

# The **STANDARD BEARER**

— A REFORMED SEMI-MONTHLY MAGAZINE —

At every opportunity, be critical of the Christian school teachers, the elders, and the pastor. Make your criticisms known to your children, and the ill will you feel toward these people. Don't . . . honor them at least for their office's and work's sake. This, too, is most effective in producing unspiritual young people . . . . It will . . . make it easy for them to leave the church later on.

See "Ten Rules for Producing Unspiritual  
Young People" — page 18

## CONTENTS

Meditation —	
The Administration of the Sacraments. ....	2
Editor's Notes. ....	5
Seminary Convocation Address —	
God's Sure Foundation. ....	5
Day of Shadows —	
Too Much Contempt and Wrath. ....	7
Guest Article —	
The Wonder of Adoption (3) ....	10
Special Report —	
Report From Singapore. ....	12
All Around Us —	
The "Turn of the Screw" ....	14
God our Father (?) ....	15
Bible Study Guide —	
Philemon — Counsel Concerning a Runaway Slave ....	16
Strength of Youth —	
Ten Rules for Producing Unspiritual Young People. ....	18
Taking Heed to the Doctrine —	
God's Providence and Sin (7) ....	20
Book Reviews. ....	22
News From Our Churches. ....	24

## THE STANDARD BEARER

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## MEDITATION

## The Administration of the Sacraments

Rev. C. Hanko

*Ques. 66 What are the sacraments?*

*Ans. The sacraments are holy visible signs and seals, appointed of God for this end, that by the use thereof, He may the more fully declare and seal to us the promise of the gospel, viz., that He grants us freely the remission of sin, and life eternal, for the sake of that one sacrifice of Christ, accomplished on the cross.*

*Ques. 67 Are both word and sacraments, then, ordained and appointed for this end, that they may direct our faith to the sacrifice of Jesus Christ on the cross, as the only ground of our salvation?*

*Ans. Yes, indeed: for the Holy Ghost teaches us in the gospel, and assures us by the sacraments, that the whole of our salvation depends upon that one sacrifice of Christ which He offered for us on the cross.*

*Ques. 68 How many sacraments has Christ instituted in the new covenant, or testament?*

*Ans. Two, namely, holy baptism, and the holy supper.*

Our fathers teach us some very important lessons concerning the sacraments in this Lord's Day. We need these lessons for our own instruction, and also to appreciate the more fully this means of grace, which God in His mercy administers to us.

We are reminded that sacraments are signs and seals. This truth belongs to our Reformed heritage. Even more than that, the sacraments are *holy* signs and seals, for they are ordained by God and appointed by Him to be administered by Christ to His church.

Our Catechism points out that these sacraments are an added benefit, which our God, knowing our weaknesses and frailties, has added to the preaching of the Word. They do not stand alone, independent from the Word. But they supplement the preaching of the Word, so that while the Word addresses us through our hearing, the sacraments speak to us as visible signs. Thus we have an audio-visual revelation of the promise of the gospel in both the preaching of the Word and the administration of the sacrament.

The fathers especially emphasize the fact that these sacraments direct our faith to the one perfect sacrifice of Christ on the cross as *the only ground* of our salvation. If we were not impressed by this in the answer in Question 66, we are reminded of it again in Question 67. And if this still has not made the proper impression upon us, it is repeated in the answer to Question 67. Three times, therefore, lest there should be any misunderstanding about that, reference is made to the one, only sacrifice of Christ on the cross as the only and complete ground of our salvation. I like that. The fact that we are baptized gives no reason that we should be assured of our salvation. The fact that we are confessing members of the church who partake of the Lord's Supper is no basis for any assurance of being saved. Our assurance rests solely and completely in the atoning death of Christ on the cross. All other ground is sinking sand!

Sacraments, therefore, are holy, visible signs and seals instituted by God to be administered by His church along with the preaching of the Word as an added testimony of the promise of the gospel that rests on the only sacrifice of Christ on the cross for all our sins.

Sacraments are holy signs and seals.

They are signs. Every creature is a sign, since all things happen in parables (Mark 4:11) Christ can say, I am the true Bread, the true Water of life, the true Vine, the great Shepherd, the Way, the Truth, and the Life. There are special signs in creation, such as paradise with its tree of life and streams of water, the deluge, the stars of the heavens, the sand

on the seashore, the crossing of the Red Sea, the types and shadows of the old dispensation. There are the signs of the Lion, the Lamb, and of Christ's second coming. Our own lives are dependent upon signs. Think of highway signs, danger signs, or of the nod or shake of the head, the frown, the smile, the handshake. There are even signs that appeal to our other senses, such as, odors, tastes, brail for the blind. But the sacraments are special signs which have their own peculiar significance because they are ordained of God for that very purpose.

Sacraments are also seals. Seals also make up a part of our daily lives. Business firms seal their products to distinguish them from imitations. The government places its seal on birth certificates, marriage certificates and all other official documents. We have seals that are also signs. A one hundred dollar bill is actually only a piece of paper, yet it represents and assures us of the full value of one hundred dollars in cash. In distinction from these sacraments are very special signs and seals.

They are *holy* signs and seals. This means that God has ordained and appointed them to accompany the preaching of the Word as an added means whereby God strengthens our faith. Sacraments were never intended to be, nor must we regard them as, the chief means of grace. The preaching of the Word is and will always remain the chief means whereby God bestows His grace on us; the sacraments supplement the Word. The Word serves both to work and to strengthen our faith, while the sacraments serve only to strengthen it. Therefore the Word is preached every Lord's Day, but the fathers have deemed it wise to limit the celebration of the Lord's Supper to special times. Yet that does not detract from the importance of, or from our need for, the sacraments. These signs are holy. They are set apart by God, given to us to serve their own divine purpose. Therefore the emphasis must always fall on the *administration* of the Lord's Supper, instead of on the *celebration*. It is true that from our point of view we celebrate the sacraments. Yet from God's point of view they are administered. The heading above both the Baptism Form and the Communion Form speaks of the *administration* of the sacrament, reminding us that Christ administers Baptism and the holy Supper through His ambassadors. This is so completely lost from sight in our day, that the sacraments have become a form of entertainment for children and for adults. The Lord's Supper is degraded to a blasphemous form of fellowship. Let us never forget that the sacraments proclaim to us the Name of Jehovah, His mighty works and marvelous grace as our covenant God Who keeps covenant forever.

Signs and seals of the gospel promise.

Our fathers say that the sacraments "more fully

declare and seal to us the promise of the gospel." The emphasis is on the *promise*. There is a general proclamation of God's particular promise in the preaching of the gospel. God declares to all who hear that He promises His people, the elect, the forgiveness of sins and eternal life through faith in Jesus Christ. This same *general proclamation of the particular promise* comes to all who are baptized and to all who celebrate or witness the celebration of the Lord's Supper.

This promise is based solely on the one sacrifice of Christ on the cross. The sacraments are visible signs of that sacrifice. The water in baptism speaks of the cleansing power of Jesus' blood. The broken bread and the poured out wine signify the crucifixion of our Savior and His complete self-surrender unto death as the atonement for our sins. The sprinkling of the water at baptism points to the sprinkling of the blood that covers us with the righteousness of Christ. We are under the blood (Exodus 12:13). In the broader sense, since the word for baptism means "to dip in," this reminds us, that God takes us out of the world, causes us to die unto sin in Christ's death, to be buried with Him in baptism, and to arise in newness of life within God's covenant as new creatures in Christ (Romans 6:4). Therefore baptism is called the "washing of regeneration" (Titus 3:5). The table of communion, the serving of the bread and the wine (which is official ministry of the elders as ambassadors of Jesus Christ), the eating and the drinking, all speak of the feasting at God's table, being fed by Christ Himself, in intimate communion of life with God and with the saints, and thus eating and drinking Christ's flesh and blood, becoming partakers of Christ as flesh of His flesh and bone of His bone, united to Him as members of His body.

Thereby we receive two chief benefits from the sacraments, namely, the forgiveness of sins and eternal life through faith in Christ Jesus. Faith is that living bond that unites us to Him, the bond through which we receive Christ and all His benefits. Baptism is the sign of the laying of that bond in regeneration, thus of our entering into God's covenant. The Lord's Supper speaks of the exercise of that faith as living in covenant fellowship with God, feasting on His bounties, and experiencing a foretaste of the eternal wedding feast of the Lamb.

This is sealed to our hearts by the Holy Spirit who uses these means to strengthen our faith. Our fathers say, "We are made partakers of Christ and all His benefits by faith, and by faith only." Those for whom Christ did not die cannot possibly be given this assurance. Those who are not united to Christ by the bond of living faith can never claim this assurance. Since election and reprobation run through the line of the generations of believers, it is

not all Israel that is called Israel. There are those within the sphere of the covenant who receive the sign, even though they are not covenant seed. They are baptized and instructed in God's Word, so that they know the truth of Christ's atoning death, yet they despise that sacrifice, and therefore receive greater condemnation. They may even partake of the holy Supper of our Lord in unbelief, and thereby eat and drink condemnation unto themselves, declaring themselves unworthy of salvation. Even as the preaching of the Word is a savor of death unto death to those who reject it, so also the general sign of the particular promise condemns the wicked in their unbelief.

On the other hand, even as the preaching of the Word is a savor of life unto life to those who believe, so also the sacraments are the power of God through Christ, who administers the sacrament. The fathers declare, that "the Holy Ghost assures us in the sacraments that the whole of our salvation depends on the one sacrifice of Christ which He offered on the cross." Christ through the minister lays the sign of baptism on the forehead of the infant. The Holy Spirit seals this sign to the heart of the elect child, who is regenerated, converted, and brought to conscious faith by the same Spirit. This conscious faith becomes evident in a child often early in life in simple, child-like confidence in God and His Christ. Later, in the Lord's Supper, this faith is confirmed and strengthened by partaking of the signs of Christ's broken body and shed blood as a complete atonement for our sins, so that as surely as we eat of the bread and drink of the wine we are partakers of Christ and of all His benefits. Therefore in the measure that we partake of these sacraments in faith, in that measure we are also blessed.

Thus thanks be to God, who knows our weaknesses and our frailties and has added the blessings of the signs and seals of the sacraments to the power of the Word. Yea, thanks be to God for His unspeakable gift, Jesus Christ!

