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"Free Course for the Word"

"Finally, brethren, pray for us, that the word of the Lord may have free course, and be glorified, even as it is with you: and that we may be delivered from unreasonable and wicked men: for all men have not faith. But the Lord is faithful, who shall stablish you and keep you from evil."

II Thessalonians 3:1-3

By the word "finally" here, Paul indicates that he is drawing his letter to a close. He has finished his chief purpose for writing. There are still a few weighty matters that he wants to say. He has comforted them because of the persecution they were enduring. And he encouraged them because there was confusion about when and how the Lord Christ was to return.

Now Paul diverts their attention from their problems and difficulties to something else. He asks that they pray for the gospel's furtherance.

The Idea of Praying For One Another

Paul has told the Thessalonians that he prays for them. Three times he said this (1:3,11; 2:16). Now he asks them to pray for him. Not that he thought they were not already praying for him. He asks them to keep praying for him.

Praying for one another was obviously important to the apostle. In every one of his epistles he lets the saints know that he is praying for them. And almost as frequently he asks the churches to pray for him. He asked the saints at Rome (15:30-32), at Corinth (II Cor. 1:11), at Philippi (1:19), at Ephesus (6:19), and at Colosse (4:2). And he had already asked the Thessalonians in his first letter to them (5:25).

Although God gave Paul powerful support, and though Paul himself prayed, he still wanted the prayers of others. Prayer is one of the means God is pleased to use to bless His people. What a powerful example to us. We too should use this means, praying specifically for one another and urging our fellow-saints to pray for us in specific times of need.

Often Paul's request for prayer was not for himself. When he tells

the saints in the various churches that he prays for them, the apostle speaks of the specific needs of the saints which he brought before the Lord in prayer. But the apostle, when asking for the prayers of the saints, often did not ask for their prayers for himself and his personal needs. Usually the apostle's concern was for the furtherance of the gospel. God had chosen him to be one of the messengers of the good news of salvation. Paul accepted this responsibility, but he felt its weight. He knew that even the calling to communicate the message of the gospel was beyond human capability. He was very, very conscious of his need for God's blessing, that God had to enable, that God had to be pleased to use him.

The Petition Requested

Paul's requests for the prayers of the Thessalonian believers is specific. He asks that they pray that "the word of the Lord may have free course, and be glorified." He wants them to pray for "the word of the Lord." This is the word which proceeds from the Lord Jesus Christ. Christ is the one who speaks it. And it is the word which is about the Lord Jesus Christ. The

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content of the word preached is Jesus, His life, death, and resurrection, and what He accomplished. The "word" is that which proceeds from the Lord and which is about Him.

When the inspired apostle speaks of the "word," the idea is a speech. It is a speech spoken by the King and then communicated through the heralds of the King. The Lord King sends out a speech (the preaching), which speech is about the Lord King.

The Thessalonians are asked to pray that this Word of the Lord may have "free course." This means that the preaching of the gospel may be unhindered as it is delivered by the apostles as they travel from town to town. Many times the apostles experienced opposition from various groups. The devil is always attempting to thwart the spread of the truth. He used and continues to use various means to have the presentation of the gospel of Jesus Christ disparaged, criticized, or denied. Among the believers at Thessalonica the word about the Lord's return had been misunderstood, so they were shaken in mind (2:2) by false teachings. Sometimes the preaching of the gospel is accompanied by persecution and other forms of interference.

Positively, the Word of the Lord has free course when permission is given for the preaching to take place and when the truth is spread from house to house and then from town to town.

Such a free course by the Word of the Lord results in the Word being glorified. When the Word is accepted by faith and begins to adorn the lives of those who believe, then the Word is glorified. When it is seen what the Word is able to accomplish unto faith, then it will be glorified. On Paul's first missionary journey the Word of the Lord was glorified by the Gentile believers, because they realized that the Word of the Lord Jesus was for them as well as for the Jews (cf. Acts 13:48). Also the Word of

the Lord is glorified when it effects a change in the lives of believers. Holiness in the lives of Christians is the glory of the gospel; the godly life of obedience adorns the gospel (Titus 2:5). And conversely, when those who profess the gospel with their mouths lead a wicked life, they bring the gospel into disrepute and occasion the blaspheming of that Word and of the Lord (Titus 2:10).

When Paul asks the Thessalonian believers to pray for the free course of the Word of the Lord, then he reminds them that such had been the case for themselves. Paul declares that, though his first stay in Thessalonica was brief, nonetheless God's Word, preached by the apostle and his companions, received positive success. The Word was preached to them, not in word only, but in power and in the Holy Spirit, and in much assurance. They became followers of the Lord, having received the Word with joy of the Spirit, even though it meant some persecution. In fact, the positive reception of the Word in Thessalonica was an example to many (I Thess. 1:5-8). As the Word of the Lord received positive success among them, so they may ask that it be blessed in other places. And as they suffered for believing the gospel preaching (II Thess. 1:4), so they knew what free course was by contrast.

