

# The **STANDARD BEARER**

A REFORMED SEMI-MONTHLY MAGAZINE

... Indeed, we who were poor have now become rich, unspeakably, unbelievably rich. What shall we say? In the cross of Christ we glory. Do we glory in that cross? Shall we then present ourselves, body and soul, as living sacrifices of praise and thanksgiving? What else can we do? To Him be all the praise and the glory, to God as the God of our salvation in Jesus Christ, our Lord.

See "Rich Through Christ's Poverty"

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## MEDITATION

## Rich Through Christ's Poverty

Rev. H. Veldman

*"For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, that ye through His poverty might be rich."* II Cor. 8:9

To give, liberally and cheerfully, is possible only by the grace of God. We read in verse 1 of this eighth chapter of II Corinthians: "Moreover, brethren, we do you to wit of the grace of God bestowed on the churches of Macedonia." Paul is speaking here of the churches of Macedonia which, notwithstanding their great affliction and deep poverty, according to verse 2, abounded in their liberality in

their collecting for other needy churches. And in verse 1 the apostle ascribes this liberality to the grace of God bestowed upon these churches of Macedonia. Indeed, to give liberally and cheerfully one must first receive the grace of God; however, when this happens one must give. This follows from the grace of God, is its absolutely necessary fruit.



And now, in this text, verse 9, the apostle refers to the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, although rich, for our sakes, because of us, He became poor, that we might be rich. This is a very profound word, and it reminds us of another equally profound word of God, recorded in Philippians 2:5 ff: "Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God...." But, as is also the case in Philippians 2, this very profound scripture is recorded with a very practical intent and purpose: knowing this grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, we, being so tremendously rich, must also reveal this as we consider the needs of others in the midst of the world. Being rich, having been so unspeakably poor, it is hardly proper to shut up and close our bowels of mercy and compassion.

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Ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ. What a knowledge!

The word grace, which means fundamentally "beauty, attractiveness," referring to the truth that God is beautiful and eternally attracted unto Himself, as the triune God, in the bond of infinite goodness and perfection, also appears in the Word of God as meaning unmerited and condescending goodness and favour, viewed subjectively from the viewpoint of the sinner. The sinner is wholly unworthy of the grace of God, and therefore the grace of God, from the viewpoint of the sinner, is completely unmerited. It is this thought of God's condescending goodness which receives the emphasis here. This is plain because we read that Christ, although rich, became poor for our sakes, because of us.

What a knowledge this is! We know this. We know that Christ, being rich, became poor because of us. We know that the eternal Son of God, although rich, impoverished Himself in order to make us rich! Surely, this wonderful truth is not known by us through natural observation, with our natural eyes and ears. This is not something we could ever conclude from what we could see and observe. How could we, viewing Calvary, ever conclude that we were being made rich by the suffering and poverty of the Sufferer upon Golgotha?! Does not all appear hopeless upon the cross of Calvary? How, then, can and do we know this? We know this, first of all, by divine inspiration. The Lord has revealed the wonder of this upon the pages of Holy Writ. And, secondly, we know this by the testimony of the Holy Spirit in our hearts; this knowledge is the experiential knowledge of divine grace; by His Spirit we have experienced this amazing wonder in our hearts. Spiritually the Lord has made it known unto us.

Our Lord Jesus Christ became poor. Must this poverty be understood as according to His divine nature? Does the Word of God here teach that Jesus, the Son of God, while in the state of humiliation, laid aside His divine nature and riches? Or does this text teach us that Jesus hid His glory which He possesses as God, so that it was covered by His humiliated human nature? This cannot be the meaning of this scripture. We read a similar thought in Philippians 2:6: "Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God." We read in our text: "For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, being rich, He for your sakes became poor." Literally, however, we read: "For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, being rich, He for your sakes became poor." We do not read in Philippians 2:6 that He was in the form of God but "being in the form of God." And this means that He continued in the form of God, essentially. And in our text we do not read that He "was rich," but "being rich." He therefore continues to be rich while becoming poor.

The idea of this scripture is therefore plain. Even as in Philippians 2:6 He is and remains God, but made Himself of no reputation, emptied Himself according to the human nature, so, in this word of God, while being God and remaining rich, He became poor as in His human nature. In His becoming poor His being rich as God remained unaffected.

Our Lord Jesus Christ became poor. How true this is at the time of His incarnation, when He was born in Bethlehem! No, this does not mean that He became poor simply by becoming man. In the first place, He is and remains God. The birth of the Son of God in our flesh and blood did not involve Him in any change of His Godhead. And, secondly, He is still man, also in His state of exaltation and glorification; but He surely is no longer poor. His poverty does refer to how He became man: He was born in our guilty relation to the law. He took upon Himself the humiliated human nature, assumed responsibility for all the sins of all the elect throughout all the ages. However, He became poor, throughout His life, especially upon the cross of Calvary. How He impoverished Himself, became poor! He made Himself of no reputation (Phil. 2:7); He emptied Himself, as we read it literally in this passage in Philippians 2. He destroyed Himself. He descended into death and hell; He destroyed Himself eternally, submitted Himself to the eternal and infinite wrath of God, cried out in utter amazement, "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" Indeed, He made Himself of no reputation forever; He perished everlastingly. This is the unfathomable mystery of the cross. What a poverty!



We are become rich. What an amazing riches!

What a riches of grace, even in a negative sense of the word! We have been saved, delivered from hell, from everlasting damnation! We have received the forgiveness of all our sins; we have received a payment that covers all of our iniquities; we have been declared righteous before God. What a wonderful salvation, when viewed negatively. This is surely great and wonderful! Yes, but it is merely the negative aspect of our deliverance. And if our salvation be great when viewed negatively, how great our deliverance must be when viewed positively! Indeed, we have been made rich. And, what a riches!

Imagine if we were to receive all the gold and all the silver and all the cattle upon a thousand hills; imagine if we were to receive title to all the goods of this present time, if we were to inherit all of this world's wealth. Receiving all this we would have nothing in comparison with the riches we have now received. After all, this world is a perishing world, and it is this with all that it contains. We are heirs of everlasting life and glory. To be sure, in that city of our God there will be no sickness, no pain, no death, no sorrow, no crying, no distress of any nature, no sin. But, positively, we shall inherit a riches, a glory so great that, upon receiving it, we shall declare that the half was never told us, that no human heart could ever conceive of it, no human eye could ever see it and no human ear could ever hear it, a glory so great that it could never enter into the heart of man. We shall receive new heavens and a new earth, shall receive a salvation according to body and soul, of heavenly life and immortality. We shall never hunger again, never thirst again; we shall be perfectly adapted to the service of the Lord, the one and only blessed God; we shall see God face to face, in Jesus Christ our Lord, together with all the saints from the beginning until the end of time. We shall enjoy perfect liberty, free from all sin and death, to serve the living God forever and ever, in never ending heavenly life and glory.

We have become rich — how? O, the text does not mean that He became poor in order that we should be rich in the sense that we became rich merely by viewing Him as our example. A mere example can never change and therefore help us. We are dead in sins and in trespasses and no example can ever induce us to turn to the living God Whom we hate and despise. We read literally: He became rich *for our sakes*, because of us. Indeed, the secret, we must understand, lies, of course in His poverty, in His atonement. How seemingly impossible and contradictory! How can poverty make one rich? He became poor, made Himself of no reputation, emptied, destroyed Himself. The secret lies in His emptying of Himself, in His bearing of the

eternal and infinite wrath of God, in His vicarious atonement, His suffering and dying for us as our Substitute, for His people. He became poor for our sakes, because of us, in order that we should be rich; that is the purpose that drove Him and the result He achieved. His poverty is our riches, inasmuch as His poverty is the bearing of all God's wrath upon our sins and the meriting of everlasting life and glory.

How was this possible? This we can understand only in the light of the truth that He, being rich, became poor. This can only be explained in the light of the truth that this amazingly poor and impoverished Sufferer is the Son of God, is rich as the eternal Son of God. This is what we read here: "For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ that, being rich, He became poor." He became poor while being and remaining rich. It is because He is the Son of God that He could die for others, pay the guilt of others, inasmuch as, being the Son of God, He had no guilt of His own. It is because He is the Son of God that He could bear the eternal and infinite wrath and indignation of the Lord. It is because of the fact that He is rich, as the eternal Son of God, that His amazing humiliation into the depths of hell demanded an exaltation of like degree, into everlasting life and heavenly immortality. What a miserable caricature the Arminian presents to us of the cross of Jesus Christ, our Lord! He would have us believe that this Man of Sorrows died for all men, head for head. He speaks of a Christ Who also died for those who perish. He would therefore have us believe in a Christ that died in vain. He would rob us of the wonderful atonement of Calvary. Indeed, we who were poor have now become rich, unspeakably, unbelievably rich. What shall we say? In the cross of Christ we glory. Do we glory in that cross? Shall we then present ourselves, body and soul, as living sacrifices of praise and thanksgiving? What else can we do? To Him be all the praise and the glory, to God as the God of our salvation in Jesus Christ, our Lord.