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

## Editor's Notes

### New Volume

With this issue we begin our sixtieth volume. We do so with thankfulness to God that He has given us the privilege, the strength, and the means to publish all these years in the interest of the goodly heritage which He has given us. The beginning of a new volume also implies some changes. As far as the Staff is concerned, departing from the ranks of our regular contributors are the Revs. W. Bruinsma, D. Engelsma, R. Flikkema, K. Koole, and R. Miersma. Added to our ranks are the Revs. Ronald Hanko, who will be co-responsible, with Rev. A. den Hartog, for *In His Fear*, and Rev. Thomas Miersma, who will write for a new department in the area of the history of doctrine. The name of the new rubric will be *Guided Into All Truth*. A new and capable writer and a fresh approach should make for an interesting new department. Watch for it! For the time being, at least, Revs. C. Hanko and H. Veldman will take care of our *Meditation* department, with the proviso that Rev. M. Schipper may return to this department any time he feels up to it. For the rest, all departments and contributors remain the same. We are also planning three special issues for the coming volume-year. The first will be December 1, when the subject will be the last of the Five Points of Calvinism. Later — in March and August, D.V. — there will be special issues on the Covenant and the Covenant Home and Family and on Preaching. We are gratified at reader-response to our special issues. Meanwhile, we ask of you, our readers certain things. The first is, naturally, *read*

what we write. The second is: continue to support and to promote our magazine. In connection with the latter, do not fail to promote the *Standard Bearer* nearest home, i.e., in your own family. Don't let edifying reading become a lost art in your homes!

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### Seminary Convocation

In this issue you will find a transcript of Prof. R. Decker's significant convocation address. If you were unable to attend seminary convocation, you can to a degree live along with the seminary by reading his address. This means, of course, that we have begun a new term on seminary hill. Three of our seminary students, Messrs. R. Dykstra, S. Key, and C. Terpstra, returned to us and are beginning the second year of their 4-year program. We have one new pre-seminary student, Mitchell Dick. We welcomed another student from the Evangelical Reformed Church of Singapore, Jaikishin Mahtani. And this year we have four students who are from the Free Reformed Church of North America, Mssrs. Gerald Hamstra, John Schuit, Hans Overduin, and Richard Basala. Remember our seminary in your prayers!

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Due to an abundance of copy, some of it crying for publication, your editor will limit his contribution this time to these notes.

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## SEMINARY CONVOCATION ADDRESS

### God's Sure Foundation

*Prof. Robert D. Decker*

The Word of God upon which I base my remarks this evening may be found in II Timothy 2:19: "Nevertheless the foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, the Lord knoweth them that are His. And, let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity." The text begins with the word nevertheless. This is a word of comfort and assurance for Timothy, the youthful pastor at Ephesus, and for the faithful church there. It is also a word of comfort for the faithful church throughout the ages. It is a word of comfort for us tonight.

The apostle Paul was prisoner in Rome when he wrote to his spiritual son to encourage him in the work of the ministry. Circumstances in Ephesus were very difficult. There were doctrinal departures, the profane and vain babblings of false teachers, and increasing ungodliness. Two false teachers denied the resurrection, overthrowing the faith of some. These led some out of the church, causing schism in the church. One can well understand that this made Timothy's work very difficult. The young pastor might very well have been in-

clined to despair, to give up. To him the inspired apostle comes with this word: nevertheless. Though all these terrible things are happening in the church, Timothy must be assured, the foundation of God standeth sure having this seal. God's church cannot be destroyed.

Our situation is similar and even worse. Apostasy abounds, even in Reformed circles, both in doctrine and in life or practice. Our churches and seminary are tiny and of no account. What can we do? Will we survive? We must hear tonight God's great "nevertheless." Hearing the word in faith we shall be able to persevere in the work with confidence and joy.

I call your attention to God's sure foundation. Notice with me, in the first place, what it is. In the second place, its seal. And in the third place, our calling.

The text speaks of "the sure foundation of God." There are many views as to the meaning of this concept. The most common are these: 1) the foundation is eternal election, 2) the foundation is Christ Himself, 3) the foundation is the church. The first cannot be correct since the apostle mentions election as part of the seal of the foundation. The third cannot be correct because the apostle speaks of the church as a house in verse 20. Christ is the sure foundation of God. This is the teaching of Scripture. In I Corinthians 3:11 we read: "For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ." And Ephesians 2:20 teaches: "And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone." In both of these passages Scripture speaks of the church as a building or temple built upon the foundation. That foundation is Christ, the revelation of God Who is the God of our salvation. Christ, by Whom and for Whom God made all things, Christ crucified is the foundation of the church. Through His shed blood and in His resurrection from the dead the church has been redeemed from sin and death. That Christ is the foundation of God means that the Word of God is God's sure foundation. Christ is the Word made flesh. Through the Holy Spirit God reveals Himself in Christ in His infallible Word. That's the foundation of God, Christ as revealed in His inspired, infallible Word. Upon that foundation the church is built. In this context the church as manifest in the world, the church institute is meant. The church as manifest in the office of believer and the office of minister, elder, deacon. That church must be built upon the one, sure foundation of God, Jesus Christ, the Scriptures.

The text emphasizes the foundation's strength. Notice it is a *sure* foundation: firm, solid, strong, immovable foundation. And that foundation *stands*

sure, i.e., it is firmly fixed, indestructible. And the foundation is that because it is the sure foundation of God. Only God can lay an immovable foundation. No man is able to do this. What a beautiful truth! God conceived of that foundation in His eternal counsel in Jesus Christ. God laid that foundation in time and history. From creation on, through the types and shadows of the Old Testament, God revealed the sure foundation. In the fullness of time, in the cross and resurrection of Jesus Christ, the sure foundation was laid. All we await is the final realization of all things in the new creation.

That foundation has a seal. That seal is that by which anything is confirmed, proved, authenticated. The seal which God placed upon the foundation is a mark of ownership. The foundation belongs to God; and we know that because it has God's seal. The seal also certifies or guarantees the genuine character of the foundation. The question is how can we be sure we are building upon the sure foundation of God. That's a real question. Many claim to be building upon the sure foundation of God. How can we be certain? Look at the seal! That's the proof, the sure guarantee.

The seal is twofold. "The Lord knoweth them that are His." This is sovereign, eternal election. From all eternity the Lord knows them that are His, before the foundation of the world He chose them in Christ. In His love and mercy God gave them to Christ, the Good Shepherd. Christ laid down His life for them and took it again. These God preserved by His grace and Holy Spirit unto everlasting life and glory.

This truth also implies reprobation. God does not know them that are not His. These God causes to serve His purpose in Christ and these God condemns in the way of their own sin to everlasting destruction. This means that to deny the truth of sovereign predestination is to deny the seal of God's sure foundation. This is precisely what Pelagianism, Arminianism, and Liberalism in all their forms do.

But there's another aspect to this seal: "and, let everyone that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity." To name the name of Christ is to confess Christ to be our Savior and Lord. It is to stand away from all unrighteousness, all of that which is contrary to the will of God as revealed in Scripture. It is to hate and flee all sin; to put off the old man and to put on the new. It is to trust in Christ and love Him with all our hearts.

These two aspects belong to the one seal. Sanctification is the fruit of election. One cannot have election without sanctification, and one cannot have sanctification without election. Election is not

a cold, abstract piece of dogma. Election always implies a calling, a responsibility if you will. That calling is: name the name of Christ in the way of departing from iniquity. That is the seal. The Lord knows them that are His and by His Word and Spirit He works in their hearts so that they name the name of Christ and depart from iniquity. By that double seal we know that the foundation of God stands sure.

What then is our calling? Obviously we must build on God's sure foundation. The churches need ministers of the Word who are skilled and able to visit the sick with the Word of God and reassure them of God's love and care for them. The churches need ministers to comfort those that sorrow in the hope of the victory of the resurrection, to care for the anxious and despairing, the lonely and troubled among God's people, to guide those who have difficulties in their marriages or with their children. The churches need ministers. Ministers are needed to help those in need and to correct and admonish the wayward. The churches need pastors who reflect the compassion, sympathy, and love of the Chief Shepherd, our Lord Jesus Christ. And the seminary must train students for this work.

But above all else the churches need *preachers*! Men who are mighty in the Scriptures and filled with the knowledge of God's Word are needed. Men who will go to the pulpit not with their own vain and profane babblings, but with God's Word are needed. The church needs men skilled at expounding and proclaiming the Word of God, men who dare to wield the sword of the Spirit and courageously proclaim the truth against every form of the lie. Only in this way will the church be built on God's sure foundation.

Therefore to the professors God says: build on the sure foundation. We who teach must bow in humble obedience before the infallible Word of God. The only proper response to the Word in all of our study and teaching is: "I believe." To assume the stance of the higher critic is to deny and reject the sure foundation of God. We must teach the truth of Scripture in every course of study. We must let the truth be seen over against all heresies and false doctrine. And God's seal of His sure foundation must be reflected in us. In our lives we must

name the name of Christ and stand away from all unrighteousness. In that way those whom we teach will see in us that we are known of God. If we speak any other word we will lead the church away from the foundation, for our words, the words of mere men, are never more than vain, profane babblings.

To the students God says: listen, learn the truth of the Word of God brought by your professors. And not only listen but receive that instruction with an obedient and a believing heart. Only men of faith, men convicted of the truth of God's Word, only these can build on the sure foundation of God. Study, study hard that you may become a workman approved of God, one who knows how to divide the Word of truth aright. In that way you need never be ashamed. In this work God's church may be encouraged. Viewing the ecclesiastical scene one might well be inclined to despair. Many in the Reformed tradition are no longer building on God's sure foundation. They deny the truths of creation, the fall, the flood, the miracles, the inspiration of Scripture, and even the virgin birth of our Lord. And all of these denials amount to a denial of the sovereign God of truth. They reject both aspects of God's seal. By rejecting reprobation and teaching universalism they deny election: the Lord knows them that are His. By allowing all kinds of corruption (drama, dance, homosexuality) they embrace all kinds of iniquity rather than depart from it. Besides, our churches are small and they struggle. What do they amount to? For the first time in thirty years they decreased rather than increased in total members. There are problems too in the churches. What's the use? Shall we despair?

Never. Listen again to the first word of the text, "*nevertheless*." That is God's great "*nevertheless*." The foundation of God stands sure and immovable with its seal: election and sanctification. No heretic ever did or ever will destroy the church built on God's sure foundation. No devil either. Not even the gates of hell can prevail against God's church. We can do our work with joy and confidence. Building on the sure foundation of God we shall never be moved. It is God's foundation, God's Christ, God's Word, God's church. And God is GOD.

## DAY OF SHADOWS

# Too Much Contempt and Wrath

Rev. John A. Heys

Sin begets sin.

As surely as man begets man, beasts beget

beasts, birds beget birds, and fish beget fish, sin brings forth more sin. And on this earth, as fertile

soil, sin develops until, as Paul writes in II Thessalonians 2:3, it has brought forth the man of sin, the son of perdition. Or, if you will, and as John calls him in I John 2:18, the Antichrist, who will appear and bring sin to its horrible climax.

There was an antichrist — a forerunner of the Antichrist to come, the man of sin in his final, dreadful form — in the day of shadows that saw Esther as queen through a series of sinful deeds. That antichrist was king Ahasuerus, and his sins set the stage for another antichrist whose name was Haman, and who did all in his power to seek to keep the Christ from being born, and to wipe the Church of Christ from off the earth. Let us take note of this series of sins as sin thrived and brought forth abundant fruit in the realm of the Medes and the Persians.