Pray. Pray that the Word about the Lord and sent by the Lord through His preachers will run without hindrance and will result in many receiving it as the Word of God and not the word of men.

The Reason for This Petition

The Word of the Lord will have free course when those used by God to bring the Word are "delivered from unreasonable and evil men." Paul has in mind a definite group (in the Greek he speaks of "the" unreasonable and evil men). In light of what the apostle wrote in his first epistle, it is likely that those he had in mind were Jews,

both physically and religiously. Everywhere, but especially in Thessalonica and Corinth, Paul's preaching was opposed by the Jews. They gave him the most trouble.

The Jewish opposition to the idea of a fulfilled Messiah was unreasonable and evil. They not only acted very improperly, but they also were actively evil, so Paul describes them as morally evil men.

From these men Paul wants to "be delivered." The implication is that these Jewish detractors of the gospel of the fulfilled Messiah not only cast disparagements against the Word of the Lord Christ, but also specifically opposed the ambassadors bringing this gospel. Paul speaks of needing to be rescued. He saw the peril he was in to be very great. Paul knew bonds and afflictions (cf. Acts 20:23), but he asks that at this time the Thessalonian Christians pray that he be given the grace to emerge victorious. It could be that the apostle meant that he emerge victorious by dying, but it is more likely (because he wants the Word of the Lord to continue to have free course) that he would be delivered alive from these evil men.

Almost as an after-thought, he adds, "for all men have not faith." An explanation for why there are evil men who oppose the propagation of the gospel is that not everyone is given the ability to believe it. Some are not given faith. You see, faith is a gift from God. And God is pleased (for the wisest of reasons) not to give every human being this wonderful gift. By the way, that means that if we have received the gift of faith, we have reason to be eternally thankful.

Note well that those to whom the gift of faith is not given are not neutral. They do not take a "what-ever" perspective. Those who do not believe are opposed to the truth. It is the lack of faith which explains their hostile attitude to Christ, His gospel, and His ambassadors.

So Paul asks that the Thessalonians pray. Pray that the Word of the Lord Christ will have free course. Pray that the ambassadors of the gospel will be delivered from those who oppose the truth. Pray that those who oppose the truth will be converted, thus ending their opposition and thus delivering the ambassadors of the gospel.

The Great Assurance

There are those who do not have faith. And then there is the faithful God. "But the Lord is faithful."


The young, struggling Christian church in Thessalonica was in need of establishing and of keeping. Paul had found them shaken in mind and troubled about the return of the Lord Jesus Christ. They need to be established in mind, not shaken. Their need to be established arose from the fact that they were up against "evil." The "evil" can refer to evil in general or to the personal evil one, namely, the

devil. In both his first epistle and this one, the apostle seemed to be conscious of the attacks of the devil himself (cf. 2:9 and I Thess. 2:18; 3:5). He had warned the church at Ephesus that believers battle "not against flesh and blood, but against principalities and powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places" (6:12).

The Thessalonians and we need some assurance that what is prayed for us will come to pass. You see, while in the previous verses (2:16, 17) Paul said that he prayed God to establish them in every good word and work, now he assures them that it will happen. They will be both strengthened and guarded. When God establishes us, then He is strengthening us, enabling us to go on, to proceed. And when He keeps us, then He guards us. God will not establish His people and then leave them. He will guard them continually. He will prevent them from falling into the traps of

the evil one. By positively strengthening them in their faith, love, and every good word and work, God is guarding believers from the sin of giving themselves over to the evil one.

This is the way God manifests His faithfulness. The original text emphasizes faithful by putting it first. We must see God's attitude and ability to keep us, especially over against those fighting against us.

That God is faithful means that His promise never fails. He always completes that which He begins (Phil. 1:6). In men there is never sufficient support. But in God there is a support of sufficient strength to keep us from falling. God is able! He is able to do "exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think" (Eph. 3:20). He is consistent to the very end in safeguarding His children. He always gives us help at the proper time. He never forsakes us in time of danger. 

Editorial

A Publishing Breakthrough: Abraham Kuyper's Particular Grace

With the publication in English translation of Abraham Kuyper's *Dat de Genade Particulier* is, the Reformed Free Publishing Association (RFPA) has accomplished a breakthrough. For the first time, with the possible exception of Kuyper's work on the Holy Spirit, the Kuyper of sound Reformed doctrine and church reformation is presented to the English reading public. Up to now, virtually the only works by Kuyper to be translated into English have been his book on common grace, some of his devotional books, and certain of his

writings on the Christian life.