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



## Editor's Notes

### End of Volume 59

With this issue we have come to the end of Volume 59. The annual index will be found in this issue, thanks to my editorial assistant, Mr. D. Doezeema. That reminds me: on October 1 the *Standard Bearer* celebrates its sixtieth birthday!

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### "Open Letter"

In this issue you will find a rather lengthy contribution entitled "Open Letter." It concerns the movement for Reformed higher education. Personally, I

am glad to note that they are increasingly "going public," as I suggested some time ago. Be sure to read their informative letter.

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### Publication News

It begins to look very much as though the RFPA Publications Committee will go to press with Gertrude Hoeksema's Bible story book early this fall. Although it is highly improbable that the book will be ready before Christmas, we will strive mightily to achieve that goal.

## EDITORIAL

# The CRC and the Doctrine of Reprobation — Further Evidence

Prof. H. C. Hoeksema

Dr. Harry Boer and I are in agreement. I believe that he is correct when he charges that his church does not believe and confess the doctrine of sovereign reprobation as taught by the Canons of Dortrecht. I believe that he is correct when he accuses his church in his recent book, *The Doctrine of Reprobation in the Christian Reformed Church*, "that in spite of the solemn and weighty affirmations and promises made in the signing of the Form of Subscription, in spite of the unambiguous undertakings to defend, teach, preach, and otherwise implement the teachings of Dort, no doctrine in the CRC is more ignored, more silenced, more mortifying, more theologically embarrassing, and more regarded as evangelistically absurd than the doctrine of reprobation." (p. 75)

To be sure, this agreement is from radically different viewpoints. Dr. Boer vehemently denies the doctrine of reprobation as taught by the Canons (and is himself in violation of the Formula of Subscription), while I wholeheartedly subscribe to it and live up to my subscription.

Nevertheless, as to the *fact* we agree. I also believe that Dr. Boer in his book proves his claim, chiefly by pointing to the treatment which his gravamen received in the Christian Reformed Church and by the synods of his denomination, as I pointed out in my September 1 editorial.

There is no better evidence of the truth of Dr.

Boer's charge than evidence which can be gotten from the official pronouncements of the Christian Reformed Church itself.

And that evidence is at hand.

Before the 1983 Synod of the CRC was a hybrid new confession called a "Contemporary Testimony." The Testimony itself is in the form of a prose-poem with the title, "Our World Belongs To God." Added to the latter is a rather lengthy commentary on the various paragraphs of the Testimony. According to *The Banner* (July 4, 1983, p. 17) this Testimony was adopted in 15 minutes and "recommended to the churches for 'use in worship, education, and outreach.' The approval is provisional, of course." The Testimony will be subject to revision and final approval in 1985.

Perhaps we shall comment on this Contemporary Testimony later, even as we did on the RCA's "Our Song of Hope."

At the moment, however, I want to focus your attention on one paragraph of the Contemporary Testimony, paragraph 33, and on the commentary on that paragraph. Both appear under the title "Election and Reprobation" on p. 436 of the 1983 *Agenda For Synod*:

*Election and Reprobation*

Therefore the Father chose  
those whom He would save



in Jesus.  
And Jesus' love,  
through His Spirit,  
moves us to faith and obedience.

(*Contemporary Testimony*, par. 33)

The doctrines of election and reprobation have been the subject of much discussion within the Christian Reformed Church recently. These teachings also mark a crucial difference between Reformed and other evangelical churches. We gladly testify now why we keep teaching these doctrines.

The Bible shows that God works out His own design as He reclaims the world for Himself. The redemption of sinners is accomplished by the amazing grace of the sovereign God Who initiates salvation. Our faith, love, piety, or good works do not force God to favour us. In fact, we confess that from the beginning of our life on earth we need the forgiveness and renewal of God's mercy. But we celebrate the freedom of God to save those who do not deserve it.

So the church confesses that the patriarchs, Israel, and the church were chosen in Christ "to grace and to glory, to salvation and to the way of salvation. . ." (Canons of Dort, I, 8). We know and believe this because God has shown it in the proclamation of the gospel. To believe in Christ is, through the working of the Holy Spirit, to believe in God Who has elected us in Christ to be His own and to remain His own forever. In God's electing love we see the eternal source of our hope, comfort, and joy (Eph. 1:3-14).

Those sinners who do not come to repentance and faith stay under God's judgment (John 3:18, 36). God is righteous in this judgment, for He is not the cause of sin and unbelief. Rather, He calls sinners to faith and repentance and states His desire that sinners turn and live (Ezek. 33:11). Therefore no sinner need fear that, being reprobate, there is no hope of salvation, for anyone may turn to Christ and be saved (John 3:16; Canons of Dort, II, 5; III-IV, 8).

In teaching the doctrines of election and reprobation we reject the attempt to find a logical balance between the two. We do not accept Arminianism, which denies the sovereignty of God, nor fatalism, which denies the responsibility of humans. We trust in the good pleasure of our heavenly Father and gladly teach how long and strong our tie to God is. "For from Him and through Him and to Him are all things. To Him be glory forever" (Rom. 11:36).

(Previous synodical statements: H. Boer Gravamen, *Acts of Synod 1980*, pp. 73-76, 486-558.)

This, I say, is further evidence of the truth of Boer's contention that the doctrine of reprobation is silenced to death in the Christian Reformed Church. And it is evidence from the CRC's official mouth.

Notice, in the first place, the fact that in the Testimony proper ("Our World Belongs To God") the doctrine of reprobation is not so much as mentioned. I will pass by the fact, at the moment, that this is also a totally inadequate statement of the

doctrine of election, and that the heartbeat of election cannot be sensed throughout the Testimony. But reprobation is not even *mentioned*! Talk about being silenced to death!

But if one expects better things from the Commentary, he is doomed to utter disappointment.

Mind you, the Committee who composed this document was mindful of previous synodical statements and mindful of the Boer Gravamen, as the footnote indicates. I cannot refrain from wondering whether they were also mindful—perhaps subconsciously—of the First Point of 1924. But at any rate, they were mindful of Dr. Boer's sharp criticisms. Perhaps they were even *painfully* mindful?

Notice that one looks in vain for any kind of statement which even approaches saying what the Christian Reformed Church believes concerning reprobation. Notice, further, that while this Commentary makes reference to the Canons of Dordrecht, it does not make any reference to the two crucial articles concerning reprobation, namely, Canons I, 6 and Canons I, 15. Notice, thirdly, that the Commentary does its utmost in the fourth paragraph in an oblique kind of way to skirt reprobation and negate its possible implications. Is this an attempt to escape an implication to which the Study Committee on the Boer Gravamen refers, a statement to which Dr. Boer also refers in his book: "Furthermore, it would seem to be an implication of the teachings of the Canons on reprobation, plus their teaching on the nature of our fallen condition, that for a person who never comes to faith, it was in fact always impossible that he would"? Notice, in the fourth place, that in the final paragraph of the Commentary there are three negative statements, but still no positive expression concerning reprobation: 1) "...we reject the attempt to find a logical balance between the two (election and reprobation)." 2) "We do not accept Arminianism...." 3) "We do not accept...fatalism...."

The conclusion is obvious. From this Contemporary Testimony no one could possibly learn what the Christian Reformed Church believes concerning reprobation, and that, too, while the Commentary states, "We gladly testify now why we keep teaching these doctrines."

And this is a Testimony to be used "in worship, education, and outreach"?

It is plain that the Christian Reformed Church would at least have been more honest if they had heeded Dr. Boer's gravamen and eliminated the doctrine of reprobation from their creeds. For Dr. Boer's claim is true: the doctrine of reprobation as taught by the Canons of Dordrecht is silenced to death by the Christian Reformed Church.



## TRANSLATED TREASURES

# A Pamphlet Concerning the Reformation of the Church

*Dr. A. Kuyper*

(Kuyper is, in this paragraph, discussing church reformation as it involves a break with the denomination. Reformation always begins with an individual or with individuals in a local congregation, but always continually involves the denomination as a whole. The role of a minister is always more serious than that of the ordinary members because his office is at stake.)

We come now to the second category which we defined as conflicts with the church federation. That is, we speak of those who are called to church reformation not by a few persons (whether common members or office bearers) but by the dealings of the consistory itself.

These conflicts have an entirely different character in so far as they do not create strife between a few persons and the church federation, but between the church federation and the whole congregation as an organized body.

Such conflict can arise in a threefold way. First, it can happen that a person (whether a common member or an office bearer) is condemned by a church federation without the consistory feeling free before God to help carry out this sentence. In such a case, the consistory defends the one who was condemned and, if the church federation maintains its position, the consistory comes under the same condemnation. Secondly, it can happen that the consistory feels compelled not to carry out a rule or alteration of the Church Order which was made law by the church federation. And thirdly, it is possible that the consistory, seeing no advantage in remaining in that church federation but realizing that it could be spiritually detrimental to the congregation, breaks with that church federation, introduces a new Church Order and intends to form a new church federation.