King Ahasuerus, moved by the spirit of alcohol, ordered his wife to display her beauty to the men whom he was entertaining. The sin of intoxication, even though it did not cause him to lose his rationality, did affect him enough to stir him to an act he would not have committed had he not imbibed. We read of that in Esther 1:10. "When the heart of the king was merry with wine he commanded" his seven chamberlains to bring Vashti the queen "to show the people and the princes her beauty." She must, according to the king's command appear with the crown royal. O, yes, all must see that this beautiful woman was his possession. The sin of taking too much wine leads to an open display of sinful pride and gratification of his fleshly ambitions.

There is no evidence that he demanded any immoral display of her body. Verse 11 says that she was fair to look on. And this can be translated "of a good countenance." And wearing the crown royal certainly suggests that she had queenly apparel on above and beyond that crown. We had better not read into the passage what is not stated or suggested.

Therefore, although the king's sins set the stage for Vashti's sin, we must not try to defend Vashti, when Scripture gives no indication that she refused in order to walk uprightly. We do well to look at what is stated, and thus at what those said who were present at the time, and lived in that day. The king's wise men called her deed one of contempt and wrath. And they were not afraid that the women in the land, hearing of Vashti's deed, would become too chaste and spurn all sensuous advances.

Scripture declares that it was her facial beauty that the king wanted revealed to the people and princes. And we must conclude that Vashti was not concerned with sin before God. Her refusal to do as

the king said was not based on a conviction of what Peter and John said in Acts 5:29, "We ought to obey God rather than men." No, she had contempt for this drinking husband of hers, who, with a heart merry because of wine, ordered her to show her beauty. And she hated this man! She hated him not simply for this demand, but had no love for him long before this day.

Vashti was a proud woman. Consider that exceptional gifts, that is, natural gifts of God's providence, whether that be a fair countenance, musical abilities, athletic prowess, mental brilliancy and the like, because of our depraved natures make us proud. Instead of being filled with thankfulness and of striving to use that gift to the utmost to God's glory, we elevate ourselves above those given other talents, as though we got these by our own strength or wisdom. A woman with physical beauty, therefore, likes to display it and welcomes opportunities to get the praise, the looks and the oohs and aahs of men, and even the jealous looks of other women. To be the best, the most talented, the most beautiful among others, our flesh wants, and not to hide but to display. (Yes, to be the most popular, or best-liked preacher also throbs in the breast of those called to be humble servants to God and of His people.) We may, therefore, believe that Vashti, with all that exceptional beauty, delighted in having it seen and in having the applause, if not even loud murmurs and cryings of approval and praise.

She enjoyed being queen. That was one redeeming feature of being the wife of this man whom she despised. The rich clothing, the luxuries of her palace were not to be frowned upon but to be enjoyed by the flesh. The word contempt can be translated loathe, despise. And the word wrath can be translated, and is so translated in Deuteronomy 29:28, as indignation. Put the two together and you see what her attitude was toward her husband, the king. She loathed him and was indignant about past deeds. This request, and opportunity to get the praise of men, did not bring such strong feelings toward a man she loved and respected. One request would not bring such vehement reaction. And love would have excused him because he was "merry with wine," or at least have done his bidding — since she was not concerned with God's law — and at the first opportunity requested him never to do such a thing again.

The king likewise was proud. And is not the sinner, no matter who he may be, always a proud creature? Sin is an act of pride. It always is. In every sin, without exception, man exalts himself above God, and in every sin man reveals himself to be so haughty that he dares to disobey and defy the living God! The proud, whom God sees afar off and re-

sists, according to James 4:6 and I Peter 5:5, in his sinful acts declares that there is no God, and that He Who claims to be God is not in actuality. The God upon Whom he depends for every breath of life, and on Whose earth he walks, he denies and defies. Is that not pride? Conceit of the worst sort? Before men that sinner may be meek and humble, but before God he is proud. In his proud mind the sinner says, "He Who calls Himself God is wrong. He has forbidden me a good thing. He has no right to deny me this pleasure. I may do this that He calls evil. What He does not want me to do, I may do; and to show you that He is not God, I will do it!" He says that also in his sinful deed. Is that not pride? But remember that you say that in every sin; and I reveal it in every transgression of God's law. Though men may call us meek and humble, the question is, "What does God say of our thoughts and works?"

And king Ahasuerus responded in a proud way to Vashti's act of pride. He did not respond in a righteous indignation, claiming that she went contrary to the Fifth Commandment and dishonoured one whom God placed over her. Humility would have moved him to reconsider his request of her, and driven him to search the Scriptures to see whether he had sinned against the living God. But pride does not do that. Pride always says, "I can do no wrong. The other fellow is wrong." And as I pointed out a moment ago, that is what we say about God every time we sin. We think He is wrong in demanding of us that we conform to His law. We in our deeds say that He is not sovereign and has no right to demand this or that of us. If we believe He is God, then in humility we say, "Teach me, O Lord, Thy way of truth." We echo the words of Jesus, "I come to do Thy will, O Lord." And Ahasuerus did not do that. In pride he ordered his wise men to advise him as to what must be done to Vashti, not what confession Ahasuerus must make. That too, of course, is pride, to refuse to confess sin and to demand a confession from those against whom you sinned.

And so we see that the sin of drinking too much wine moved the king to a sinful command for his wife. This led to a sinful reaction on her part. The king continues to walk in his sin and seeks advice from sinful men to maintain himself in his evil way. Step by step he proceeds until he takes that clearer step of sin in that he divorces his lawful wife, who was not guilty of adultery, and for whose divorce he can find absolutely no Scriptural ground. But then pride does not want to look for God's will, and know what pleases Him. Soon it is the next sinful step that he marries another woman and lives in adultery with her. That little seed of sin consisting in drinking that brightly colored wine in such a graceful drinking vessel has sent forth a tree

with branches, leaves, and fruit. For there is more coming out of that sin. Mordecai and Esther are drawn into this chain of sinful deeds. Be patient and we will show that. But their sin sets the stage for Haman to plan his dastardly deed of having the Jews killed, and in that way to prevent the birth of the Meek and Humble Saviour of mankind. No, Haman did not have that in mind. But that would have been the fruit of his sin.

But to return to the line of the story. Too much contempt and wrath? Is there an amount that is allowed? It does sound as though Vashti had shown a measure of contempt and wrath before this time. There may have been previous nasty encounters between the king and the queen. Contempt could have been building up while the king had his one hundred and fourscore days of feasting; and wrath may have been building up by his celebration and boastful display of his majesty. In all this she was given no part. And now for his satisfaction, with his royal crown, she must display her beauty before *his* drunken friends?!

At any rate, there was too much contempt now. And there always is too much contempt when man sins. There was too much when Adam committed his first sin. One sin is too much! For just that one sin God sent forth a world of curses and prepared a lake of everlasting fire. It was not after a multitude of sins that God drove Adam out of paradise, among thorns and thistles and away from the tree of life. And we must not deceive ourselves today into thinking that one sin is not too bad. One sin is too much contempt of God and too much hatred towards Him!

But consider that Satan is at work here. He had been at work for a long time before this incident. Through the years he has had a bumper crop of sin. Esther and Mordecai find themselves in Shushan, and not in the land of Canaan, because Satan succeeded in leading the Kingdom of Judah into idolatry. And God brought the nation into captivity. While the seed of Abraham is under the rule of heathen nations, Satan's devilish plan to prevent the birth of the Christ seems on the threshold of being fulfilled. He, who in heaven was filled with pride (I Timothy 3:6), seems on the verge of succeeding in the proud work of keeping God from fulfilling His promise to His church, namely, The Seed of the woman Who would save us from Satan's power.

And why is this history recorded and preserved for us? As we saw in that opening statement of the book, all things come to pass out of God's counsel. And although there is too much contempt and hatred against God in the world, He has too much mercy and sovereign grace in His Son to let Satan succeed. God Himself has too much contempt and

hatred of Satan and his evil works to let him succeed in keeping His elect church under his evil rule. He has too much love for His own to let the abundance of evil in the world keep Him from saving all His elect, and reveals this by sending His

Son in the weakness of our flesh, and pretty soon in the glory of His kingdom. All will work together for good to those that love God, because God eternally loved them.

## GUEST ARTICLE

# The Wonder of Adoption (3)

*Rev. Ronald Hanko*

In previous articles we have seen that our adoption as the children of God is predestinated from eternity by God the Father and prepared and sealed in time through the work of Christ, the First-begotten Son. Now we turn to the third phase in the revelation of the wonder of our Sonship, the work of the Holy Spirit as the Spirit of adoption. It is through the Spirit of adoption that the adoption of sons is *possessed* by the children of God.

We must understand, of course, that our emphasis on the Spirit in this aspect of our adoption does not mean that the Holy Spirit is not active in the predestination or preparation of our sonship. We know that also election is of the Father, through the Son, and by the Holy Spirit; and Hebrews 9:14 tells us that it was "through the eternal Spirit" that Christ offered Himself in our behalf. Nevertheless, it is in the application of adoption that the work of the Spirit stands on the foreground.

In the application of adoption the Spirit gives to us the blessings and benefits of sonship that are earned for us through Christ's bloody sacrifice and sealed to us in His resurrection. The result of the work of the Spirit, then, is that we come into conscious possession of our sonship, have the assurance of an incorruptible inheritance, and receive the calling to live as sons of God in a wicked world.

The importance of this work of the Spirit is clearly seen by returning to the earthly picture for a moment. When we adopt a child we do not leave that child at the adoption agency but we take him to our home and into our own life, otherwise he would never know anything of his sonship, nor would he profit one whit from his adoption. The work of Christ on the cross lays the legal basis for our sonship, but does not deliver us from the house of the devil. It is through the Spirit that we are received into the family of God and are made partakers of all the goodness of His house.

This work of the Spirit also teaches us once again that here, too, our sonship is a great work of God. It

is so great and so wonderful that only God Who planned it and prepared it can give it to us, enable us to understand it, and fill us with the assurance that we are and forever shall remain His dear children.

The work of the Spirit as the Spirit of adoption was revealed prophetically already in the Old Testament. In Isaiah 44:3-5 the prophet says:

For I will pour water upon him that is thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground: I will pour My Spirit upon thy seed, and My blessing upon thine offspring: and they shall spring up as among the grass, as willows by the water courses. One shall say, I am the Lord's; and another shall call himself by the name of Jacob; and another shall subscribe with his hand unto the Lord, and surname himself by the name of Israel.

Notice two things in connection with this remarkable passage: first, that through the Spirit the children actually "spring up" as living plants in a barren land; and secondly, that for these children this involves a new consciousness of their sonship so that they begin to call themselves by the names of God's children, "Jacob" and "Israel."

