledge in the field.

The commentary is, on the whole, an excellent one. It is based on sound principles of exegesis and is thorough in its exposition of the text. Anyone who contemplates preaching on the book of Galatians or who is preparing to lead a Bible-study group in this epistle could profit immensely from the book. It is almost a necessary addition to one's library on this important book of Scripture.

There are certain characteristics of the book which ought to be mentioned in a review. It is not a commentary for those who have not had some training in the original Greek. The commentary is directly from the Greek, contains textual notes, and refers extensively to the rest of the Greek New Testament.

One weakness of the book in my estimation was its lack of homiletical application. It might be answered that this is not included in the book because the purpose of the series of commentaries is not primarily to aid in sermon making. Nevertheless, this is so completely lacking that there is almost no treatment of the importance and relevance of this Word of God to the whole New Testament Church including the Church of today.

One doctrinal weakness which struck me was its insufficient emphasis on the juridical relation between Christ and His people in the central truth of the book: justification by faith in Christ apart from the works of the law.

There is some historical and literary criticism, but of a more "conservative" kind.

The book is a valuable addition to a pastor's library.

**THREE MEN CAME TO HEIDELBERG AND GLORIOUS HERETIC: THE STORY OF GUIDO DE BRES;** Thea B. Van Halsema; Baker Book House, Grand Rapids, Michigan; 134 pp. (paper), \$3.95 [Reviewed by Prof. H. C. Hoeksema]

The two sections of this book were originally published separately, the first by the Christian Reformed Publishing House in 1963, and the second

by Eerdmans in 1961. Baker Book House has now republished them in a neat and attractive little paperback.

As the titles suggest, this book contains the stories of the origin of our Heidelberg Catechism and our Belgic Confession. The stories are historically accurate and interestingly told. The book is easy reading for a winter's evening.

Our teenagers could profitably read a book like this, either in connection with their catechism classes or their church history courses at school. And I mean they could read it not as a "must" assignment and a burden, but they could read it with interest and fascination and at the same time be instructed.

Recommended.

**IN RETROSPECT: REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST,** F.F. Bruce; Wm. B. Eerdmans Publ. Co., Grand Rapids, Mich. 319 pp., cloth, \$13.95. [Reviewed by Prof. H.C. Hoeksema]

This is a very interesting autobiographical account by this well-known English New Testament scholar. As the dust jacket informs us, this book is actually "a rewritten version of 24 reminiscence articles by F.F. Bruce published over a two-year period in *The Witness*, a British magazine addressed largely to members of the Plymouth Brethren." I must confess I was surprised to learn from this book that the author is a member of the Open Brethren.

The book is, of course, not a contribution in the areas of theology or New Testament scholarship. It is rather in the nature of a "human interest" work. I found it very interesting, however; and it is helpful in understanding Dr. Bruce's writings to know "where he comes from." Recommended.

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## WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

On March 27, 1983, our parents, MR. AND MRS. JOHN HOKSBERGEN will celebrate their 25th wedding anniversary, the Lord willing.

We, their children, are thankful to our heavenly Father for blessing us with our God-fearing parents. And we thank them for their love and covenant instruction in God's ways. We pray that God will always be near them and bless them in the years to come.

"But the mercy of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting upon them that fear Him, and His righteousness unto children's children" (Psalm 103:17).

Mr. and Mrs. Ronald Hoksbergen  
Julie and Jonathan

Mr. and Mrs. Gary Westra  
Jeffrey and Glenda

Mr. and Mrs. Dennis Hoksbergen  
Jacelyn Hoksbergen



## News From Our Churches

February 15, 1983

As most of us know, an individual who desires to partake of the Lord's Supper usually has his or her name read at the beginning of the celebration of the Lord's Supper. The Consistory of Southwest Protestant Reformed Church has adopted a different procedure: " 'All requests for permission to partake of the Lord's Supper must be made one week prior to the celebration of the Lord's Supper and the name shall be announced from the pulpit at the preparatory service.' This gives the congregation opportunity to make objection if necessary and give the requesting participants opportunity to partake in preparatory."

Southwest Protestant Reformed Church has "district elders" where two elders are assigned to part of the congregation who live in a certain geographical location. There are three geographical areas served by six district elders.

Southwest Church also has started organizing Sunday evening discussion groups. Other of our churches also have Sunday evening Bible discussion groups. Hope Protestant Reformed Church in Walker has discussion groups that meet once a month from October to May. These meetings are very profitable for those who attend, and they serve to unite the body of Christ together.

By now many of us have noticed the changes in the sermon pamphlets of the Reformed Witness Hour. The reason for these changes is to improve the print quality of the pamphlets so that they are more readable. In the past, the pamphlets were mimeographed. Now they are typeset. I have heard several older members of our congregations remark about their being able to read the new pamphlets a lot more easily. The cover was also changed in order to give the pamphlet a more attractive appearance. These changes are costly, almost three times as much as a mimeographed copy, but these changes are for the benefit of those who read them.

It is good to see from the church bulletins that frequent collections are taken for the Reformed Witness Hour. Although some stations have been dropped, the cost of the other stations continues to rise. I have gathered the following station names, frequencies, and times from our various church bulletins: Hull Protestant Church—KDCR (88.5 FM), 6:15 P.M., Sunday; Loveland Protestant Re-

formed Church—KLOV (1570 AM), 10 A.M., Sunday; Randolph Protestant Reformed Church—WLKE (1170), 8:30 A.M., Sunday; First Protestant Reformed Church in Grand Rapids—WJBL (94.5 FM), 2:00 P.M. Sunday, WFUR (1570 AM), 4:00 P.M., Sunday, and WJBL (94.5 FM), 12:30 P.M., Tuesday. There are a few more stations in addition to these that the Reformed Witness Hour broadcasts over.

Hudsonville Protestant Reformed Church sponsors its own radio broadcast called Saturday Evening Meditations over WJBL (94.5 FM), at 9 P.M. The Meditations are taped copies of previous Sunday sermons. I am going to quote a response to this broadcast, taken from the January 2, 1983 bulletin. " 'Letting you know that I listen to your sermon every Saturday nite on WJBL, I and also two of my widowed sisters....who each live in their own home or trailer also listen to you. The older sister and I are Christian Reformed. The younger sister is Reformed Church of America.... We all look forward to your preaching as solid Calvinistic Preaching, and we thank you for it. ...I was young when your church separated.... I did not understand the split and because I was younger, didn't concern myself very much.... The thing that concerns me and Christianity is that we are saved by Grace (and Grace alone) not by works....' A listener from Zeeland."

"Rev. Joostens and deacon Dan Pastoor and their wives left for the Jamaican field at 7 A.M. last Thursday (February 10th)." Rev. Flikkema and Rev. Miersma will follow Rev. Joostens so that their times will not overlap. May God bless this field of labor in His vineyard with abundant fruit.

If you were thousands of miles away from home you would want to receive letters from your friends. South Holland Protestant Reformed Church put this announcement in their bulletin of January 23: "Mr. Michael Soh, a member of our sister church in Singapore, is a student at Southern Illinois University. His address is 504 South Rawlings, Apt. 44, Carbondale, IL., 62901. His birthday is May 27...." Perhaps Mr. Michael Soh would appreciate letters from his friends not so far away.

The next issue will inform you about the "Tape Room" and about the forbidden use of lottery.

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