The Reformed community has especially made much of Kuyper's little book on common grace and the influencing of society, *Lectures on Calvinism*. Embrace of common grace as set forth in this book has been equated with being "Kuyperian" and even Reformed. Those who reject the philosophy of the *Lectures on Calvinism* (there is no explanation of Scripture in the book whatever, and hardly a biblical reference) are banished from the precincts of "Kuyperian" and Reformed. They are outside the camp.

The RFPA's publication of Kuyper's *Dat de Genade Particulier* is, in English translation for the first time, sets the record straight.

A Biblical Defense of Particular Grace

The well-chosen English title is *Particular Grace: A Defense of God's Sovereignty in Salvation*. The book is Abraham Kuyper's defense of the particular grace of God in the salvation of sinners. Although the defense centers on the truth that Christ died for the elect alone, it extends to every aspect of the grace of God: the will of God, which is

the eternal source of salvation; regeneration; and the preaching of the gospel. In every respect, from beginning to end, God's grace is particular. The title of the book does not have to do with particular *redemption* but with particular *grace*.

The book is biblical, deliberately and pervasively so. Kuyper recognized that human nature, including his own, abhors the sovereign particularity of God's grace in the salvation of sinners. Therefore, he determined to form his thinking on the subject from Scripture alone. He called his readers likewise to submit to the testimony of Scripture. Much of the book is explanation of passages of Scripture that teach that God's grace is particular. There are also many references to other passages that teach this truth. A large section of the book is Kuyper's systematic survey of the entire Bible, from Adam in the Old Testament to the witness of the Son of Man Himself in the New Testament, demonstrating that the one message of the entire Scripture is the particularity of grace.

Controversy over General Grace in Kuyper's Day

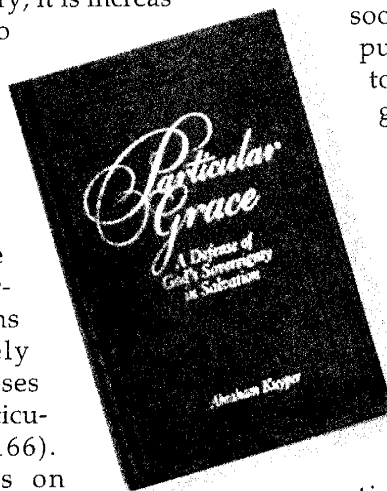
The book is controversial. It was controversial when it was written. It is still controversial. It was, and still is, controversial in *Reformed churches*. Kuyper wrote the book to oppose the widespread belief and confession of general grace in the Reformed Church in the Netherlands. The popular doctrine was that God's grace in Christ is for all humans without exception. According to the prevailing doctrine in the Reformed Church in Kuyper's day, God's grace was general in the death of Christ: Christ died for all men. The Church taught that God's grace is also general in the will of God: God desires the salvation of all men. Likewise, God's grace is general in the preaching of the gospel: the preaching of the gospel is a gra-

cious offer to all who hear inasmuch as God wishes to save all.

Kuyper tells us how widely and vehemently the false doctrine of general grace was held in the Reformed Church in the Netherlands, as well as in evangelical churches throughout Europe, at the time that he wrote *Particular Grace*. Kuyper's opening sentence is: "In some of the so-called 'orthodox' circles of our country, it is increasingly the custom to present the expression 'Christ for all' ... as a criterion of evangelical truth." Later, he remarks that "almost the entire corps of orthodox theologians today deliberately and fiercely opposes the doctrine of particular grace" (p. 166). Kuyper's articles on particular grace (for he published the book first in the form of articles in the religious periodical, *De Heraut*) shocked the church.

After all the influential and learned theologians in Germany, as well as here in our own country, had exhausted their energies for at least 140 years in the contradiction, rejection, and obscuring of particular grace; after a public opinion had developed, even among us in the realm of religion, that it was foolishness still to believe in "particular atonement"; after almost all of our preachers had forgotten that the Reformed church had continually thought exactly the opposite in its most glorious age; and after the individual and the congregation, not out of an evil purpose but simply from a lack of better knowledge, had been made accustomed to an interpretation of Scripture that cut off every possibility of believing in particular grace—it could not really surprise us that readers were somewhat shocked when suddenly and boldly, in one

of the most widely read church periodicals, there was notification again of a plea for particular grace (pp. 345, 346).



There was strong opposition to Kuyper's defense of particular grace in the Reformed Church of which he was member. When Kuyper preached a sermon on the "comfort of eternal election," one of his minister colleagues soon followed him to the pulpit of the congregation to proclaim to the congregation that "whoever preaches another gospel than that Christ has died for all men, let him be accursed" (p. 346). Such was the zeal for general grace, and the antipathy toward particular grace, that those who

confessed particular grace were no longer "taken seriously" by the leaders in the Reformed church. Not only were those who defended particular grace accused of heresy and perversion of truth, but they were also "cut ... off from fellowship and dismiss[ed] as naïve." Within Reformed circles, they were "pariahs" (pp. 3, 4).