According to this point of view, these three cases actually become one with two different possibilities. The consistory retains the Church Order and still remains in the church federation; but the conflict arises through the opposition of the members of its congregation, or through opposition; from within the consistory and thus the further development of the conflict has the result that the consistory, without fear of further confusion, may decide one of two things, *vis.*, either to continue under the existing Church Order or to set it aside.

Both are possible.

We know that the theory is set forth by men of importance that, "As long as you remain under the existing Church Order you are obligated to conduct yourself according to that Church Order." But it is our inner conviction that this is false. The rule, after all, that no obedience to man is possible except it be in complete obedience to God's Word, holds not only for the state and society, but for school and family, and also in like measure and even in higher measure for the church.

A child stands under the rules of the house. But if ever a command of father or mother or governess should lead to something that is disobedience to the Word of God, then the child may not obey. The same rule applies for servants over against their mistresses, for school children over against their masters, for workers over against their bosses, for soldiers over against their officers, and for citizens over against their king. Thus even in a stronger sense this is the rule of the consistory over against the church federation.

The idea that promises of faithfulness or sworn oaths would deprive that rule of its strength is absurdity itself. The Thebes Legion had also sworn a military oath to Caesar, but nevertheless it refused to participate in idolatrous sacrifices, and permitted itself, after being brought back to Geneva, twice to be decimated and then to be killed as sheep for the slaughter rather than to be obedient to the command of its general.

Also if the Church Order is not yet changed and one still lives in the church federation, yet a consistory must never do, out of submission to the church federation or as following that Church Order, what it knows is not good, nor honorable, nor responsible before God the Lord.

The all-inclusive reason which settles everything is that every stipulation of obedience, or bond of promise, or obligation to submission to human rules, always and above all and under all circumstances is limited by the all-governing condition which never has to be expressed because it speaks for itself: Nothing may be done which conflicts with our obedience to God.



Many are the consequences which the conflict which thus arises can bring about. And this is all according to what the membership of the consistory is, what the inclination of the church federation is, what the constitutional position of the church is, what the connection between church overseers and consistory is, and whether the congregation, completely or by majority, supports or opposes the consistory in the conflict which affects it.

If the legal relation is free from every sense of party spirit in the administrative government as well as in the judge; if the prelates remain faithfully on the side of the consistory; if the consistory need not be apprehensive that their members are in collusion with the opposition;—then such a conflict presents little danger and the church federation shall as a rule end the matter by conceding the point. This is more likely if the lower body of the church federation (e.g., the classical government) refuses to lend itself to execute the decisions.

But we may not hide the fact that circumstances are seldom so favorable. In a number of consistories a minority, usually with preachers at the head, choose the side of the church federation over against faithfulness to God's Word. In almost all congregations a part of the church members lend themselves to the opposition. In far and away the majority of cases the classical government assumes the role of policeman. In very many cases the prelates hand over the building, assets, and whatever more there is to the officers of the church federation. All in proportion to whether the government representatives who serve the king are obviously for or against the church federation, either the administration will ignore everything or oppose it. And finally, the outcome is determined by whether in the highest governing judicial circles historical investigation has led to a better knowledge of the church political question, or whether a lack of such an investigation compels them to maintain the conventional policy. This will determine whether the decision of the highest rightful power maintains the original right of the churches or harms that right perhaps for all time.

Circumstances are almost the same where the conflict arises not under the existing Church Order but because the Church Order is set aside. This is all the more true where consistories, who come into conflict with the Church Order, when the danger of separation arises find it advisable to break immediately with the Church Order.

It can happen that the consistory sets aside the Church Order without a definite occasion. As soon as in a church of God an upright and genuine consciousness of guilt concerning the unlawful condition of the church is aroused and this con-

sciousness penetrates in the consciences of the office bearers, and by them is brought into the consistory, then such a consistory shall weigh whether the existing Church Order permits a reformation of the church according to the demand of God's Word. If not, then one should so revise that Church Order that the obstacles which stand in the way of reformation would disappear. And if this is not possible, then the only solution is that those who oppose reformation should not interfere with those churches who desire it.

Even if one takes this last position, a change of the Church Order is not yet absolutely necessary. But if, on the other hand, the consistory becomes certain that the existing church federation is going to oppose necessary reformation, that the federated churches are not prepared for nor inclined to an alteration of their Church Order; and that the officers of the church federation will not permit the reforming church to proceed;—yes, then there is not the least doubt that a consistory is bound to break temporarily with the denomination and to introduce a better Church Order on the ground of the historical confessions. If such a consistory can do this together with other consistories so that it immediately enters a new church connection, so much the better. But also, if this does not succeed and the consistory stands before the choice of going its own way or of refraining from reformation, its obligation is clear to continue an independent existence.

Such a consistory has the right of this step because of two considerations. First, it has this right from the obligation which rests upon it to keep the church faithful to God's Word. Secondly, it has this right from the circumstances that each church which continues in church federation retains the right to loose one's self from that bond. This is true because no church ever possesses the right to sell itself into slavery. Suppose a consistory had taken on a contract to bind its church for all time, even if that were possible, and that the bond would result in apostasy from the living God, then such a contract would be already null and void because each immoral alliance would be declared invalid by the civil law.

Taking such a step such a consistory in the meantime would have to pay very careful attention to four things.

Surely, first of all, it would have to pay attention to the fact that the pressure and impulse for such a step does not arise from a Phariseeistic pride, from turbulent discontent, or from superficial church ideas, but that it is deeply rooted in the desire and obligation of the soul to be subject to the Word of God. Every impulse which is not rooted in obedi-



ence to God's Word is revolutionary pride and must be opposed.

Secondly, the consistory must see to it, as it takes such a step, that it correctly lays the foundation for the new movement, not by breaking with history, but by maintaining the historical confession of the church as basis. At the same time it must draw up a newly introduced Church Order which does justice to the principle of God's Word, introduces no new tyranny and not only opens the way for a new church federation but is itself taken up in this federation.

Thirdly, such a consistory goes to work with caution. They must be harmless as doves, but also wise as serpents, as Jesus has also commanded us. Where there are three or four ways of doing things, the consistory must avoid the reproach of risking carelessly the well-being of the church and her future existence through inconsideration or a foolish disposition of the matter.

If one takes an example from the relationship between the consistory and government representatives, if a situation is not good but can possibly be made better, it is reckless to neglect this.

At the very least good and efficient preparation is necessary for such an important work.

If the conflict arises regarding a matter, no one can make a choice for himself, but must follow the direction of Him Who has placed him in that position. If, on the other hand, as is the case of the introduction of a new Church Order, one has the choice of the time for separation, then that choice of the proper time must be made with serious consideration.

A consistory which engages in such a holy work must not work hastily nor without the clear consciousness of what it is doing.

And fourthly, the consistory must show moral earnestness also in this that it makes the congregation realize that a holy work is undertaken for its own salvation.

The consistory shall show this by not taking important decisions with a majority which is too narrow to be worth mentioning so that there is the dan-

ger that the decision, before it is carried out, turns around into its opposite.

Further, the consistory may not only react against the false and corrupted church federation, but it must allow censure to work in the congregation and must manifest the power of saving and condemning love, not only against corruption of doctrine, but also against profanation through careless walk of life.

No less must the preaching of the ministers serve to enlighten the congregation and to bind reformation of heart and house on the soul.

Finally, the consistory, whether in planned meetings or through circulated letters, must enlighten the congregation concerning what is happening and help her to live along in the struggle which is fought for the honor of God and His Word.

In short, just as you would not let an artistic work of your beloved be done in your home where there was much noise, but would allow it to be done only under quiet prayers and with holy earnestness, thus also it ought to happen with this artistic work in your church.

Prayer should be made in a clear consciousness of the danger that can threaten.

There should be the conviction that reformation must nevertheless happen.

And besides all this there should be a shattering of hearts and consternation of spirit so that reformation may result in a true and upright work before Almighty God.

And if a few traitors appear in the bosom of the congregation or unfaithful members of the congregation repudiate the consistory; if the higher government attacks those who work for reformation, government representatives work against them, a magistracy hinders them, and the judge finally condemns them, all of this must be borne, endured, and wrestled with in the name of the Lord. When the Roman Caesar locked up the church members of Nicomedia in the church building and burned them, that patience and suffering was so much more terrible than we endure, and yet the church of God triumphed over that mighty Caesar.

## FROM HOLY WRIT

# Believing All the Prophetic Scriptures

*Rev. G. Lubbers*

## Chapter VIII

### The "Seven Dispensations" of Scofield's Bible—continued

We have now come to the discussion of the so-called fourth dispensation of Scofield's "dispensations."



Scofield takes his point of departure for this "fourth dispensation" in Genesis 12:1. He captions this section as follows:

"The Fourth Dispensation: PROMISE—from the call of Abraham to the giving of the Law (Gen. 12:1-Exodus 19:8)."