From this prophecy of Isaiah we see, therefore, something that is more clearly revealed in the New Testament, that the work of the Spirit of adoption has two aspects: the bringing forth of sons, and the giving of the assurance of adoption. There are several New Testament passages which speak of this twofold work of the Spirit, notably II Corinthians 3:18 and Galatians 4:6 and 7.

The first work of the Spirit of adoption, therefore, is the bringing forth of sons. This is a very great miracle. When we adopt children and take them into our homes and hearts, for all the love we show those children, they never become our own flesh and blood. The great wonder of our adoption as God's children is that we are reborn as the sons and daughters of the living God. The result of this

spiritual rebirth or regeneration is that we, in a creaturely way, reflect the nature and glories of our heavenly Father and of His Only Begotten Son.

In Romans 8:29 this work of the Spirit is mentioned. There we are reminded that the purpose of God in predestination is "that we should be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren." In II Corinthians 3:18 Paul specifically mentions the Spirit, in this connection when he says that "we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image (that of the Lord's glory, R.H.) from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord." Peter says that there "are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature" (II Peter 1:4; cf. also John 1:10-13, 3:13-18, II Cor. 5:17, I Peter 1:23, I John 3:9, etc.).

This spiritual rebirth involves the restoration of the image of God in us. In Colossians 3:12 Paul tells us that our great glory as those who are risen with Christ (vs. 1) is that we have "put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of Him that created him" (cf. Also Eph. 4:24 and Hebrews 12:10). John, however, reminds us that this marvelous renewal of our nature in the image of our Father in heaven is not complete until at last we appear before Him in glory: "Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that when He shall appear, we shall be like Him; for we shall see Him as He is." John is saying that our glory as the sons of God is not yet *visible* and will not be visible until the appearing of the Lord Jesus. Then "the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ . . . shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto His glorious body, according to the working whereby He is able even to subdue all things unto Himself" (Phil. 3:20, 21).

The second part, then, of the Spirit's work as the Spirit of adoption is that of giving the assurance of sonship to God's children. Thus it is that the truth of adoption becomes a matter of comfort and joy to each of God's sons and daughters. Here the earthly picture holds true once again. When we adopt a child, then we show that child our love by taking him into our home, caring for his needs, protecting, helping, and instructing him. Thereby we prove our love to him and show both in word and deed that he is a son not only before the law but also in our hearts.

Through the Spirit God proves His love to us. Through the Spirit He gives good gifts to His children (Luke 11:13, I Cor. 12:7-11), helps and comforts them (Rom. 8:26, John 14:16-18, etc.), teaches them (John 7:37-39, etc.), and cares for all their needs. The earthly picture falls short of the reality,

however, for the testimony of the Spirit is addressed not only to the outward man, but, as we read in Romans 8:16, "The Spirit itself beareth witness, *with our spirit*, that we are the children of God." God writes the assurance of sonship on our hearts, something that we as earthly parents cannot do.

The Scriptures speak of this testimony of the Spirit also in Galatians 4:6: "And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father." Notice that Paul simply speaks here of a testimony of the Spirit, whereas in Romans 8 he speaks of a twofold testimony, that of the Spirit with our spirit. The reason for this is that in Romans 8 Paul is emphasizing the strength of that assurance; thus he teaches us that "in the mouth of two or three witnesses" every word of God concerning our sonship is established. In Galatians 4 the emphasis is rather on the fact that the assurance of sonship is a gracious work of God through Christ and so the testimony of the Spirit with our spirits is not mentioned.

Galatians 4:6 is valuable, however, because it reminds us that the Spirit is the Spirit of the Son. That means three things: that He is given to the Son in His exaltation (Acts 2:33), that He is poured out by the Son upon the church (John 16:7), and that He speaks only of the Son (John 15:26, 16:13, 14). That is important because it is only as the Spirit of the Son that He can give us the assurance that we are sons. He testifies of our adoption as sons and daughters of God, by testifying of God's Only Begotten Son. The two, our sonship and His, can never be separated even in the work of the Spirit of adoption.

Through the work of the Spirit, then, an intimate relationship of love and friendship is established between God and His people in Christ. Not only does the Spirit testify of God's love toward His people, but the Spirit as the Spirit of adoption also awakens in the hearts of the children a response of love toward God. Of this we read in Romans 8:15b: "Ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father." In that cry all of the love of God's children for their Father is expressed, as well as a complete dependence upon Him, and a longing to dwell in His heavenly house.

Once again the earthly picture serves us well. Adoption becomes a legal reality for us when all the papers are signed, but it does not become a living reality until first our adopted child in response to our love and care cries for the first time, "Father, Mother." And as much and much more than we delight in the cries of our children, our heavenly Father delights in all those who cry to Him. But here also the earthly reality falls short, for we may be disappointed in those adopted children, finding

them unthankful and sullen; but our heavenly Father is never disappointed, for it is His almighty grace working in His children through the Spirit that elicits this response from them—every one.

And this response of the children of God is something that is not only treasured up in the secret places of their hearts, but becomes their confession both in word and deed. We are called to be "blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom (we) shine as lights in the world" (Phil. 2:15). We are called to be "followers of God,

as dear children" and to "walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us" (Eph. 5:1, 2).

So it is that through the Spirit we are rooted and grounded in love and are able to comprehend and know with all the saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height of the love of God in Christ which passes knowledge. Yea, when Christ as the Son of God dwells in our hearts through the Spirit and by faith, then we are filled with all the fullness of God our Father and look forward to the day when we shall dwell in His presence and in His house forever.

## ***SPECIAL REPORT***

# **Report From Singapore**

*Rev. A. den Hartog*

Greetings to our beloved churches in the U.S.A. who have called us and support us continually in the ministry of the Lord Jesus Christ on the mission field. It is our joy to report to you again of how the Lord has blessed His church here and added unto her such as must be saved. The Lord continues to reward all those who have given and supported this cause. As your missionaries we daily give thanks that the Lord has given to us the great privilege of being involved in the work of missions and witnessing how the Lord prospers this work in Singapore. All the glory belongs unto the Lord alone Who performs great and wonderful deeds in our midst.

In our last report in the Standard Bearer we told you about all the weddings we were having in the church. These are now history and we are experiencing the blessings of all the new Christian homes in our midst. The highlight of all these weddings was the triple wedding on June 25. This was a very large wedding. There were more than 700 people in attendance. Pastor Lau officiated. I was asked to preach a short sermon on Joshua 24. It was quite an experience preaching from this passage where Joshua exhorts Israel to put away their idol gods and worship the only true God of heaven and earth. As I was standing there preaching I was profoundly aware of the fact that a large majority of the audience was heathen and idol worshiping. Before this audience the three couples were vowing together with Joshua to serve the Lord the true and living God.

Another very great event took place in our church on July 9. On that day nine young people made confession of their faith and received Adult Baptism. Besides these nine another six young

people, who came to us from other churches in Singapore, also joined our church by making public confession of their faith. In the midst of this we were all reminded of how the young people here have to stand for their faith in face of severe persecution in their own homes. One of the sisters, a university student, who had earnestly desired to be baptized on that day was locked up by her parents in her room to prevent her from being baptized. Her mother came to her in tears urging her not to be baptized. Her father threatened to disown her entirely if she went ahead with baptism. Another one of the sisters who was baptized has ever since suffered severe persecution in her home. Her father has pressed her very hard, trying to make her promise never to go to church again. By the grace of God she has refused to do this. Whenever she comes to church now she must do this without her parents knowledge or she will get into trouble. How precious the Lord makes faith in Him in situations such as these.

The Lord continues to add to His church here in a wonderful way. On July 31 we started another pre-baptism and membership class. I was asked to teach this class again, something which fills me with great joy and excitement. We were very thankful to the Lord and excited when 16 young people signed up for this class. Most of these are seeking baptism in the church. The others are coming to us from other churches in Singapore and are seeking to become members of our church. As usual this class will continue for about 20 to 25 weeks. We are meeting every Lord's Day afternoon at our apartment.

During the month of June the church had its

annual Bible camp similar to our young people's convention in the U.S.A. Pastor Lau was the key speaker for the camp. He gave five messages on the theme, "Be Thou My Vision Lord." It was again a blessed camp that served very much for the spiritual enrichment of the lives of those who attended. I was asked to give one message at one of the evening meetings as well as be involved in a number of the other activities of the camp.

On July 28 and 29 the University students in our midst sponsored two lectures especially for University students at a place near to the campus. We had these last year too. Pastor Lau was asked to speak on the Reformed Faith. His theme for the first evening was, "Why Does God Save Some and Not Others?" The theme for the second evening was, "Today's Gospel, Authentic or Synthetic?" It never ceases to amaze me how many people come out for events such as this in Singapore. We were happy to see quite a number of new university students at both meetings. These meetings also serve as the beginning of a new school year and of another year of weekly Bible study meetings for the University students. Over the years the Lord has brought a number of students into our church through these activities.

The church here is excited about the fact that they have another young man from here training to become a minister. This is another very significant development for the future of the church here. We ought also to rejoice that the Lord uses our Protestant Reformed Theological School in this manner.

There have been in the last months some very interesting developments with our contacts with brethren in Trengganu Malaysia. In the month of May we were invited to come up to preach for the church there. There is a group of brethren there who love the Reformed Faith and desire earnestly to see the Reformed Faith established in the church there. We had an opportunity to preach in a church there and also to have a blessed time of fellowship with the brethren. One of the brothers, Joseph Tan, has for a number of years been getting books and materials from our P.R. churches. He is really zealous for the Reformed faith and has his own bookstore where he sells Reformed books. Another couple who has become very dear to us is earnestly trying to promote the Reformed Faith in the Baptist Church where they belong. These brethren really need our prayers. Since the time of our visit up there the brethren have earnestly requested more help. Last month one of our elders and his family went up there to give spiritual counsel and encouragement. There is much talk about future involvement in the work there. We are waiting for the Lord's direction as to how we can help those saints.

At the end of October the church is planning

once again to have two meetings in connection with the celebration of Reformation Day. I have been asked to speak on a subject related to the Reformed Faith. We will be renting a Presbyterian Church for the meetings. Much work is already being done to publicize these meetings. These meetings have also become yearly affairs for the church and the Lord has blessed them greatly in past years.

The church here continues to face great problems as far as obtaining a new building is concerned. In the past months, building in Singapore has been a little slower because of the recession. Presently it is picking up again. This means that our present place in River Valley could soon be demolished to make room for re-development. We are urgently in need of another place. Besides this, our present meeting place is again filled to capacity. Recently we were able to expand the seating capacity a little again. But that is all filled up again and there is no more possibility of expansion. We face many great problems in connection with obtaining a new worship place. The greatest problem is of course coming up with the huge sum of money necessary. It is very unlikely that we will be able to get any bank loans. Then too there are really very few places available in overcrowded Singapore. It is very unlikely that we would ever be able to purchase a place big enough to hold our present congregation. We would have to get a place that would have seating capacity for at least two hundred already now. We are therefore looking for an old house that could be converted to be used as a church meeting place. Then we would probably have to have at least two or more services in the morning to accommodate the people and another service in the evening. Even such a place would cost a very great deal more money than we can afford presently. Besides this, we are presently in grave danger of losing the place we are now using for our Toa Payoh Mission services. There is a question about the legality of holding our services there. This may mean that we will have to stop our Toa Payoh Mission services, which would be very sad indeed. To find another place will be very difficult if not impossible. We trust, however, that the Lord knows our need and that even as He has always done in the past so He will provide for our future needs. The Lord is able to do things beyond our knowledge and expectation.