Controversy over General Grace in Our Day

This is the condition of the churches today. Evangelical churches are committed to general grace. The large, mainline Reformed and Presbyterian churches have long ago renounced sovereign, particular grace. By this time they have embraced sheer universalism. But also most of the supposedly conservative Reformed and Presbyterian churches are ardent advocates of general grace. They teach a grace of God for all in the preaching of the gospel, which grace has its source in a will of God to save all. This is the doctrine of the "well-meant offer of the

First Voucher Case

The U.S. Supreme Court agreed last month to consider for the first time the constitutionality of a state tuition voucher scheme designed to provide tuition assistance to low-income parents of children in a failing public school system. In recent years the Court has declined to hear appeals of similar voucher cases, including the highly publicized cases from Milwaukee and Arizona, where the programs were upheld by state supreme courts. Some constitutional scholars are suggesting that the Court's decision in this pending Cleveland case, expected in June of next year, may be the most important church/state case in 50 years.

At issue is last year's ruling (quoted above) by a three-judge panel of the U.S. Court of Appeals in Cincinnati, which, by a 2-1 decision, struck down the controversial Ohio voucher program as violative of the First Amendment prohibiting the "establishment of religion." The Bush administration had filed a brief with the Cincinnati appellate court, arguing that the impact of the Ohio voucher scheme was "neutral," aiding students without regard to religion and allowing private schools to participate, notwithstanding their sectarian orientation. But a majority of the federal Court of Appeals disagreed, holding that, because the Ohio voucher scheme had no restrictions on the religious schools as to their use of the tuition funds, there was no effective means of guaranteeing that the state aid would be used "exclusively for secular, neutral, and non-ideological purposes."

The Ohio Pilot Scholarship Program

The voucher program at issue was adopted in 1995 by the Ohio state legislature in response to a federal court order that placed the Cleveland School District under direct state management and supervision due to mismanagement by

the local school board. At the time, the Cleveland schools had failed all of the state's 18 standards to evaluate minimum performance. A 1996 survey disclosed that only 9 percent of Cleveland's high school students passed Ohio's 9th grade proficiency test.

The remedial voucher program provides \$2,500 scholarships to children residing in the applicable district, with "preference to students from low-income families." Approximately 60 percent of the children receiving scholarships in the program were from families below the established poverty line.

Although the scholarship vouchers could be used at any school (including surrounding public schools), an estimated 95 percent of the scholarship recipients voluntarily enrolled at private religious schools within the Cleveland school district operated by Catholics, Lutherans, and non-denominational evangelical Christians. The participating private schools are required to register for the program and are prohibited from discriminating on the basis of race, religion, or ethnic background; advocate or foster unlawful behavior; or teach hatred of any person or group on the basis of race, ethnicity, national origin, or religion. The program requires participating private schools to cap tuition at \$2,500 per student. The scholarship checks are mailed to the school selected by the parents, where the parents are required to endorse the checks over to the school to pay tuition. During the 1999-2000 school year, fifty-six schools registered to participate in the programs; 82 percent were church-affiliated.

Federal Appeals Court Strikes Down Cleveland Voucher Program

The three-judge panel of the 6th Circuit Court of Appeals ruled last year that the Ohio Pilot Scholarship Program violated the Constitution's Establishment Clause, which

provides that states "shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion...." The court began its constitutional analysis by referring to the Supreme Court's landmark decision in the 1971 case of *Lemon v. Kurtzman*, wherein the Court established the historic three-pronged test to determine whether a state aid statute passes constitutional muster under the Establishment Clause: 1) the statute must have a secular legislative purpose; 2) the primary effect of the statute must be one that neither advances nor inhibits religion; and 3) the statute must not foster excessive entanglement with religion.

The U.S. Supreme Court has applied the *Lemon* test to numerous church/state cases in the last three decades, but the appellate court majority found the 1973 *Nyquist* case "the most persuasive." In *Nyquist*, a New York state statute established a tuition grant program which provided for 50% tuition reimbursement to low-income parents whose children attended private and elementary or secondary schools, 85% of which were sectarian.

The U.S. Supreme Court in *Nyquist* struck down the New York tuition reimbursement scheme, and the Cincinnati appellate court held that *Nyquist* was applicable to the Ohio program:

We find that *Nyquist* governs our result. In both *Nyquist* and this case, there are no restrictions on the religious schools as to their use of the tuition funds — the funds may be used for religious instruction and materials as easily as for erasers and playground equipment.

The court also opined that Ohio's \$2,500 tuition cap effectively discouraged participation in the program by "schools not funded by religious institutions." Accordingly, the tuition cap was a "financial disincentive" for public schools outside the district to take on students via the voucher program.