Should we inquire more about this "dispensation," then we read the following from Scofield's pen:

"(a) The dispensation of promise is connected with the "Abrahamic Covenant" (Gen. 15:18), and by it the "descendants" of Abraham became distinctive heirs of the *promise*.

"(b) In Egypt the descendants of Abraham lost their *blessings* but not the *Covenant*.

"(c) The Dispensation of Promise extends from Gen. 12:1 to Exodus 19:8 and was *exclusively Israelitish*. (*italics mine*)

"(d) The Dispensation must be distinguished from the Covenant. The former was a mode of testing; the latter was everlasting and unconditional.

"(e) Only the dispensation, as a testing of Israel, ended at the lawgiving."

Now the above-stated propositions of Scofield are not very clear and lucid. What is clear and outstanding is that the promise, as a dispensation, was exclusively for the natural descendants of Abraham. This means that it excluded all the nations, and did not at all pertain to the elect sons of God both from the "Circumcision" and the "Uncircumcision," to Jew and Greek both, to those who belong to Christ and, therefore, are Abraham's seed (Gal. 3:29).

It should be noticed that in the above-quoted propositions, which we will here consider, the terms "promise" and "covenant" are really manipulated in a very strange way. What makes this so grievous is that the clear and sound teaching of the biblical pattern is contorted beyond recognition in so doing. It should be quite evident that here we are not dealing with a mere "literal interpretation" of "Israel" but a systematic reconstruction of such biblical terms as "Promise," "Covenant," and "dispensation." Scofield does not believe all the prophetic Scriptures concerning the truth of the "Promise." Somehow the "promise is dissected from the covenant-oath of God to the heirs of the promise. There can be a promise which is but for a time, a certain dispensation of trial; however, God's Covenant is unconditional and everlasting. Even so, it is very clear, upon close consideration, that the "covenant" which is unconditional and everlasting, is not the same as the New Testament in Christ's blood for both Jew and Gentile, who are

fellow heirs of the promised Spirit of Pentecost.

Briefly stated, Scofield teaches:

(a) The promise is really "dispensational," and is a period of trial, testing. Fact is that this promise relates to Israel's reception of the *earthly* land of promise. That is why, when Israel went into the land of Egypt, she lost the "blessings" of the promise. For this "promise" is really temporal and conditional.

(b) At the time of the law-giving, Israel said "Amen" to the law of God, and placed themselves under the law, when "they rashly" accepted the law (Exodus 19:8). We read there "And all the people answered together, and said: all that the LORD hath spoken we will do."

Such is the Scofieldian construction of the Scriptures on this truth of the "law" and the "promise." We are also certain that with possibly certain modification that is the teaching of nearly all Dispensationalism in our land.

Let us try to analyze this rather strange and unbiblical teaching.

In the first place, it should be repeated, the Bible knows nothing of these "seven dispensations." These are wholly an invention of Scofield, who here follows the teachings of the "Plymouth Brethren" of England. As we have shown in an earlier chapter (Chapter V) the term "dispensation" refers to a Divine arrangement of God's Covenant blessings of Salvation in the New Testament times, wherein all the blessings of God's Covenant are for all the elect, Jew and Greek, bond and free, male and female. In this New Testament Dispensation we see the fulfillment of the Promise of God to Abraham and to his seed forever (Eph. 1:10; 3:2; Col. 1:24). Compare also Galatians 3:6, 7 and 3:26-29).

Secondly, it ought to be noticed that the term "promise" in the Scriptures is no less unconditional and everlasting than is God's Covenant. God's covenant-words in the Old Testament prophetic Scriptures were *promisory* in character. They were oath-bound promises of God, which He swore by Himself, because He could not swear by anyone greater, and thus this was the end of all contradiction (Hebrews 6:13). These were the words of promise to Abraham which God spoke at the Mount Moriah, where Abraham sacrificed Isaac upon the altar (Gen. 22:16, 17; Ps. 105:9; Luke 1:73). Hence, it is rank heresy to teach a promise, which is only for the natural seed of Abraham, and a promise which God could and actually did abrogate at the time of the law-giving at Sinai, as teaches Scofield.

Thirdly, we must most strongly insist, that it is



not at all true that Israel "rashly accepted" the law at Sinai, and thereby showed that they did not stand, as standing the "test" of being under promise. This is not true from the very nature of the meaning of the law-giving as a taskmaster to Christ (Gal. 3:24); but it surely does not follow from the very terms of God to The People by Moses in Exodus 19:8. The words of God through Moses are not an abrogation at all of the "promise." For Israel did not rashly accept a new way of "testing," but they are saying an "Amen" of faith to the Covenant words of Jehovah, Who declares to Israel: and ye shall be unto Me a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation. They are told that they are God's peculiar treasure in all the earth. Does not the LORD really promise them that they shall be those who are called out of darkness into His marvelous light? Are they not foreseen as the newborn babes, who are to be God's spiritual stones in His temple, built upon the Stone chosen in Zion? Thus Peter quotes this text from Exodus 19:1-9 in II Peter 2:4-10. The great prophetic perspective in these words of Jehovah are fulfilled in the gathering of the church, the spiritual strangers "throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia and Bithynia, elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit unto the obedience and the sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ" (I Peter 1:1, 2).

No, at Sinai God did not abrogate the "promise" but brings in the "law" of obedience of Christ, the royal law of liberty, which has in it the grand covenant proclamation: I am the LORD thy God which had brought you forth from Egypt, the house of bondage! (Exodus 20:2). And now Israel must walk in her "part" of the covenant, claiming the fulfilled promises in Christ, in Whom they are all "yea" and "Amen" to the glory of God the Father.

Fourthly, we should admit that Scofield's assertion that the "covenant" is "everlasting and unconditional" is the gospel-truth as far as it goes. However, in Scofield's teaching, this is Dispensational jargon! This does not mean that the Promise is sure to all the Seed by God's unbreakable covenant mercies in David, but that the covenant of God to fleshly Israel concerning their inheriting the earthly land of Canaan cannot be broken. Israel will surely be delivered from Egypt, will temporarily lose the "blessings" of the land, but will surely return to their covenanted earthly land of promise. Whereas Scofield makes a false contrast between the "promise" and the "covenant" what he teaches concerning the Covenant is not Scriptural teaching at all. He severs, in his teaching, what God has immutably joined together. And, therefore, he teaches the untruth that the promise was abrogated at Sinai, and that Israel "rashly accepted the law"

and, thereby, failed to pass the test of the "dispensation of the promise."

Now, it seems to me, that this is a clever ploy to avoid teaching that the promised mercies of God never end, yea, that they extend to the end of the world, and into the highest heavens, and into the everlasting and heavenly Kingdom of God in Jesus Christ! As Scofield teaches the dispensation of promise, he cannot but fail to connect the promise with the fulfillment of the law at Calvary, where Jesus cried with a loud voice: It is finished! (John 19:30). There is no saving grace in the Promise to Abraham!

In light of this it is no wonder that Scofield speaks of "seven covenants." These are purported to be: the Adamic (Gen. 3:15); Abrahamic (Gen. 15:18); Mosaic (Ex. 19:25); Palestinian (Deut. 30:3); Davidic (II Sam. 7:16); New (Heb. 8:8). Without going into the fallacy of these "covenants" we observe in passing that these covenants do not mesh chronologically with the "dispensations." We observe here a very obvious arbitrariness of divisions, even if they were true. Here we are treating with mere whim and fancy of a mere man. My point is that when once he has severed the "Covenant" from the "Promise" of God, there is no end to these cunningly devised fables, and erroneous constructions.

Meanwhile, let us be thoroughly convinced in our heart and mind that it is indeed false doctrine to teach that the "promise" in Genesis 12:1 was the first time that God announced His sure gospel promise to the elect church. The gospel-promise was first of all revealed by God Himself in Paradise to Adam and Eve (Gen. 3:15) and it was further shown in its meaning to Abraham as one of all the prophets (Gen. 20:7) and it was portrayed in the shadows and types of the Old Testament tabernacle and the ceremonial ordinances and feast days, and it was finally fulfilled in God's Only-Begotten Son (Rom. 10:4).

Besides, let it not be overlooked, we, in the New Testament dispensation, are not left in the dark concerning the Divine connection between the "law" and the "promise." Jesus came to fulfill all the promises of the Old Testament Scriptures (Matthew 3:15) and He also gives His word of warning, that He is come to fulfill the law in its deepest spiritual sense as He tells us in detail in Matthew 5:20-48.

We must never read the Scriptures through the "notes" of Scofield. Ever blind leaders lead the blind. Let us be as those who cling to the sound teaching of the Bible, also in regard to such truths as the "Promise" of God, as the Oath-bound Word of God, fulfilled in Jesus Christ His Son, our Lord.