Today I am giving personal catechism instruction to a young girl. This has been going on for several weeks. She is from a Buddhist home that is strongly against her being a Christian. She is able to come secretly to the worship services on most of the Lord's Days. However, she cannot manage to come to the pre-baptism and membership class. She earnestly desires to join our church. She formerly was at-

tached to a cult. The Lord brought her away from this cult and to our church through one of the members of our church.

As you can gather from the above there is still much work for us to do as your missionary in Singapore. Even though the church here has its own Pastor there is enough work for two Pastors to keep very busy. Besides all of the above, there is much visitation and pastoral work. Both of us are involved in leading Bible Study groups and speaking regularly for such meetings as Adult Fellowship and Youth Fellowship and the many special meet-

ings. Both Pastors are giving special instruction to the young man who is also a full-time worker in the church. We have session meetings almost every week. Some of these meetings last till the early hours of the morning. There are very few evenings ever when both Pastors are not involved in church work. We are thankful that the Lord has given us so much work to do and continues to use our churches for the work of missions here in Singapore. Continue to pray for us and for the church of Jesus Christ here in Singapore.

## ALL AROUND US

Rev. G. Van Baren

# The "Turn of the Screw"

Perhaps the following hardly seems newsworthy anymore since it was an event which occurred several months ago. Yet, because it will likely have a real and devastating effect on Christian schools and even on churches, it is worthy of continued attention. I refer to the ruling of the Supreme Court on May 24, 1983 concerning the denial of tax exemption for Bob Jones University. You have likely read of it. The *Presbyterian Journal*, June 8, 1983, quoted from the rules of Bob Jones University as stated in their student handbook:

There is to be no interracial dating

1. Students who are partners in an interracial marriage will be expelled.

2. Students who are members of or affiliated with any group or organization which holds as one of its goals or advocates interracial marriage will be expelled.

3. Students who date outside their own race will be expelled.

4. Students who espouse, promote, or encourage others to violate the university's dating rules and regulations will be expelled.

This same periodical explains the ruling of the Supreme Court:

In an 8-1 ruling, the Court said that to warrant exemption under the IRS code, an institution must not only fall under one of the categories listed in Section 501 (c) (3), but also "demonstrably serve and be in harmony with the public interest, and the institution's purpose must not be so at odds with the common community conscience as to undermine any public benefit that might otherwise be conferred."

...That fear, of course, is what drives some religious and educational leaders to speculate what could lie

down the road. Fred Graham, legal reporter for CBS News, said that new lawsuits are already in the works on the basis of alleged religious and sexual discrimination by churches and schools.

Further, the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights has reportedly been pressuring IRS to apply Title IX regulations on sexual discrimination to all private schools. Such pressure, some observers speculated, prompted President Reagan, immediately on the heels of the Supreme Court decision, to fire three members of the Civil Rights Commission and replace them with conservatives to his own liking.

The argument of BJU's attorneys that the issue is ultimately one of religious freedom was rejected by the Court, which admitted that "denial of tax benefits will inevitably have a substantial impact on the operation of private schools, but will not prevent those schools from observing their religious tenets."

Instead, said the Court, "The governmental interest at stake here is compelling....The Government has a fundamental, overriding interest in eradicating racial discrimination in education.... That governmental interest substantially outweighs whatever burden denial of tax benefits places on petitioners' exercise of their religious beliefs."

Dr. Carl McIntire wrote, as quoted in *Christian News*, June 6, 1983,

The United States Supreme Court decision in the Bob Jones University case,... denying them IRS tax exemption, concedes that it actually is a denial of religious liberty. The court said, "On occasion this Court has found certain governmental interests so compelling as to allow even regulations prohibiting religiously based conduct." The Bob Jones case is another such occasion. There the religiously based conduct is a basis for severe tax penalties which the Court conceded

will injure the school. How many other "occasions" will we now have? The door is open for many more, based on the court's clearly stated statement for its interpreting of the Constitution....

What will now be done by the courts to sustain the civil rights of homosexuals because of rules in Christian colleges and churches against them, their dating and the like? This can not be dismissed. Tax exemption could be denied on their behalf some day. In an increasingly secular humanistic society, all religious tax-exemption could eventually go. An open-ended Constitution can be used to do this very thing in the future under such a court as exists today.

This now opens to government penetration a new area in the whole religious world. Basically it becomes the rule of men, not the law, the supreme law.

We might respond, "So what?" Bob Jones University represents a school which hardly sets forth Calvinistic, much less Protestant Reformed, truths. We would want to set ourselves far from them. Yet the Supreme Court decision against them is extremely disturbing — alarming, in fact.

Whatever one might say about the rules of B.J.U. concerning interracial dating and interracial marriage, the fact is that these rules were adopted by B.J.U. out of their religious convictions. It was not even a matter of discrimination. B.J.U. *does* admit blacks in the school. There are black students on the campus. These voluntarily enter this school in full knowledge of the rules. These students, as far as I know, have never complained about discrimination.

And though we might convince ourselves that we have no such similar rules, and therefore are not affected by the Supreme Court ruling, let me remind you of what one can expect if this Court ruling is applied consistently.

First, the courts of the land have also spoken of the "rights" of homosexuals. Apply, if you will, the ruling of the Court to the situation of homosexuals.

Schools which forbid dating and "marriage" between those of the same sex could likewise be said to "discriminate" and therefore not be entitled to tax exemption. To forbid dating and marriage between a Christian and an atheist could also be discriminating. To refuse to have an atheist or homosexual as teacher could be regarded as basis to deny tax exemption.

Secondly, the I.R.S. has already attempted in the past (and thus far has failed because of the tremendous outcry against their ruling) to insist that the *absence* of blacks in a school is *per se* proof of discrimination. The I.R.S. tried to insist that each school *must* have an active recruitment policy to bring blacks into their school—or they were discriminatory and would be denied tax exemption. This effort will likely now be renewed. It could conceivably be extended to include a demand for active recruitment of homosexuals or atheists for teachers as proof of non-discriminating positions.

Thirdly, what is true for schools and their tax-exempt status, can as easily be applied to churches. Those that deny women officebearers, those that condemn and discipline homosexuals, those that do not have sufficient blacks—would be judged discriminating and not eligible for tax-exemption.

Finally, there is but one short step between denial of tax-exemption because of "discrimination," and denial of right-of-existence. The Supreme Court could well state in the future (as it did in the present instance), "The governmental interest at stake here is compelling.... The Government has a fundamental, overriding interest in eradicating racial (and sexual?) discrimination...." The Court then could well conclude that any organization which is not in harmony with this "governmental interest," may not continue to exist. Indeed, a tremendous blow was struck against "religious freedom."

## God our Father (?)

The "in" thing today seems to be the attempt to remove any "sexist" language from Scripture. One expects this from the wild-eyed liberal. For example, the National Council of Churches is considering the following revision of John 3:16, "God loved the world, loved it so much that the beloved Child of God was given to the world, and all who trust in this unique being will never perish but have eternal life."

But one is shocked to find something similar in

the *Banner*, Aug. 29, 1983, in "Soapbox," written by Dr. Hendrik Hart. He states in conclusion to his article:

I'm pretty well convinced that thinking of God as mother is not wrong. Just strange and different. And if that's the case, I do not have the *right* to forbid this novel and unusual usage to those who find *more* comfort in it, more faith, more meaning. That would be unpastoral. Just as it would be unpastoral to force others to say "mother" to God. So I'm fairly convinced that we *have* to make room, also in our worship

service, for those who are growing up with the wonderful message of God as their mother. I'm nearly convinced that if we don't, we will be *wrong*....

The writer bases this strange claim on this:

Jesus, the Bible, the Lord's Prayer, our confessions, doctrine, tradition, songs, and the organization of our faith can be said to be circles which have "God the Father" as their center. Still, for a person whose history has made "father" a source of anguish rather than comfort, betrayal rather than trust, enmity rather than love, we have no doctrine which *commands* the use of that image.

This article is in line with a recent report I heard of a minister (Reformed) who spoke of the Second Person occasionally, though not consistently, as the "daughter" of the First Person.

All the above appears blasphemy to me, all the

clever argumentations notwithstanding. Does a child who has two horrible, cruel parents, who finds affection only in her little dog, therefore address God as, "God our Dog"? The reasoning, it seems to me, is as logical as that which Hart presents—but it is blasphemy. When the earthly type is corrupted by sin, as inevitably it is, this does not change the reality. It's a question of maintaining the teaching of infallible Scripture. Jesus taught *us* to pray, "Our Father...." Never in Scripture is He presented as "mother." May we ever seek to improve on the prayer Jesus taught us to pray—or use language *contrary* to the concept of the "Fatherhood" of God? Scripture gives to God other names—but never "Mother." The churches ought to cut out such evil foolishness quickly and emphatically. To do otherwise is to deny the infallible Scriptures and to lose one's Reformed heritage.

## BIBLE STUDY GUIDE

# Philemon — Counsel Concerning a Runaway Slave

Rev. J. Kortering

This little gem was written by Paul to a rich man who was instructed by Paul to receive his slave who had run to Rome, but was converted there by Paul's preaching and instructed to return. As such, it contains many implications on the fruits of the gospel.

### PHILEMON AND ONESIMUS

Philemon was a member of the church at Colosse, perhaps even an office bearer, addressed as "fellow laborer" (vs. 1). In all likelihood Philemon was among the converts when Paul worked in Colosse during his third missionary journey. You recall that during this journey Paul stayed about three years in Ephesus, from which he travelled to cities in the area, Colosse included (Acts 19:10). Philemon's wife was Apphia (vs. 2), and his son was Archippus (vs. 2), who was a leader, perhaps minister, in the church of Colosse (Colossians 4:17). This may explain why all three are addressed, and why mention is made of the "church in thy house" (vs. 2). We may also conclude from this that they were people of material means, known for their hospitality and generosity on behalf of the gospel. They had a house large enough either to hold the services, or to accommodate several members. They had slaves and they cared about the material needs of the saints (vss. 5-7). Evidently there was a close re-

lationship between Paul and Philemon, as evidenced in the terms of endearment used ("dearly beloved") and the special request that Paul makes of him, namely, to receive his runaway slave back home.