The court held that although the Ohio program permitted participation by public schools, since no public schools actually registered in the program, this alternative was illusory:

The Ohio scholarship program is designed in a manner calculated to attract religious institutions and chooses the beneficiaries of aid by non-neutral criteria. There is no neutral aid when that aid principally flows to religious institutions; nor is there truly "private choice" when the available choices resulting from the program design are predominantly religious.

The Dissent

Justice Ryan filed a vigorous and sarcastic dissent, arguing that it is "impossible to take seriously" the majority's claim that the 1973 *Nyquist* case governs the court's result:

The majority's refusal to conduct any meaningful analysis of the Supreme Court's several Establishment Clause decisions handed down in the 27 years since *Nyquist* was decided, and the factually unsupported anti-religious schools arguments strongly suggest that the majority has simply signed onto the familiar anti-voucher mantra that voucher programs are no more than a scheme to funnel public funds into religious schools.

The dissenting judge argued that the New York tuition reimbursement program struck down in *Nyquist* 30 years ago is clearly distinguishable from the Ohio voucher program at issue for three reasons. First, the New York statute was designed to provide financial assistance to financially troubled *private schools*; the Ohio scheme was designed to help *public schools* in Cleveland. Secondly, the New York program involved *direct* grants to private schools, whereas the funds under the Ohio statute are given to the parents and reach

the private religious school only after parents have considered a variety of options. Thirdly, the New York program permitted participant schools to impose religious restrictions on admission; the Ohio program forbids participating schools from discriminating against prospective students on the basis of religion.

The dissent also argued that *Nyquist* is no longer good law because the *Lemon* test utilized by *Nyquist* in 1973 has been "modified" by subsequent Supreme Court decisions. The new test, argued Justice Ryan, is to determine whether the "impermissible effect" of Ohio's voucher program is to advance religion, either because (1) the aid it provides results in governmental indoctrination, or (2) the program defines its recipients by reference to religion.

Addressing the first prong of the modified test, the dissent argued that no *governmental* indoctrination occurs in the Ohio program because the voucher recipients make a "genuinely independent and private choice" to "spend" the funds in a religious school, rather than various other options (including attending Cleveland public schools or non-religious private schools). Regarding the second prong, the dissent insisted that the Ohio scheme is "neutral," "expressing no preference, explicitly or implicitly, either as to the religion of the voucher recipient ... or whether the voucher is applied to a religious or non-religious school."

Comment

The Supreme Court's anticipated ruling on Ohio Pilot Scholarship Program, expected next spring, will be its first ruling on the issue of tuition vouchers. In recent years the court declined to rule on the controversial voucher programs in Milwaukee and Arizona which had been approved by lower courts. The Supreme Court's acceptance of the Ohio case for con-

sideration has led constitutional scholars to surmise that the Court is now poised to alter its previous rulings barring most state tuition aid to private religious schools. Although some church/state experts are predicting a comprehensive landmark decision on vouchers, there are reasons to believe that the Court's ruling will be limited in scope. The Court's approval of the Ohio Pilot Scholarship will hardly be *carte blanche* for a national tuition voucher scheme proposed by school choice advocates.

First, the Ohio program at issue is primarily directed at low-income families from failing public school districts. The dissent made much of the fact that the purpose of the Ohio statute was to "provide financial help to poverty level students attending *public schools* in Cleveland....," in contrast to the New York statute in *Nyquist* which was aimed at benefiting financially pressed *private* schools.

Secondly, the Ohio Pilot Scholarship Program contained an alarming provision explicitly forbidding participating schools from discriminating against prospective enrollees on the basis of religious belief. Since most Christian private schools insist that parents subscribe to an evangelical or Reformed/Presbyterian statement of faith, if the Supreme Court indeed finds the religious nondiscrimination requirement significant, it is difficult to imagine how the Court's approval of such a fundamentally restrictive voucher program would be beneficial for evangelical Christian schools. In fact, such an anticipated ruling by the Supreme Court — prohibiting discriminatory religious admission requirements — would again be a serious challenge to the independence and autonomy of parental Christian schools which understandably loathe governmental intrusion in admission standards, teacher certification, and curriculum content.



that carried Bible verses condemning homosexuality. It featured an icon of two stick figures holding hands with a circle and slash through it.


As a result, the Saskatchewan Human Rights Commission ordered that he and the paper pay \$1,500 each to three homosexuals who complained about the ad, according to *The Ottawa Citizen*. The ruling complained that the biblical references, such as the one from Leviticus, "suggested more dire consequences and there can be no question that the advertise-

ment can objectively be seen as exposing homosexuals to hatred or ridicule."