## THE DAY OF SHADOWS

### Mocked By Wine

*Rev. John A. Heys*

"Wine is a mocker, strong drink is raging; and whosoever is deceived thereby is not wise." So spake the wisest of all mere human beings. Solomon in Proverbs 20:1 warned his son, and all who read the book of Proverbs, against being deceived by wine and strong drinks. And he did so at a time when men did not know of the damage that alcohol does to the brain, liver, and blood vessels. Those few moments of fleshly pleasure that wine and strong drinks give are soon changed into years of suffering of that same flesh and a hastening of the day of death. Such also is the mockery of wine. And although this aspect was not known then, and comes to light through more recent scientific and medical research of the human body, its member's functions and diseases, Solomon knew that wine mocks and strong drink brings raging.

Solomon also knew that any man deceived by wine and strong drinks is not wise. He knew that it gets man into troubles and shame. He knew that it would make the normally meek and quiet boisterous and noisy. The word raging as used by Solomon has the root meaning of noisy. Alcohol taken internally removes man's inhibitions and moves him to louder speech not only but raucous laughter. And those who are sober and watch the intoxicated add to the noise with their laughter. Then there are the broken objects, the tables and chairs overturned by the clumsy, staggering walk that add to the din.

Many years after Solomon penned down these words, and in a land far from where he wrote them, a king, whose duty it was to rule the people of his land, was ruled by wine to bring scorn and shame upon himself, yea even contempt. Of this we read in the first chapter of the book of Esther. Ahasuerus, a powerful king who ruled over one hundred and twenty provinces from India to Ethiopia, willingly subjected himself to the power of wine and let himself be ruled by it, and revealed himself as one who is not wise. For he invited the scorn and contempt that followed and opened the door to noisy contempt and wrath among the women throughout his vast domain. He asked for it, and it took some swift drastic action to stem it.

Ahasuerus could hardly be listed as a typical antichrist, even though he ruled a large portion of the world as it was then known. He did definitely,

as is true of all unbelievers, have antichristian ambitions. His realm though vast did not include all men of that day. He was, at the very time that the incident recorded in Esther 1 took place, preparing for war against Greece, which did not belong to his realm. He wanted to annex Greece, and in that sense had antichristian ambitions and did want to rule over all nations, tongues, and tribes, as the Antichrist will do for a brief period of time.

For half a year—one hundred and eighty days, or six months of thirty days each—Ahasuerus held feasts. We must not think of one prolonged feast, but rather of a series of feasts that took one hundred and eighty days to complete as planned. We may note that to these feasts were invited all his princes, nobles, and servants, who in Esther 1:3 are called "the power of Persia and Media." These were the men through whom he ruled those one hundred and twenty-seven provinces. And it would hardly be safe to call them all at one time to Shushan to stay there and feast for half a year! This would invite too much insurrection and revolt in the provinces, where people who were neither Medes nor Persians seethed under their subjection, had passions that were inflamed, and resented being ruled by a "foreigner," that is, not one of their own men. Much wiser it would be to have these princes come at different times and a few at a time.

At the end the king makes one grand celebration that included all the people in his capital city. Perhaps he was so pleased with the results of his feasts that he was moved to schedule this feast of all feasts in celebration of seeming success. For the purpose of these former feasts is pointed out in Esther 1:4: "...he showed the riches of his glorious kingdom, and the honour of his excellent majesty." This indicates, first of all, that these princes and servants either did not know of this riches and honour, or that the king feared that they did not know them. So they must come to Shushan to learn first hand. They must feast with the king to experience it and go home with a good impression of him as a great king! He is, and for four years was, preparing for war with Greece. He needs desperately the co-operation of these princes.

These feasts were then for propaganda purposes. Not only were they designed to create a good im-



pression of the king but also to discourage any ideas that might lead to revolt and insurrection while his armies were occupied with fighting Greece. There must be no domestic warfare while he fights a foreign nation. The princes must give wholehearted support to him and not dare to take advantage of him when his hands are tied in war with Greece. He needed also their co-operation to supply him with men.

The feast at the end of this period of displaying his riches and honour to the princes of the 127 provinces was a lavish one. The decorations were carefully chosen as far as color and material are concerned. Gold, silver, and fine linen were used. Marble with blue and red lines, but also marble with white and black designs in them were chosen for an attractive floor for the beds of gold. Among the drinking vessels there was no monotony. Although all were of gold they were all different patterns. This may reflect the various provinces with their different cultures and art styles. All this would impress the princes of his riches and honour. And by the beds we are to understand reclining couches for eating purposes. Their tables were not as high as ours. There was no sitting on chairs to eat but reclining on the left side. The feet were far from the table and not under it. The head and arms were closest. They took it easy when they ate and drank. In our hustle and bustle of our hectic life-style, meals are not a relaxing moment, but we cater to the fast foods industry and eat our food on the run, as it were. Here they took time and relaxed at the table.

Wine was used in abundance, and to excess. The only law concerning wine was that every man should do according to his own pleasure. There were no scheduled toasts as in the previous feasts during the 180 day period. There were not set times when the wine vessels would be refilled. A man had merely to wave his empty vessel and servants would come swiftly to fill it. Or else officers kept an eye on the vessels, and as soon as a vessel was seen to be half empty it would be refilled. Wine flowed freely. And it was good wine. It was royal wine, or, if you will, wine fit for a king. The same word royal we find in verses 7 - 11 which speaks of the royal house and royal crown. It was wine that men did not get the opportunity to drink every day. It was superior to the average lot of wine and usual grade of it. One would be tempted to want his cup refilled and to take full advantage of this treat which soon enough would come to an end.

The king also indulged beyond what his capacity for wine was. And we read that his heart was merry with wine. In other words the king had an artificial sensation of well-being. It was one that came out of a drinking vessel, not one beating within a joyful

confident heart. He was not merry because of good health and a soul free from troubles. He was, as Solomon suggests, deceived by wine to feel good when he had no good reason for such a sense of well-being. He had reason to be weary of all the celebrating and to be bored by it all. After all that eating and drinking, his psychological as well as physical condition was not what a man who eats and drinks in moderation would know. Of his physical condition and all the cares and anxieties of so vast and varied a domain he lost sight momentarily because of his imbibing of too much wine. You may be sure that the officers saw to it that his drinking vessel never got even half empty.

He was by wine deceived into believing that he had made a better impression on the princes than was warranted. He, with all the affairs of the State resting heavily on his shoulders, could feel merry! And verse 10 says it was due to wine. It declares that *when* his heart was merry with wine, *when* the wine began to take its effect, he began to be merry. Plainly the meaning is that before this his heart was not merry. And plain from the statement is also that it was wine that made the change.

Up to this moment that king had wisely kept the men and the women separate. We read in verse 9 that Vashti the queen made a separate feast for the women. Up to that time he was strictly business and with men who did his business. It was his riches as king and his honour as ruler of such a vast domain that had occupied his thoughts and his time. But the more wine he drank the further all his business as king flowed away on a sea of alcohol.

And now his thoughts center on himself and his own personal life. He begins to think of his own private riches consisting in the unusually beautiful wife that he had obtained. He wished to display her before the princes and to all the people of the city. And to make sure that all get the point that he is making, she must come with the royal crown. This will associate her with him and make it clear that this is his property and his riches. He wants all to be sure that this honour is also conferred upon him.

Instead by wine he was deceived, for it moved him to set the stage for all the good impressions that he had made with the princes and nobles to vanish in a matter of a few moments. He who wanted all to know how well he could rule showed that he could not rule his own wife! He was not as big a man as he wanted others to believe. He was not as rich as he tried to display. His own wife did not honour him, and what he thought was a rich possession was shown to be that on which he did not have a firm grip and had slipped away from him. He had shown his strong points, and wine moved him to behave in such a way that his weak points stood out



in bold relief.

No, he was not stone drunk. He had not lost control of his members to stumble and fall off his seat and throne. Outwardly he appeared to be sober. He could handle that wine. But his thinking processes were not only slowed down, they were affected to give warped judgment. A man intoxicated to the point of what we call drunkenness is beyond what the king was. He became furious in his anger. We read that he was "very wroth, and his anger burned in him" (Esther 1:12). This a fully drunken man cannot do. This ought to warn us, and we had better be on our guard that wine does not deceive us into thinking otherwise, that long before one begins to stagger and slur one's words, it warps one's judgment, slows down one's reflexes, impairs one's judgment, AND WE ARE UNDER THE INFLUENCE OF ALCOHOL long before we are completely overpowered by it. You do not have to be drunk to be under the influence of alcohol. It

deceives also in this respect that it leads a man to think that he still has control of himself. It already controls that portion of the brain that would otherwise warn us that all is not well.