The name of this slave was Onesimus. He evidently had done something wrong. It is suggested that he stole money from his master — "which in time past was to thee unprofitable" (vs. 11). Along with this crime he ran away to Rome, for there a slave could become lost in the obscurity of the million and a half people who lived there. While in Rome he contacted Paul, who was imprisoned in a house. Some suggest that Onesimus knew Paul from the time he labored in Colosse, and when he heard that Paul was in prison, looked him up with the desire to be right with God. Others suggest that it was the need for money (he spent the stolen money and became desperate) that prompted him to turn to Paul. Whatever it was, God used the preaching of Paul to lead Onesimus to conversion and to faith in Christ: "my son whom I have begotten in my bonds" (vs. 10). Paul and Onesimus became dear friends: "mine own bowels" (vs. 12).

### DATE, AUTHOR, AND OCCASION

The immediate occasion for writing this letter was Paul's desire that Philemon receive Onesimus

back as a slave and forgive him for running away.

Let's try to construct in our minds the sequence of events. Paul is in prison in Rome. The years of his early imprisonment were A.D. 61-63. During this stay, he was held prisoner in a house. He was able to have his friends stay with him. Colossians 4:10 mentions Mark, Aristarchus, Justus, Luke, Demas, and others. This letter to Philemon mentions specifically "Ephaphras, Marcus, Aristarchus, Demas, Lukas" (Philemon vss. 23, 24). When Onesimus appeared in Rome and was converted, Paul and Onesimus realized that duty demanded that Onesimus return to his master. At the same time, Paul heard from Epaphras about the evils taking place in the church of Colosse. If a person would travel to Colosse to bring them a letter, he would likely go there by way of Ephesus. Since the Ephesian church needed counsel, Paul sent Tychicus, who was at Rome with him, to Colosse by way of Ephesus. Tychicus took with him Onesimus to be returned to Philemon, and three letters, one for the Ephesian church, one for the Colossian church, and one for Philemon, a member of the church of Colosse.

There is no doubt but Paul wrote this letter to Philemon. In verse one he identified himself as the writer and called himself "a prisoner of Jesus Christ." The date is the same as that of Ephesians and Colossians: A.D. 62 or possibly 63.

#### THE MESSAGE

The preaching of the gospel had a saving effect in the heart and life of Onesimus. As was true for his master, Philemon, when Paul preached in Colosse during his third missionary journey, so now was true for this runaway slave. Onesimus must have responded so well to the gospel preached that Paul calls him "my child who I have begotten in bonds" (vs. 10), "my own bowels" (vs. 12), and "a brother beloved, specially to me, but now much more with thee both in the flesh and in the Lord" (vs. 16), and finally, "faithful and beloved brother" (Col. 4:9).

Paul desired that Philemon receive Onesimus back into his home as a slave. The sin that stood between Onesimus and Philemon had to be resolved. The only way that that could be done was for Onesimus to confess his sin against the fifth commandment (he rebelled against the authority of his master), and prove his confession by returning to Philemon and submitting to his rule. Philemon was to forgive him in Christ and show the sincerity of this by reinstating him into his former position.

It is interesting to note how urgently Paul reasoned for Philemon to receive Onesimus. He does not command, though he could have, but beseeches for love's sake to receive him (vs. 9). He reminds Philemon that he, Paul, is aged, and this

implies wisdom (vs. 9). He beseeches him as a prisoner to receive Onesimus, the slave (vs. 9). He points out to Philemon that he would prefer to keep Onesimus with him in Rome and use him for the gospel's sake, but he realizes it is his duty to return him (vs. 13, 14). Finally, he points out that Onesimus is now a brother in Christ, and must be treated as such (vs. 16). He asks Philemon to receive Onesimus as if Onesimus were Paul himself (vs. 17). Paul even offers to repay anything he may have stolen if that is necessary (vs. 18, 19).

In summary, we can see that the message of Paul to Philemon has many important implications.

First, the spiritual principle of repentance and forgiveness is basic to all Christian experience. Tenney in his *Survey* writes, "In this letter are found all the elements of forgiveness: the offense (11, 18), compassion (10), intercession (10, 18, 19), substitution (18, 19), restoration to favor (15), and elevation to a new relationship (16). Every aspect of the divine forgiveness of sin is duplicated in the forgiveness which Paul sought for Onesimus. It is a practical lesson in the petition of the prayer, 'Forgive us our debts as we also have forgiven our debtors.'"

Second, the question arises whether the counsel of Paul to Onesimus eradicates the former relationship, that is master-slave. Some writers suggest that "as you receive me" (vs. 17), and "Having confidence in thy obedience I wrote unto thee knowing that thou wilt also do more than I say" (vs. 21), are suggestions to Philemon that he free Onesimus from being a slave. This is highly speculative. One does not read in the New Testament exhortations to change the social structure. Rather, it is more correct to see that in this letter, Philemon (master) and Onesimus (slave) are to deal with each other differently. Faith does not abolish older structures, it does affect how we act in them. By this epistle, Paul exhorts Philemon to deal with Onesimus as a Christian must deal with a brother in Christ, even if he is a slave, and a runaway at that. Similarly, Onesimus, as a brother in Christ, must return, respect, and serve his master in the Lord. This is a noteworthy example for all social relationships as the Spirit works in our hearts by the holy gospel.

#### A BRIEF OUTLINE

1. Salutation (vss. 1-3). He, Paul, identifies himself as the author, being a prisoner of Jesus Christ. He also mentions the fact that Timothy is with him (vs. 1). He addresses Philemon as dearly beloved, a fellow laborer, mentions his wife Apphia and son Archippus, and includes the church that meets in his house (vss. 1, 2). He expresses the apostolic greeting (vs. 3).

2. He expresses gratitude for Philemon's charity

(vss. 4-8). Paul prays for Philemon (vs. 4), he heard that Philemon loves Christ and the saints, he rejoices in this and encourages him to continue (vs. 8).

3. Paul mentions his desire that Philemon receive Onesimus back and forgive him (vss. 9-21). He requests that Philemon consider this as coming from Paul, both older and a prisoner (vss. 9, 10). He informs Philemon that Onesimus is more than a runaway slave, he is a brother in Christ and now profitable for both of them (vss. 12, 13). He also asks Philemon to receive him willingly with a view to retaining him and using him as a brother in Christ (vss. 14-16). He asks him to do this as a partner of Paul; and if money stands in the way, Paul will repay it all (vss. 17-19). He tells him that by doing this, Paul will be lifted up and encouraged by the evidence of this fruit in the gospel (vss. 20,21).

4. Paul asks Philemon to prepare a lodging place because Paul expects to travel there soon (vs. 22).

5. Closing salutation (vss. 23-25). He sends along the greetings of others who are in Rome with him, Epaphras, Marcus, Aristarchus, Demas, Lucas (vss. 23, 24). He closes with a benediction (vs. 25).

## QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

1. Reflect upon the evidence that we have as to who Philemon was. Is there any indication of his wealth, his charitableness?

2. Show from this letter that both Philemon and Onesimus were dear friends of the apostle Paul.

3. What do we know about slaves in this New Testament period? It could be that Onesimus was a captive taken by the Roman army and subsequently sold as a slave. Do you think Onesimus had a hard life as slave of Philemon?

4. Show from the Bible that both Philemon and Onesimus were converted by the gospel preached by Paul.

5. Point out from this letter that the spiritual message is repentance and forgiveness.

6. Do you think that Paul wanted Philemon to free Onesimus from being a slave? Is there any indication? Does the New Testament gospel forbid slavery?

7. What lesson is there in this letter for instructing the church in how to deal with one another, whether one is a master and another a slave?

## STRENGTH OF YOUTH

# Ten Rules for Producing Unspiritual Young People

*Rev. Ron Cammenga*

In any great undertaking there are certain basic rules or principles which need to be followed if the endeavor is to be capped with success. The pilot must know the principles of aeronautics; the draftsman the principles of engineering; the surgeon the principles of human physiology. Such is also the case in the great enterprise of producing unspiritual young people. Here, too, one's goal is most easily achieved, and success guaranteed, when these basic rules are taken into consideration. Application of these time-tested laws, either singly or in any combination, is sure to bring about the desired goal. Any consistency in applying the rules is sure to make the Devil cheer and the world applaud. By the same token the Holy Spirit will be grieved and the cause of Christ's church in the world dealt a severe blow.

What are these rules, the practice of which is most effective in producing unspiritual young people, a virtual serpent's brood?

Rule #1. Parents should take little or no interest in the spiritual education of their children and young people. They should not be involved in teaching their children their catechism, their Sunday School material, or their Bible material for school. The best excuse to use in implementing this rule is that you are too busy; after all, you've got to put food on the table. Instead of seeing to it that your children are prepared for school and catechism, just assume it. It doesn't hurt either to take the position that Christian education isn't really necessary, and that public school training is adequate. In carrying this rule out, parents should see to it that their evenings are so filled up with other activities that they simply have not time for their children. Careful application of the rule is sure to produce spiritually ignorant young people, young people who neither know nor are interested in the truth.

Rule #2. Beginning already when the children

are very young, parents should give them anything that they want. Satisfy their every whim. Always buy them the very finest. See to it that they always have new toys. Dress them in the finest clothes. As soon as they can drive, buy them a new car. Lavish them with every extravagance possible. This is a most effective means of producing unspiritual young people. It is sure to make cross-bearing and self-sacrifice, things which are absolutely necessary to the Christian life, repulsive to them. When their faith requires of them self-denial, or even requires them to endure suffering, they are sure to deny their faith. When it becomes plain to them that the way into the kingdom is always a way of tribulation (Acts 14:22), they will want no part of it.

Rule #3. Cultivate in your young people a love for pleasure and entertainment. Tell them that, after all, we only live once, and so we ought to get the most out of life that we can. You can best do this by madly pursuing pleasure yourself. Instead of impressing upon them that life is a battlefield, tell them that life is a playground. Enjoy yourself with sports, or entertainments, or vacations. And if they should become involved in worldly amusements, so much the better. Their attending the movie or going to dances will only further your cause. Consistent application of this principle is sure to produce young people who are "...lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God" (II Tim. 3:4).

Rule #4. Set before your young people an inconsistent example. You know the old adage, "Do as I say, not as I do." This is sure to work confusion and discourage the young people from living a life of obedience to the glory of God. Some examples. Tell your children that they must go to church regularly, but be irregular in your own attendance. Tell your children to obey those in authority over them, but you be quick to become angry at the boss, the policeman, or the elders. Tell them that they may not go to the movie, but you watch the movies and drama that come over the TV. Tell them that they must live chastely, but you read dirty novels and watch filthy television programs. This kind of life is sure to be offensive to the young people. They'll notice the inconsistency immediately, and your example will speak louder than your words. This is an especially old and time-tested rule, that over the years has met with a great deal of success.