StarPhoenix editor told the paper the ad was a freedom-of-speech issue, but he doesn't plan to appeal: "I wouldn't do it again, that's for sure."

University of Western Ontario law professor Ian Hunter complained to the *Calgary Herald* of the severity of censoring Mr. Owen's ad. "If Mr. Owen cannot express his opinions through a paid ad in the *StarPhoenix*, can he express them from a street corner soap-

box?" he wondered. "From the pulpit of a church? Should he get himself elected in the House of Commons? Do we have the right to express anti-consensus views anywhere in Canada?"

The 'thought police' slowly close the circle. Freedom of speech belongs to those who say things offensive to and about God, not to those who may say things that offend the feelings of poor sinful man. One wonders, indeed, how long the pulpit will be free. 

When Thou Sittest in Thine House

Rev. Wilbur Bruinsma

The Glory of a Covenant Home

"Children's children are the crown of old men; and the glory of children are their fathers."

Proverbs 17:6

The warning signs are all around us. "The New Single Mom: Why the Traditional Family is Fading Fast" (*Newsweek* headline, May 28, 2001). "Married With Children Now in the Minority in Michigan" (Headlines of *Kalamazoo Gazette*, May 23, 2001). The cry is heard everywhere that the traditional definition of the family must needs be changed. The family of modern society no longer fits into the old-fashioned view of what the family is. And since society sets the standard for all things, our definition of the family must change with the changing times!

Unbelief again, as is always the case, puts pressure on the church

to change what God Himself clearly teaches us in Scripture about the family unit. And much of the church world is caving in under that pressure! This is true because unbelief itself has made deep, deep inroads into the sphere of the church institute of today. The infallible standard of God's Word is now ignored, and it is replaced by the humanism of our day. What is good for society is good for the church too, so it is reasoned. This is why much of the fornication that characterizes our licentious society can be found within the sphere of the church today. This is why there is a murmur heard within the church too for acceptance of the changing standard of what constitutes a proper and godly family unit.

As God's people who are called to make a stand in this world against the evil influence of our degenerating society, we may not become confused, or worse, calloused by unbelief's evil masquerade of a proper family. We must refuse to let sinful man define for us what constitutes a family. On the con-

trary, we must look into God's Word for the correct view of the family. Then we must establish and maintain such biblical families. God establishes His covenant in the line of our generations in the way of proper, godly family units.

That unit of the family is described for us in Proverbs 17:6: "Children's children are the crown of old men, and the glory of children are their fathers." In this verse we read of old men and their children's children, that is, their grandchildren. We also read of the fathers of these children. The Hebrew states all of this using the male gender: "Sons of sons are the crown of old men (grandfathers), and the glory of sons are their fathers." This does not mean that women are not included in the picture presented by this verse. The mention of the male gender in many passages of the Scriptures often is meant to include the female gender also. (It is rather refreshing, though, to see the family here described in terms of men. The modern idea of the family centers in women almost to the exclusion

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of men altogether!) The beautiful picture that is presented us by Solomon here is this: grandfathers and grandmothers sharing their lives together with their sons and daughters as well as with the grandchildren those children are bringing forth.

What a foreign thought this passage presents to our present society! Today there is an abnormal mixing of the generations going on. And it is not pretty, though the world of unbelief pretends that it is! The world of wickedness and sin has created it and attempts now to excuse it as "normal" when, in fact, it is far, far from normal! It is a twisted and perverted concept of the family! Even within the church there is so much unlawful divorce and sinful remarriage going on that it is difficult to distinguish fathers and mothers from stepmothers and stepfathers. And since this has been going on for some time already in society, one loses track of one's true grandfathers and grandmothers or grandchildren!

It is becoming difficult to identify everyone at family gatherings and to know whom to invite to weddings. Here is a possible scenario. When I invite my brother he may take along with him his second or third wife whom I hardly know. That wife may take along with her the children of a previous marriage. Or maybe my brother will take along with him the children of his second marriage whom his third wife hardly knows, but which he has to take care of because his second wife is gone on a trip with her boyfriend. And where are his children with his first wife? Well, they are not there to see grandpa and grandma because his first wife decided to take them along with her! In their place are all these "foreign" children who are not even the flesh and blood of father and mother. All this compounds itself the more when this happens with more than one of the family members. Soon there are children running around that be-

long to this niece or nephew that are either born out of wedlock or are from a previous marriage. The old man and woman (can they truly be called Grandma and Grandpa anymore?) sit there entirely bewildered! This is their family? Who are all these strangers that somehow are supposed to fit in with their own flesh and blood?

This is not an exaggeration of what is going on in today's society — including within those families who yet insist that they are "Christian." Family lines have blurred! It is like mixing together several beautiful colors of paint and coming up with black! The clear and beautiful picture that Scripture draws for us in this proverb of Solomon is lost today! Very few families are left unscathed by the corruption of the family that is taking place.