Let us beware of false joys and of seeking joy artificially out of a bottle or cup. Instead look to that of which wine in the sacrament of the Lord's Supper speaks, for true, lasting joy, that has no aftertaste, no hangover and no let-down. Look to the cross and the return of Him Who died thereon for our sins. There is no mockery or raging there for those who look to Him Who died there for our sins. He who seeks comfort in the cross is wise. His cup of joy will always be full. With David he will say in the New Jerusalem, "My cup runneth over" (Psalm 23:5). Christ, Who in His first miracle changed water into wine, will keep the believer's cup full. For in Lamentations 3:22, 23 we read, "His compassions fail not. They are new every morning: great is Thy faithfulness."

## GUEST ARTICLE

# The Wonder of Adoption (2)

*Rev. Ronald Hanko*

In studying the biblical truth of adoption we have seen that election is the eternal source of our adoption as the children of God. The wonder of "the adoption of sons" is first revealed in the fact that it is "predestinated," and the close relationship between election and adoption reveals the sovereignty of God's predestinating purpose. Even the earthly picture of adoption reflects the fact that it has its source in a sovereign choice. Nevertheless, that relationship between election and adoption also shows us that election is not a mere arbitrary, intellectual choice of certain persons, but rather a revelation of the fountain of love and mercy that flows forth from the heart of God Himself. Election is the marking out of sons and daughters unto the closest possible relationship of love and fellowship with the living God in Christ. That too, as we have seen, is reflected in the earthly picture.

God further reveals that wonder of adoption in the work of our Lord Jesus Christ. Adam, by virtue of his creation in the image of God, was also a son of God in paradise, and as God's son he reflected in an earthly measure the glory of God, his Father. But God, in His inscrutable wisdom, chose to reveal the full glory of our adoption not in the first Adam but in the second, and through Him in the way of sin and grace. In the redemptive work of

Christ, therefore, the full breadth, and length, and depth, and height of the love of God in Christ shines forth.

As election then, is the eternal source of sonship, the work of Christ incarnate provides the *legal basis* for sonship. Even in the earthly picture there must first of all be a legal basis for adoption. When we adopt children we must, before anything else, obtain the legal right to make those children ours. There are certain procedures which must be followed, certain legal formalities to be observed, court appearances to make, and documents to sign—all part of the *legal process* of adoption. We obtain the legal right of sonship through Christ. It is as though our adoption papers are signed with His blood and sealed with His resurrection power.

This legal basis for sonship is necessary because of sin. Just as in the earthly picture, the adoption of grace implies that those who are adopted are, by their first birth, strangers. We do not have to adopt those who are born as sons and daughters, nor need we obtain the legal right to be their parents. But we are not born as the children of God. By nature we are strangers and aliens to the covenant of grace (Eph. 2:12) and have forfeited all the rights of sonship in our father Adam. By nature we are children



of the devil, as Jesus told the unbelieving Jews (John 8:44). And through death, which is the penalty for sin, God actually puts Adam and Adam's children out of His house and consigns them to the house of their father below.

Yet the wonder of adoption is exactly that through Christ's work God adopts these children of death and hell and the devil as His own children. As Paul says in Ephesians 2:13, 19, "Ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ . . . Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints, and of the household of God."

And notice once again the emphasis on the sovereignty of our salvation in this connection. Even in the earthly picture of adoption it is not the adopted child who seeks and obtains the right of sonship, but the adopting parents. So also God in His infinite mercy obtains for us in Christ all the rights and privileges of children. Galatians 4:4-6 emphasizes this both in connection with the work of Christ and in the application of adoption by the Spirit of Christ.

But what we must notice especially in Galatians 4:4, 5 is the tremendous truth that adoption is the great purpose of all the work of Christ. Christ was "made of a woman, made under the law" first of all for the redemption of those who were sold into the horrible slavery of sin. But even that is not the ultimate purpose of Christ's entrance into the world. Even the purpose of redemption is to be found in the adoption of sons. All of Christ's humiliation when He emptied Himself and came in the form of a servant, all His agony, His cross and His tomb have one grand purpose in the counsel of God, that "we might receive the adoption of sons."

The supreme importance of the work of Christ for us is seen in the contrast that is drawn in Galatians 3, 4 between the church of the Old Testament and the church of the New. Because Christ had not yet come, the church of the Old Testament did not enjoy the blessings of sonship as we do. To be sure, the Israelites were also the children of God. In Exodus 4:22, 23 God sends Moses to Pharaoh with these words: "Thus saith the Lord, Israel is My son, even My firstborn; and I say unto thee, Let My son go, that he may serve Me and if thou refuse to let him go, behold, I will slay thy son, even thy firstborn."

Nonetheless, as Paul points out in Galatians 4:1-3, the children of Israel, though sons, were in fact no better than servants in the house of God because they were under the law as a tutor and governor. Under the law they were "in bondage" and did not fully enjoy the rights and privileges of sonship, because the legal basis of adoption, though promised,

had not yet been provided in the work of Christ. That which makes all the difference between the Church of the Old Testament and the Church of the New Testament is the "sending of the Son" at the time appointed by the Father. In the fulness of time Christ came that we might receive the adoption of sons.

It is in this connection that we may also understand what Scripture means when it speaks of Christ as the "firstborn among many brethren" (Rom. 8:29). That concept of the firstborn is very rich and beautiful. That Christ is the firstborn means, first of all, that He is first in God's counsel as the One in Whom God purposes to reveal His glory (Col. 1:15-19). And especially in connection with our adoption this means that Christ as firstborn is the head and ruler of the whole of God's family. That was one of the privileges of the firstborn already in the Old Testament (Gen. 27:29, 40; 49:10, etc.), and it is also Christ's privilege as the first begotten in the house of God (Ps. 89:24-29, Heb. 3:6).

In the second place, that Christ is firstborn Son means that He represents His brethren before the Father. This too was true of the firstborn son in the Old Testament and was prophetic of Christ's place and calling in God's family. It is for this reason that Israel is often called "Ephraim" in the Old Testament Scriptures (cf. Jer. 31:9), for although Ephraim was not the firstborn son of Jacob or of Joseph, he nevertheless had the place of the firstborn in that he received the birthright of the firstborn (Genesis 48). And Christ the firstborn speaks as the representative of His brethren in Hebrews 2:13 where He says before God the Father, "Behold, I and the children which God has given Me."

Even more importantly, the firstborn is presented in Scripture as the one who opens the way for his brethren. Thus it is that the firstborn son is commonly called throughout the Old Testament "the one who opens the womb" (cf. Ex. 13:2, 12-13, etc.). Christ as firstborn is the one who opens the way for us into the presence of the Father where we are received as God's children (cf. Heb. 10:19-22).

Christ, the firstborn among many brethren, therefore, is the one who through the grace of God opens the way of sonship for us by laying its legal foundation in His blood. He gives us the *right* to all the privileges and blessings of sonship. In Him we have the right to God's love and the privilege of calling Him "our Father." In Him we may come to God with our needs and cares expecting that He cares for us and will not fail to give us what we ask. Jesus points this out in Luke 11:10-13: "For every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened. If



a son shall ask bread of any of you that is a father, will he give him a stone? of if he ask a fish, will he for a fish give him a serpent? or if he shall ask an egg, will he offer him a scorpion? If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children: how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask Him?" The right and confidence of all our prayers is built upon the work of Jesus Christ as our elder brother.

Even our attitude toward trial is tempered by this knowledge of our legal right of sonship in Christ. As Hebrews reminds us, if we are "wearied and faint in our minds" then it is because we "have forgotten the exhortation which speaketh unto (us) as unto *children*, My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of Him: for whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth and scourgeth every son whom He receiveth" (12:3-6).

These things are but a few examples of the importance of this blessed truth of adoption for all of life. Its comfort is without end. Because of the legal basis for sonship which is laid in the blood of Christ there is no one who can lay anything to the charge of God's elect—not even their own conscience—and no one or anything that can separate them from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord: "Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, Who is even at the right hand of God, Who also maketh intercession for us" (Rom. 8:33-39). In Christ God says of us, "Bring forth the best robe, and put it on him; and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet: and bring hither the fatted calf, and kill it; and let us eat, and be merry: for this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found" (Luke 15:22-24).

## CONTRIBUTION

# An Open Letter Concerning Reformed Higher Education

*Rev. David Engelsma, James Lanting, and  
Lamm Lubbers*

This open letter is addressed to all members of the Protestant Reformed Churches and to all others who have a concern for the instruction of the children of the covenant in all aspects of earthly science on the basis of the truth of the Reformed Faith as set forth in the Reformed Creeds.

It concerns Reformed higher education, i.e., college-level instruction.

It is sent on behalf of a group of Protestant Reformed men that calls itself the "Conference on Reformed Higher Education." At a meeting held in Grand Rapids, Michigan on March 4, 1983, the group decided "to have a committee draft...an article for publication in *The Standard Bearer* and other periodicals." It was stipulated that, among other things, the article should outline "the purpose and provisional structure of our Conference group."