Rule #5. When your children do break one of God's commandments, be sure that you don't discipline them, at least not severely. You may, perhaps, scold them; but nothing more. You know what Solomon says, after all, in Proverbs 23:13, 14: "Withhold not correction from the child: for if thou beatest him with the rod, he shall not die. Thou shalt beat him with the rod, and shalt deliver his soul from hell." There is scarcely anything so

destructive to our goal as the consistent and loving application of discipline. When it comes to your attention that your son or daughter is guilty of some wrong-doing, minimize the seriousness of their deed. And at all costs, protect them, even if they're in the wrong. Cover for them and give excuses for their bad behavior. Make sure the teachers in the Christian school are aware of your disapproval of their disciplining the children. And if their bad behavior continues, don't go to the pastor or the elders to seek their help. If the church should sooner or later become involved anyway, become angry and attempt to stand in the way of the church's work. This rule, carefully followed, is sure to produce young people who are unholy and wicked.

Rule #6. At every opportunity, be critical of the Christian school teachers, the elders, and the pastor. Make your criticisms known to your children, and the ill will you feel toward these people. Don't hide your feelings toward them, and don't honor them at least for their office's and work's sake. This, too, is most effective in producing unspiritual young people. It will encourage the same critical spirit in them. It will cultivate a low view of the church and the members of the church, and make it easy for them to leave the church later on. And this is what usually happens. Once out of the church and separated from the means of grace and the preaching of the truth, they are fair game.

Rule #7. Allow them to make friends with unbelievers, or at least do not strongly disapprove of their establishing these friendships. After all, you can reason, they can be a good and effective witness to these unbelievers in this way. Don't stop them from running with these other young people who have no concern to live a holy life and no interest in spiritual things. When they are with these worldly friends, don't be concerned where they are or what they might be doing. After all, they're old enough to know better, and they can make their own decisions. We all know the influence a Delilah had on Samson. We all know that Israel's making leagues and friendships with the ungodly Canaanites was instrumental in bringing about their apostasy from the Lord God. A most effective measure!

Rule #8. Don't take any interest in the dating or courtship of your young people. This rule stands in close connection to Rule #7. Don't warn them against being yoked together with an unbeliever. Don't point out how this angers the God of marriage and is destructive to the purposes He has ordained for marriage. Take a light view of their leaving the church for the sake of a marriage partner. Don't point out their calling to maintain membership in a true church, and don't point out the

importance of this for their children in the future. History has proved the effectiveness of this rule. Just call to mind the outcome of the sons of God marrying the daughters of men prior to the Flood, or the result of the children of Israel marrying the ungodly Canaanites prior to the time of the Judges. Applied consistently, this rule will surely have the outcome that the young people are weaned away from the church, their spiritual home and the source of the nourishment of their spiritual life.

Rule #9. Point out to your young people the importance of earthly success. Get them to see that they must succeed in life and establish a name for themselves. Their career has got to be the main thing. In the case of the young women, don't set before them the blessings of establishing a godly home and being a joyful mother of children. Tell them that they ought at least first find fulfillment in some secular pursuit. Have the young men see the importance of success and advancement in the world. Their work must come first, the church and family, the things of the kingdom of God, must take second place. Once they have made spiritual things second place in their lives, it's only a short step to giving them no place at all.

Rule #10. Set before your children the goal of becoming rich. Get them to see that money means power, and that money talks. Have them exert

themselves fully, occupy themselves completely with getting rich. You know what Jesus said, that it's easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter into God's kingdom (Matt. 19:24). You know what happened to Achan in the Old Testament. The Apostle Paul says in I Timothy 6:9, 10: "But they that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition. For the love of money is the root of all evil: which while some coveted after, they erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows." In the parable of the sower, Jesus speaks of the seed that fell among the thorns as "...he that heareth the word; and the care of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, choke the word, and he becometh unfruitful" (Matt. 13:22). This is a particularly timely measure to employ in our affluent society.

These are the ten basic rules to be followed in the production of unspiritual young people. There's nothing difficult or complicated about any of them. You might say, they come naturally. Apart from the intervening grace of God, their results are guaranteed.

Now test yourself. How many of the rules have you been following?

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## ***TAKING HEED TO THE DOCTRINE***

### **God's Providence and Sin (7)**

*Rev. H. Veldman*

As we stated in our preceding article, we, as Protestant Reformed Churches do not believe in Hyper-Calvinism. That God is sovereign and has surely willed sin does not annul our calling to demand of all who hear the preaching of the gospel to repent and believe. Continually we are admonished as people of God unto faith and repentance because the truth stands sure that God does all things, but also that He causes us to stand in His grace. If it is God Who worketh in us the willing and the doing, we then, as the result of that work of God, must will and do. And as far as the wicked are concerned, who refuse to walk in the way of God's commandments, who reject the living God because Christ saves from sin and they love sin, they will be held accountable for the fact that they loved darkness rather than the light and walked in the ways of iniquity because they hated the living God.

The call to repentance and faith which must be addressed seriously to all who hear the preaching of the gospel does not negate either God's counsel of double predestination, or the sinner's total inability to turn from his evil way unto the living God. We are aware of the fact that we are often charged with the error of not being able, seriously, to demand of all sinners repentance and faith because of our emphasis upon the Calvinistic doctrines of God's double and sovereign predestination, Christ's particular atonement, the sinner's utter inability to do any good, and the irresistible efficacy of divine grace. However, we surely subscribe to what we read in our Heidelberg Catechism, Lord's Day 4, in answer to Question 8: "Doth not God then do injustice to man by requiring from him in His law, that which he cannot perform?", and we quote the answer of the catechism: "Not at all; for God made

man capable of performing it; but man, by the instigation of the devil, and his own wilful disobedience, deprived himself and all his posterity of those divine gifts." Notice, please, that God requires of man that which he cannot perform. Indeed, the demand of repentance and faith is not nullified by the sinner's inability to do what is good. Pelagianism and Arminianism are not the answer to the possibility of preaching the gospel to all its hearers, demanding of them repentance and faith.

How wonderfully comforting is the truth of God's Providence and Sin to which we have been calling attention in these articles. God is absolutely sovereign. This can never be emphasized too emphatically. We may well ask: what do you prefer, that God is in absolute control or that the devil is in control? Somebody must have control. The sinner surely does not control things. The affairs and development of them in the midst of the world are certainly not in his hand. They are controlled by a power or powers outside of him. So, the question is all-important: who is in control?

This truth of God's absolute providence, also as governing the reality of sin, is comforting, first of all, from the viewpoint of the position of the church of God in the midst of the world. Now this is primarily the viewpoint of our Heidelberg Catechism in Lord's Day 10. Our Heidelberg instructor discusses in Lord's Day 10 the providence of God. This providence of the Lord had already been mentioned in Answer 26 of Lord's Day 9. We read in Question 28: "What advantage is it to us to know that God has created and by His providence doth still uphold all things?" Now it is evident that the Catechism here refers also the wicked world. He speaks in Answer 26 of "whatever evils He sends upon me." We read in Answer 28: "since all creatures are so in His hand, that without His will they cannot so much as move." And we also read in Answer 27 that the providence of God is the almighty and everywhere present power of God whereby, as it were by His hand, He upholds and governs heaven and earth and all creatures. Indeed, this power of God also controls the wicked world. Now this comfort is very apparent. If all things are controlled by Jehovah, the church is surely perfectly safe in the midst of the world. Then no harm can possibly befall us. No devil, then can do me any harm. Fact is, all things are in the hands of my almighty Father. In His constant care we, of course, are perfectly safe.

This, however, is not the only comfort which we may derive from the truth of God's Providence and Sin. It is surely true, of course, that the Lord causes all things to work together unto my good. But of what benefit is it to me that the Lord has willed sin?

Would it not have been far better for you and me to enter into glory without the way of sin and grace? But, we must understand, this present night of sin and darkness and death is no accident. Although the infralapsarian begins in God's counsel with the phenomenon of sin, and declares that God has sovereignly elected and reprobated out of a fallen human race, the supralapsarian position has never been condemned. And the infralapsarian himself concedes that he does not do justice to certain strong Scriptural passages. Hence, would it not have been better for God's people to enter into glory without the way of sin and grace? O, it is indeed true that this truth is comforting from the viewpoint of the church of God in the midst of the world. Indeed, all things are under our God's sovereign control, also this present night of sin and death, this valley of the shadow of death.

However, this is not all. We must also maintain that the eternal glory of the alone living God is my comfort. On the one hand, this conception of God's sovereign control over all things, including sin and darkness, maintains God as God. We must face the reality of iniquity. To cause sin to have its origin apart from God gives the church of God no comfort. Shall we maintain the truth of Isaiah 45:7: "I form light, and create darkness: I make peace, and create evil: I the Lord do all these things"? We realize that when we read in this passage that the Lord creates darkness and also that He creates evil, this does not negate the truth that the Lord is never the author of sin; or, to express it positively, it does not teach that God is the author of sin and darkness and evil, and it surely does not negate the truth that the Lord willed sin as committed by man who is a moral-rational, responsible creature. Nevertheless, if God be not the sovereign Creator of evil and darkness, (Isaiah 45:7), then this night of sin and evil must be ascribed to the devil. Then all this night of sin and evil is of that evil one. Can we possibly prefer this? It is either or, God or the devil. Do we prefer to have the devil in charge? Then we lose God. However, to know God as the only true God is eternal life (John 17:3). It must be and surely is the desire and longing of my heart that God remain God. And the Scriptures declare that He alone is God, that there is none beside Him. That He is God, Whom I love, that He works all things, that He holds the reins of all things in His hand, is of supreme importance and comfort to the child and church of God. The church cannot possibly live without this truth. It is the rock of all my salvation and comfort.

And this is not all. God did not simply will sin as such. More can and indeed must be said. God must be God, yes, but He must be God also as the omniscient and holy One. Now we know that the sinner

loves sin, but to the Lord this sin is an abomination. And we do not hesitate to say that we rejoice in the fact, in connection with the presence of evil in the midst of the world, that the good and holy God has willed it. No, we do not rejoice in the fact of sin itself, or in its presence in the world. But we do rejoice in the fact that the good and holy God has willed it. If the devil held the reins of history in his hand I would not have a moment of peace. Imagine, if you please, that he were in control! Or, imagine that an accident took place in Paradise when Adam fell, which would imply that it occurred outside of the Lord's control and jurisdiction. This would imply that all things would be "repair work." Imagine that as far as God is concerned, Adam could have earned or obtained for the whole human race eternal life in the way of obedience. Imagine that we and all men could have attained unto life everlasting! And now Adam sins and the entire human race lies in the midst of sin and death. Now the Lord is attempting to salvage what He can. He is as it were "picking up the pieces." He offers His salvation to all those who hear the gospel. What a shame it is, then, that the church does not reach more men with this general well-meaning offer of the gospel. The Lord, Who would have all men be saved, must now be satisfied with a mere handful. What a pity! Indeed, what a pity in the light of the possibility that the whole human race could have been spared this terrible night of sin and darkness and death!