It is clear from Scripture what God's ordinance for the family is. God has ordained from the beginning that a man leave father and mother and cleave to his wife that they might be one flesh in the unbreakable bond of marriage. The two, the man and his wife, are called by God, if God so wills, to bring forth together children out of their union with each other. And if that union is unbreakable, then the children they bear are certainly going to be raised by them alone. These children then grow up and also enter into the bond of marriage. In their marriages too they bring forth children who live within the confines and security of a home established by father and mother. These children have their two sets of grandparents whom they learn to love and respect as much as they do father and mother. And so the generations continue one after another. That is the ordinance of God as far as the family unit is concerned.

Of course, there are always exceptions to the standard. There can be the death of a spouse, and remarriage is then allowed by God. There are, also, husbands and wives to whom God does not in His providence give children. There are even cases where a spouse is deserted by another or has obtained a lawful divorce because of the unfaithfulness of the other. These must then raise their children as a single parent. But these exceptions are far from the norm. These occurrences within the church are few and far from creating discord and disharmony in the family unit. God's ordinance for the family is set. We ought not to allow unbelief, that ignores the dictates of God in every area of life, to determine for you and me what constitutes a proper family. To follow the direction of society today is to end up in the ultimate ruination of the family. We are already finding in some states in the United States the marriage of homosexuals and lesbians, *and* their adopting or using artificial means to have children in these adulterous relationships!

What a heartwarming and proper picture of the family Solomon gives to us in Proverbs: children's children are the crown of old men! There is no greater blessing that God can give to a man and his wife than children. Children are a heritage of the Lord. We rejoice when we are able to see in the church young men and women bringing forth children. We sorrow with those who are unable to do so.

The wicked may boast of their love for children. But children are, in fact, a burden to them! Avoid them until late in life. Avoid them or even abort them because they might get in the way of one's fun and career. Wait until one is financially set before having them.

In contrast to this, the Bible


To follow the direction of society today is to end up in the ultimate ruination of the family.

speaks of no greater earthly gift than the joy and satisfaction children can bring. Although to a man and his wife who are not able to have children God also gives contentment and joy in life found in the sufficiency of Jesus Christ, these can have their struggles. Why? Because children give great satisfaction to a godly man and his wife. And if that is true of our children, then even more is it true when our children bring forth grandchildren. Children's children — grandchildren — are the crown of old men! They bring the blessing of children to the highest possible glory. The word for "crown" used here by Solomon is that of a diadem, the crown of a king, a royal crown. The crown of a king was usually made of gold and decked with all kinds of precious

jewels. It was a piece of beauty and dignity that signified the royalty of that king.

What a fitting picture: an elderly man sitting in his house sharing in blessed fellowship with his children while around his feet play his grandchildren. That man may be a "nothing" in this world, but in his home he is a king! And his wife is his queen! Look at all those precious jewels in his crown! He sits back — and grandfathers do that, you know — he sits back as proud as a peacock of the riches God has given him in his family. God has beautified his home with children and children's children. That is a family! That is what God wants us to see and appreciate in order that such a family not be lost in the church. It is too late for the society in which we live. They

have long perverted the family unit by their sin and unbelief. No wonder we see the increase of domestic violence in society. The wicked world follows after its idols in Hollywood who make no qualms about perverting the family unit. Certainly, all of this gives rise to the perilous times in which we live (II Tim. 3:1-5), and to the lawless society of our world (Matt. 24:12). But the church must remain faithful in these times. We must, at all costs, preserve the sanctity of the family.

This is only half the picture that this passage in Proverbs 17:6 draws for us. There is also the last half of the verse: "the glory of children are their fathers." That too says much concerning the covenant family. This we will pursue in the next article. 

That They May Teach Them to Their Children

Miss Agatha Lubbers

Establishing Schools to Provide Reformed Covenant Education (8)

More than seventy years have passed since two of the early leaders in the Protestant Reformed Churches, Herman Hoeksema and George M. Ophoff, wrote articles concerning the nature and essence of specifically Reformed Christian education. The articles were critiques of the Specific Principles that were adopted in 1925 by the National Union of Christian Schools (today called Christian Schools International). The articles that were written by Hoeksema and Ophoff not

only were critiques, but they also included ideas and concepts based on Scripture and the Reformed confessions.

The previous articles have affirmed that the writings of George M. Ophoff and Herman Hoeksema had a pronounced influence on the development of the Protestant Reformed Christian Schools. The ideas and the concepts developed in the early articles are employed in the constitutions of the schools. In addition, the ideas expressed in the articles are reflected in the basic principles that regulate the instruction in the schools that have been established by Protestant Reformed parents.