This history of the "Conference" is quickly told. The immediate cause was conversation among men of Classis West, mostly laymen. Contact was made with other laymen who shared the concern for Reformed higher education and who would be able to attend meetings, for a day or two, to explore the idea and its possibilities. The result was that a num-

ber of Protestant Reformed men from the eastern and western sections of the Protestant Reformed Churches in the U.S. and from Canada met in South Holland, Illinois on January 12, 13, 1982. A second meeting was held in Grand Rapids on June 8, 1982. The third, and most recent, meeting was held in South Holland on March 4, 1983. The Conference has recently distributed a "Newsletter" in all the Protestant Reformed Churches.

These meetings reflect a longstanding concern of Protestant Reformed people for Reformed higher education, especially the training of prospective Protestant Reformed schoolteachers. Oddly enough, in the light of our traditional opposition to church-schools, this concern surfaced at the Protestant Reformed Synods of 1948, 1949, and 1950. The Theological School Committee brought to the Synod of 1948 a letter from "The Society for Protestant Reformed Education," asking "to what extent the facilities of the Theological School can be made available to prepare persons interested in the teaching profession to qualify them for teaching in schools of our own" ("Acts," p. 63). Synod advised the Society "that we have no facilities for a complete normal course. However, that we can supply,



we hope, the very necessary Protestant Reformed point of view by having prospective teachers take Principles of Education and read specified outside literature upon educational subjects, as produced by our men and others" ("Acts," pp. 65, 68).

The T.S.C. returned to the Synod of 1949 with another letter from the Society for Protestant Reformed Education. This letter asked that "a normal course be added to the curriculum of our Theological School this coming year." The motivation was the need for "teachers, able and equipped, to teach our children the required subjects permeated by the Protestant Reformed life view" ("Acts," pp. 64, 65). Also at the Synod of 1949 was an overture from the Consistory of Randolph, Wisconsin, that Synod "consider ways and means of establishing our own normal Training School to train prospective teachers in our own Christian Schools" ("Acts," pp. 67, 68). Synod decided to place this matter before the faculty and the T.S.C. for study and possible execution ("Acts," p. 68).

The Synod of 1950 received for information a report from the T.S.C. that Rev. H. Hoeksema had drawn up an outline of "Principles of Education" and that Rev. G. Ophoff was teaching a course along these lines, under the auspices of a Teachers' Club in Grand Rapids ("Acts," pp. 29, 30). Here, apparently, the matter rested.

The Conference has no official standing, whether ecclesiastical, educational, or otherwise. Nor does it seek this. It has been a free association of some who thought that the possibility of giving Reformed instruction at the college level, especially to prospective Protestant Reformed teachers, was worth looking into. As part of its investigation, the Conference has studied the history of Reformed higher education; curriculum; accreditation; organization; finances; and other areas. We have conferred with our teachers. It is this purpose, this cause, and some of the fruit of our study that we now lay before you and ask you to consider.

The purpose of the Conference is indicated in the brief, working "Statement" which the participants drew up and signed at their first meeting: "We believe that higher education based on Reformed principles as set forth in the Reformed Creeds is a legitimate concern for Reformed people. We...resolve that in order to preserve Reformed higher education in our age, especially as it relates to teacher training, we will promote the cause of a Reformed teacher education program. We agree to form committees to study the possibility, and the ways and means, of reaching these goals."

The agenda for the first meeting ambitiously called for an investigation of the possibility of a Protestant Reformed Teachers College. The difficulties

of establishing a full college were seen to be so great as to daunt even the most hopeful. Therefore, without losing sight of the ultimate goal, the Conference has concentrated on realistic beginnings. An able, interested Protestant Reformed teacher could be called, full-time, to give instruction to college students in certain, fundamental subjects. These courses, although of special value for the would-be-teacher, would also be beneficial for other college students. Investigation has shown that such courses could be accredited through existing Christian colleges. While giving these courses, the teacher could also work at developing a more complete program. In time, yet another teacher could be added to the staff.

To enable such a teacher to give this instruction, it was thought desirable, if not necessary, to send him, or her, to a graduate school for advanced study and a degree. A Christian college has expressed its willingness to set up a summer course, taught by qualified professors, which interested Protestant Reformed teachers, and others, could take for credit towards a master's degree.

It is our conviction that college-level instruction of prospective Protestant Reformed Christian schoolteachers in the truth set forth in the Reformed Creeds, as maintained by the Protestant Reformed Churches, is part of our calling in the covenant, to the extent that God enables us to provide it. This Faith is God's own truth that must be the foundation of all teaching.

The education of our teachers in State universities and colleges is unsatisfactory, since the Word of God is not the light in which these schools teach the students to see light. The teaching of existing Christian colleges is widely and seriously weakened by the errors of the doubt and denial of the infallible inspiration and full authority of Scripture ("higher criticism"); of theistic evolution; of the philosophy of the A.A.C.S.; of common grace; of socialism, if not Marxism; of the current "liberal" dogmas of revolution, feminism, pacifism, and sexual permissiveness; and of the lack of zeal for godliness of life.

Our desire is college-training that is excellent, both academically and spiritually. Qualified professors, themselves trained and competent in their own fields, would not merely pay lip-service to the great doctrines of the Reformed Faith, much less busy themselves to call these doctrines into question and to undermine them, as they teach future teachers, but would teach their subjects in the light of these doctrines—the inerrant inspiration of the Holy Scripture; creation and providence; the fall of the human race in a real Adam; God's curse upon fallen man and his world, outside of Christ; the



Divine judgment of a universal flood; the antithesis between elect Church and reprobate world; the Lordship of the risen Son of God; the binding Law of God in Holy Scripture for marriage, family, labor, economy, government, and personal behavior, and the end of the world. Surely, this is a worthy, and a thrilling, concern.

No one ought to dismiss the matter out of hand as no concern of his, on the ground that it is a matter of college-training and his children do not attend college. Since it is training of those who will be teaching Protestant Reformed children in the grade schools and the high schools, it is a concern of us all. Those without children as well as those with children can embrace and support this cause, as a cause of God's covenant and truth. Nor do we see even the first courses that might be offered as limited to prospective teachers. Other college students would benefit as well. Indeed, students from churches other than the Protestant Reformed might well enroll, if they are desirous of the perspective of the Reformed Faith.

All of this, we repeat, is only the thinking of the Conference and is, of course, not binding on any future organization.

It is the intention, now, of the Conference to hold public meetings in various areas of the U.S. and

Canada, where there are Protestant Reformed Churches, in order to present this cause to our people, and to others who may be interested, so that they may take steps, if they are so inclined, to organize as an association, to carry out this work. Already, men in various locations are advised to speak to school and church groups. A public meeting is scheduled in the N.W. Iowa-Minnesota area on September 6, 1983, in connection with the meeting of Classis West. We ask that you attend the meeting that may be held in your area and give the matter a careful hearing. Our hope is that Consistories, School Boards, and others will promote the cause, as they have opportunity. All who desire more information, have suggestions, care to comment, or desire a meeting in their area can write the Conference in care of our secretary:

Mr. James Lanting

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South Holland, IL 60473.

The task is large; the cost is high; our resources are small. But the need is also great; and the benefits are precious—the welfare of the children of the covenant and the glory of God's Name in the knowledge of His truth. Let us make a beginning, trusting in the Lord, Whose we are and Whom we serve, to bless the small beginning, as He has done before.

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## Book Review

**BIBLICAL INSPIRATION**, by I. Howard Marshall; Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1983; 125 pp., \$4.95 (paper). (Reviewed by Prof. H. Hanko)

Of the writing of books on the doctrine of inspiration there is no end. And it is somewhat doubtful whether this latest book will advance the cause of the truth of inspiration or whether it will serve to quiet the current storm of controversy which rages over this truth.

The author's expressed intent in adding to the number of books on this subject is to mediate between the "conservative" position which insists that the doctrine of inspiration means that the Bible is totally inerrant in all its parts, and the more moderate position which holds that the Bible is only fallible in what God intended it to teach—the position which is more or less taken in most evangelical circles. Not a great deal of attention is paid to unbelieving higher criticism, although the author refers to it now and then and criticizes it rather severely. The result of this position is that the truth of infallibility (or inerrancy) comes under heavy attack at certain crucial junctures.

Perhaps a quote from the blurb which accompanied the book will help to understand the position of the writer.

Marshall first considers various theories of the nature of inspiration, in the experience of the original writers, and for the status of the biblical text. This leads to a consideration of the "entire trustworthiness" of the Bible, the inerrancy debate, and the place of biblical criticism, on which he argues, "It is possible to distinguish between the proper use of methods of linguistic and historical study and the adoption of skeptical presuppositions... the answer to skepticism is not to ignore it but to do a better job."