Shall we endorse this view? God forbid! The Lord is unchangeable sovereign, irresistible and almighty, also as far as sin and all the powers of darkness are concerned. Indeed, no accident occurred. Never does the devil hold the reins of history in his hand. God indeed willed sin. And now all is well. *All* is well. Sin must indeed serve the highest glory of God's everlasting Name. O, the Lord did not will sin for sin's sake. It is not so, as the Arminians would have us believe, that the Lord throws people into hell, casts, as they say, little

babies into endless perdition. The Lord casts sinners into hell, also as far as those little babies who perish are concerned. Indeed, He did not will sin for sin's sake. Sin is an abomination to the Lord. But He willed sin for His own Name's sake; He realizes the glory of His Name in the way of sin and grace. Darkness must serve the light. Even as a diamond shines so much more brilliantly upon the background of a coal pile, even so sin and darkness must serve the power and glory of His grace and the Lord's own adorable sovereignty. All things shall unite in the glory of Jehovah, positively in heaven, but also in hell as the everlasting manifestation of His adorable holiness and righteousness. A remnant is being saved that cannot possibly save itself. The people of God must suffer for Jesus' sake, in His behalf, that the ages to come may declare forever His faithfulness and the power and glory of His grace. Well may we say, how truly we may and do abhor all evil: O, Lord, if this sin, all this darkness must serve the light, what and how great shall the light be, the eternal glory of Thy Name! Indeed, what depths of the wisdom of God! Who, O Lord, hath been Thy counsellor? None, and none could possibly be that counsellor. All things shall glorify His Name. We may, therefore, praise Him, always realizing that our covenant God is realizing His glory sovereignly, and this throughout the ages. What a wonderful truth and confession this is, proclaimed by the church of God throughout the ages. "For who hath know the mind of the Lord? or who hath been His counsellor? Or, who hath first given to Him, and it shall be recompensed unto Him again? For of Him, and through Him, and unto Him are all things: to Whom be glory for ever. Amen." (Rom. 11:34-36). With this majestic, inspired word of the apostle we conclude these articles. Our God reigneth, our almighty and sovereign God reigneth, and He is our God, now and forever. The enemy may fume and rage at this truth, but we will cleave to it, our only comfort in life and death, now and even forevermore.

## Book Reviews

**THE NEW CENTURY BIBLE COMMENTARY, I & II Thessalonians**, by Howard Marshall; Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1983; 340 pp., \$6.95. (Paper) (Reviewed by Prof. H. Hanko)

This new set of commentaries, edited by Ronald E. Clements (Old Testament) and Matthew Black (New Testament) has added this volume to its list. It is, according to the information sheet sent with

the book, "a standard commentary on the Revised Standard Version that is balanced and up-to-date in terms of both its scholarship and its reflection of the contemporary relevance of the biblical text."

Each book contains a rather lengthy introduction which is helpful to one desiring a detailed study of the book, but both the introduction and the commentary itself are written from the viewpoint

of higher criticism. Nor are the volumes meant particularly for laypeople; they are geared more to one familiar with the Greek text and with the intricacies of higher critical thought. While these commentaries are useful to those who are interested in more modern scholarship, they are not of great value to one who desires to have an aid in the understanding of Scripture.

**LEARN TO READ THE GREEK NEW TESTAMENT**, by Ward Powers. Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1982; 336 pp., \$19.95 (Reviewed by Prof. H. Hanko)

This new volume is an interesting book on Greek Grammar, interesting because it follows a new approach in the teaching of Greek. The following information is given with the book: "The Powers method was developed in the classroom and has been proved highly successful. It applies the principles of linguistic science to the analysis of New Testament Greek and to its teaching and learning. The method is based on six principles: framework learning; natural language acquisition; immediate introduction to the target material; low threshold of utility; morphological analysis and pattern recognition (with rote learning of basic paradigms kept to a minimum); and progressive presentation followed

by systematic revision. This volume includes the Beginner's Course, the Intermediate Course, and several appendices, including a student's guide, a teacher's guide, and a Greek vocabulary and index."

The Grammar follows generally what is known as the inductive method. This means that the approach is basically different from historical and traditional ways of learning a language. The traditional way is to learn the grammar first and then read the language; the inductive method is to begin immediately reading the language and learn the grammar as it appears in what is read. This inductive method can be used in the teaching of any language and has been successful in teaching modern languages, especially if the goal is to teach a language to speak it. But the inductive method is not, in this reviewer's opinion, as successful in an ancient language where the goal is not speaking, but reading. Its weakness is its failure to emphasize grammar sufficiently to give a solid foundation for later use.

However, the book is exceptionally well worked out, is, for the most part, lucid in its presentation, and has abundant helps in the appendices for both the student and the teacher.

The author intended that this book could also be used by those who wish to teach themselves Greek so that they have at least a passing acquaintance with the Greek New Testament. It is my judgment that for such purposes the book is ideal. One can profit more from this approach than from the traditional approach if one is not interested in a thorough mastery of the grammar of Greek. But the old saying ought then also to be observed: "A little learning is a dangerous thing. . ."

### WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

On October 8, 1983, the Lord willing, MR. & MRS. PETER KNOTT will celebrate their 35th wedding anniversary. We, their children and grandchildren, are thankful to our Lord and Father for the years we have had them and for all the guidance and help He has provided through them.

"The Lord shall bless thee out of Zion; and thou shalt see the good of Jerusalem all the days of thy life. Yea, thou shalt see thy children's children, and peace upon Israel." (Psalm 128:5, 6)

Andy & Mary Brummel  
Shelley, Kristi, Julie, & Mike  
Don & Jackie Offringa  
Dennis, Melonie, & Wendi  
Bob & Kathy Knott  
Jennifer, Katie, & Aaron

### RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The Martha Ladies' Aid Society of the Protestant Reformed Church of Hull, Iowa, expresses its sincere sympathy to Mrs. Ralph Brummel in the loss of her mother, MRS. PETER HOEKSTRA.

"For we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens." (II Cor. 5:1)

Rev. Cammenga, Pres.  
Mrs. Henry Hoksbergen, Sec'y.

### RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The Martha Ladies' Aid Society of the Hull Protestant Reformed Church takes this opportunity to express sincere sympathy to one of our members, Mrs. John Boer, in the loss of her brother, MR. DAN HOEKSTRA.

"Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of His saints." (Psalm 116:15)

Rev. Cammenga, Pres.  
Mrs. Henry Hoksbergen, Sec'y.

### LEAGUE MEETING NOTICE

The Fall Meeting of the League of Eastern Men's and Ladies' Societies will be held, the Lord willing, on Tuesday, October 11, 1983, at 8:00 P.M., at the Hope Protestant Reformed Church. Members and friends are invited to attend.

Rev. C. Hanko will speak on "The Need for Special Education for the Handicapped."

Gwen Van Kampen (Mrs. Joe)  
Secretary

### CELEBRATING 15 YEARS OF COVENANT EDUCATION

You are invited to help celebrate 15 years of history at Covenant Christian High School on Saturday, October 8, 1983. The activities will begin in the early afternoon with games for the young people and children. A light supper will be served followed by an early evening program. If you are interested in participating in the Alumni Choir and Band numbers, call Mr. Vern Huber, (616) 669-9863 or the school, (616) 453-5048. Those not able to attend may get a copy of a commemorative booklet being prepared, by contacting the school, 1401 Ferndale, S.W., Grand Rapids, MI 49504. A special invitation is extended to all our 580 alumni to use this happy occasion to fellowship together and to renew their friendship. Ours is a "—goodly heritage marked out with a gracious care."

## News From Our Churches

October 1, 1983

First Protestant Reformed Church of Grand Rapids has chosen Rev. R. Miersma to receive the call to be missionary on the island of Jamaica.

Rev. den Hartog travelled to Kuala Trengganu, Malaysia. Part of the June 27, 1983 letter printed in the August issue of *Across the Aisle*, the newsletter of First Protestant Reformed Church, reads, "There are a group of young Christians there who are keen on the Reformed Faith. They are few in number but very zealous and devoted. One young couple Kiah Siang and his wife Suat Tian are very much the leaders in the small Baptist Church there. They are very much desirous of bringing the Reformed faith to this young church.... We do not know if some day the Lord will open the door for us to do some work there. It is however rather doubtful that a Western missionary could stay in Malaysia for any length of time because of the governmental policies.

"We were quite encouraged by the attendance at the Toa Payoh Mission last week. We saw a number of visitors who came because of the tracting done in the area. So we can see that the Lord is blessing the work there. We may be in danger however of losing the use of the premises there because the government has just drastically increased the rents of such places...."

The August 28, 1983 bulletin of First Church read in part, "At the General Consistory meeting held Monday evening, it was decided that henceforth the following designations will be used: 1. the body of Deacons will be called 'The Board of Deacons'; 2. the body of Elders will be called the 'Consistory'; 3. the body of Deacons and Elders sitting together will be called the 'Council.'"

The building committee of First Church "has come to the conclusion that it will be better to wait until Spring to start construction" on the new sanctuary. They also decided to "provide our own coordinator" who would "take bids on all the subcontractors and equipment. This would permit us to use our own people as much as possible." "An organ committee has also been appointed...to investigate both pipe and electronic organs."

The Annual Meeting of the Reformed Free Publishing Association was held September 22, at Southwest Church. Rev. C. Hanko spoke on the subject "Contending for the Faith."

Randolph Protestant Reformed Church had this information in their August 14, 1983 bulletin: "There is a newsletter in the bulletin rack from the Randolph Protestant Reformed Christian School Society. The school board intends to print monthly newsletters in which the need for a Protestant Reformed Christian School is spelled out." I hope someone on the board will also send me a copy of these newsletters.

The Classis East has given permission for the organization of the church in Byron Center. Further information will be provided in the report from Classis East. Classis West met on September 7 in Edgerton, Minnesota.

The Reformed Witness Hour will no longer be heard over WJBL, as of the end of September. In addition, WJBL is no longer a religious broadcasting station. The religious broadcasting of the RWH has been moved to another station, WWJQ, until the end of September. The reasons for this change are dual coverage, lack of response, and the need to cut costs. The RWH can be heard over WFUR-AM at 4 p.m. Sunday.

Last time I reported that Mr. Mahtanis showed slides at Loveland Protestant Reformed Church. In August, Mr. Mahtanis also showed slides for the congregation of Covenant Protestant Reformed Church in Wyckoff, New Jersey. His efforts are greatly appreciated.

I leave you with this quote from "Profitable Diversity," by Rev. Meindert Joostens, "As the carefree days of Summer rapidly draw to a close, we find ourselves caught up in various congregational and school activities...."

"Our spiritual gifts are God-given for the benefit of the whole body of Christ. Each of us has gifts and with them the responsibility to exercise them. Then we shall grow together and increase!"

DH