The heart of the argument of the book can be found in the author's discussion concerning what exactly is meant by accuracy or truth. While this point is discussed in more than one place in the book, the author argues that the Bible is by no means accurate according to modern standards of accuracy, although it is accurate by biblical standards. He refers in this connection to the use of summaries of speeches, round numbers used in

biblical figures, discrepancies in chronologies, etc. On pp. 54-57, e.g., he discusses various ways in which the Bible speaks of truth. He points out that the Bible uses language in a great variety of ways, sometimes to set forth factual data, sometimes in the asking of questions — which have no "truth" implied in them, and sometimes in commands which also do not imply any truth of falsity. (This is so obvious that one wonders why the author belabors the point.) Then again he points out that there are parables in Scripture which cannot be taken as factual truth—also an obvious fact. He reminds his readers that sometimes God is not speaking to man, but man is speaking to God, as in the Psalms. The latter is not necessarily "Truth" either—although he fails to reckon with the fact that the psalmists often spoke to God by divine inspiration also, a means which God used to reveal His Word. Finally, he points out that the question of truth involves the deeper question of "true for whom?" — as with the Old Testament levitical laws.

These questions lead him into flatly erroneous positions. He speaks of parts of the Bible as human (115), allows for some higher criticism (90), admits that later biblical teaching can correct former and earlier biblical teaching (108), and insists that the cultural situation determined what the instruments of inspiration said (110).

The weaknesses of the book can be summarized under the following points. In failing to distinguish properly between important concepts, he creates problems where there are none. He fails, e.g., to distinguish between formal and material inspiration, between revelation itself and Scripture as the infallibly inspired record of revelation, and between inspiration proper and graphic inspiration.

He fails to do justice to the *miracle* of Scripture; i.e., that Scripture belongs to the wonder of grace and that it is not understandable in empirical terms of investigation. While he denigrates the efforts of higher criticism to explain Scripture in human terms, he nevertheless opens up the doctrine of inspiration to critical analysis and thus makes room for higher critical methods.



He raises questions where none really exist and brings a certain doubt into the mind of the believing child of God.

He fails to deal properly with the fundamental truth that Scripture interprets Scripture, with the result that "discrepancies" are found in the record of Scripture which do not, in fact, exist.

And all of this is easily summed up in the one objection that he introduces a human element in Scripture which ought not to be introduced—in the interests of guarding against any kind of "dictation theory."

I found the book stimulating and enjoyable in certain regards. It is well written and it forces one

to examine closely the position of infallibility. This has its value and worth, for we must defend the biblical doctrine of inspiration on all fronts. But as a solution to the problem, it is inadequate.

*Know the standard  
and follow it.  
The Standard Bearer*

**NOTICE OF ANNUAL MEETING  
of the  
REFORMED FREE PUBLISHING ASSOCIATION  
to be held at the  
SOUTHWEST PROTESTANT REFORMED CHURCH  
on September 22, at 8:00 P.M.**

Rev. C. Hanko will speak on the subject — "CONTENDING FOR THE FAITH." Three Board members are to be chosen from the following nominations: Tom Bodbyl, Leonard Holstege, Charles Kalsbeek, Dave Kamps, Henry Kamps, Robert Pastoor. **ALL** members are urged to attend!

**WEDDING ANNIVERSARY**

On September 25, 1983, our parents, REV. AND MRS. ROBERT C. HARBACH, will celebrate their 40th wedding anniversary. We, their children, are thankful to our heavenly Father for the years of love and covenantal instruction with which we have been blessed. We are also thankful for the many years of Rev. Harbach's ministry in our churches. We pray the Lord will continue to bless them in the days to come.

"Know therefore that the Lord thy God, He is God, the faithful God, which keepeth covenant and mercy with them that love Him and keep His commandments to a thousand generations." (Deuteronomy 7:9)

Philip Harbach  
Janice Harbach

**WEDDING ANNIVERSARY**

On October 4, 1983, the Lord willing, MR. AND MRS. MARCEL STRAAYER celebrate their 25th wedding anniversary. We, their brothers and sisters in the Lord are thankful to our Heavenly Father for them and pray that the Lord will continue to bless them in the years ahead.

"The Lord shall preserve thy going out and thy coming in from this time forth, and even for evermore." (Psalm 121:8)

The Adult Bible Class  
First Protestant Reformed Church,  
Edmonton, Canada  
Rev. Thomas C. Miersma, Pres.

**WEDDING ANNIVERSARY**

On August 17, 1983, our beloved parents and grandparents, MR. AND MRS. CORNELIUS KAMPS, celebrated their 35th wedding anniversary. We are thankful to God for the preservation of our loved ones, both physically and spiritually. We are also thankful for the years of covenant instruction, love and care which they have given us.

"I will sing of the mercies of the Lord forever; with my mouth will I make known Thy faithfulness to all generations." (Psalm 89:1).

Carey and Lois Kamps  
Matthew, Tim, Kyle, AnnaLynn  
Dave and Karla Kamps  
Laura, Sarah  
Terry and LaVonne Kooienga  
Jared, Tara

Jim and Sandra Westing  
Kimberly  
Ruth Kamps  
Lynn Kamps  
Jonathan Kamps

**WEDDING ANNIVERSARY**

On September 7, 1983, our parents and grandparents, MR. AND MRS. BENJAMIN BOSMAN celebrated their 35th wedding anniversary. We are thankful to our Heavenly Father for all the Christian love and devotion they have given us. We pray that the Lord will continue to bless and keep them in His care.

"Happy is he that hath the God of Jacob for his help, whose hope is in the Lord his God." (Psalm 146:5)

their children and grandchildren  
Richard and Nancy Bosman  
Benjamin, April, Adam, Rebecca  
John and Elisabeth Bosman  
Samuel



## News From Our Churches

August 30, 1983

On September 7, 1983, the convocation of the Theological School of the Protestant Reformed Churches took place at Southwest Church. Prof. Decker delivered the convocation address. In addition to our regular students, there will be three part-time students from Canada and a special student, Mr. Jaikishin Mahtani, from Singapore. May God bless the Professors and students as they study the Word of God.

I have met Mr. Mahtani and his wife, Esther. This will be a frequent occurrence, since they live nearby. Their address is 4962 Ivanrest Ave., S.W., Apt. B, Grandville, Michigan, 49418. Telephone number 616-532-6832. We hope that they will experience the richness of the communion of the saints while in Grand Rapids.

Apparently Mr. and Mrs. Mahtani were busy visiting our churches as they made their way to Michigan. Loveland Protestant Reformed Church had this notice in their July 31 bulletin: "Mr. Mahtani will show some pictures and update us on the mission work of Singapore.... We rejoice in what work God is doing there and we are thankful for the opportunity to learn more of this by the servant of God who is in our midst today."

The annual meeting of the Reformed Free Publishing Association will be held September 22, 8 P.M., at Southwest Church. Rev. C. Hanko will speak on the subject, "Contending for the Faith." I hope that the members of the Association will make a concerted effort to attend this important yearly meeting.

The Council of Southwest Protestant Reformed Church made the following change in their evening worship service, "...the evening doxology (is changed) from 'May The Grace' to Psalter #197."

Hope Protestant Reformed Church's Consistory of Walker, held a meeting of its interested members on Thursday, August 18th, with a view to organizing a congregation in the Grandville area. The meeting was well attended and a committee was formed to investigate the various aspects of organizing a congregation in the Grandville area or surrounding areas. It is the hope of the Consistory that this will relieve the crowded conditions in Hope.

Hudsonville Protestant Reformed Church had

this July 31 bulletin announcement: "Services for the proposed Byron Center-Cutlerville Church will begin Sunday, August 7th, 1983, at Byron Center Christian Junior High School, 8840 Byron Avenue. Services will be held at 9:30 A.M. and 5:00 P.M. These services are under the supervision of the Hudsonville consistory and will have two elders and one deacon present at the services before organization...."

Covenant Protestant Reformed Church, in New Jersey, has progressed in the building of its church: "...the scaffolding is down from the steeple, an extra partition and some odds and ends of framing have been done in the basement. We expect the men to install the heating system this week." I gleaned that from their July 10, 1983 bulletin.

On September 6, 1983, the "Conference on Reformed Higher Education" held an informational public meeting at Hull Protestant Reformed Church. Part of this meeting was to give a history and explanation of Reformed Higher Education, a college level education based on the truth of the Reformed Faith.

Hope Protestant Reformed Church had a farewell program for Rev. S. Houck, who has accepted the call as missionary to Ripon, California. May God bless the work in Ripon and bring fruit upon the labors of Rev. Houck.

Covenant Christian High School will celebrate its 15th Anniversary on Saturday, October 8. Anyone having pictures of interest is asked to contact the school office, 453-5048.

Southeast put this announcement in their July 24, 1983 bulletin: "The Evangelism Society has recently made available to the congregation the book 'Three Men Came to Heidelberg,' and 'Glorious Heretic' (the story of Guido de Bres). We believe for those that love the Reformed truth an even deeper appreciation can be gained concerning the catechism and the Belgic Confessions. Price - \$4.00. Contact Bruce Van Solkema."

"Those who are engaged in active and useful service for the Church, are not prepared exclusively by their own exertions, or framed to it by their own talents, but stirred up thereto by God." John Calvin (on Ps. 105)

DH