The current articles that survey

the contents of the articles of Hoeksema and Ophoff may seem unnecessary and out-of-date, but a review of the history contributes to our understanding of the Protestant Reformed Christian Schools. The reviews of the articles of Hoeksema and Ophoff attempt to demonstrate how these men have contributed to the understanding and development of the correct goal and objective for Reformed Christian education.

An Examination and Review of the Critique and Restatement of the Specific Principles of the National Union of Christian Schools

We begin by quoting in its en-

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tirety the fifth Specific Principle that was adopted by the NUCS in 1925.

The all-embracing objective of the school is to promote the glory of our covenant God: (a) by seeking in humble dependence upon God to equip the pupil for his supreme task, namely, to realize himself as God's image-bearer (2 Timothy 3:17); and (b) by seeking in that same dependence upon God to re-constitute the sin-perverted world by realizing God's Kingdom in all spheres and phases of life (Matthew 6:33). This is possible at least in principle through Christ, who is not only the Creator (as the Logos) but also the re-creator (John 1).

In two articles, one appearing in the May 15, 1932 issue of the *Standard Bearer* and the other published in the July 15, 1932 issue, Herman Hoeksema provides his critique and criticism of the fifth specific principle of the NUCS.

Hoeksema describes the terminology of Specific Principle 5 as high sounding, and he also indicates that he is certain that the authors of Principle 5 could not tell how a school could attain to the ideal proposed. He asks, how can the school: "enable the pupil to realize himself as God's image-bearer? Reconstitute a sin-perverted world? Realize the Kingdom of God in all spheres and phases of life?"

He cannot see how the Christian school as it existed in the days that he was writing his critique of the principles could approximate the objective stated in the principles, nor does he believe the Christian school should attempt to work for this objective.

Hoeksema continues by calling attention to the expressions that are used in the fifth Specific Principle. He begins by analyzing the phrase "the all-embracing objective of the school is to promote the glory of our Covenant God," and he declares that this expression has become hackneyed (commonplace).

Particularly in Calvinistic circles the phrase has been used so often that it seems trite. Although Hoeksema states that the phrase may be commonplace, he asserts that it cannot be gainsaid that the purpose of all things, and therefore of the Christian school, is the glory of God. He notes that what follows in the Specific Principle indicates the specific way the authors of the principle say the school may promote the glory of God.

Hoeksema considers next the phrase that the school must equip the student for his supreme task, i.e., "to realize himself as the image-bearer of God." In this part of his critique, Hoeksema expresses his fear concerning the exact meaning of the authors. He writes as follows:

Do the authors here refer to the regenerated covenant child, in whom the image of God has been restored by grace? Or do they have in mind any pupil natural or spiritual, and must the schools make of all the children men and women that realize themselves as image-bearers of God?

Hoeksema states that the expression must be considered in the light of its context. Although he hardly dares to believe this, he argues that the context leaves him no other conclusion than that the authors of the statement are teaching that the school must make all children realize themselves as image-bearers of God.

Since Hoeksema believes this is the meaning of the authors, he proceeds to cite three reasons why this is impossible. He writes

I maintain (1) That the task is an impossible one, for the natural man has not the image of God. (2) This whole conception is contrary both to Scripture and to our Reformed Confessions. (3) That the reference to II Timothy 3:17 certainly is a mistake, for it speaks of the man of God and not of any man.

Hoeksema says that he is willing to grant for the sake of the argument the possibility that the authors did not intend to convey the idea that natural man is an image-bearer of God. In his response he shows that in a previous principle (i.e., the third Specific Principle) the natural man is referred to as a bearer of the image of God. Hoeksema contends that the statement in the third Principle is rooted in the belief that natural man is able, because of common grace, to do civic righteousness. He maintains that the authors proceed from the following presuppositions: "(1) The natural man is still an image-bearer of God. (2) As such, man is able to do civic good. (3) This doing of civic good is the self-realization of the natural man as an image bearer of God."

Hoeksema declares that if the authors did not mean natural man in this fifth declaration they ought to admit and realize that the language of the article is to be blamed for this lack of specificity.

Hoeksema continues his critique by stating that the first part of the fifth Specific Principle is bad enough, but the statement that "the school must seek to equip the pupil for this supreme task to realize himself as the image-bearer of God" is equally bad. In addition, the proof-text that is cited, "That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works" (II Tim. 3:17), does not prove what it is purported to prove.

Hoeksema correctly states that this text does not teach that every man is an image bearer of God. The text does not speak of every man, but it speaks of the man of God, the regenerated and sanctified child of God. The text does not say that the task of the man of God is to be busy "realizing himself as God's image-bearer." Man cannot do this because all men have lost the image of God in the fall. Instead II Timothy 3:17 teaches that the man of God, as a

bearer of the image of God, has been created anew in Christ Jesus. As an image-bearer he can and must live to the glory of God.

Although Hoeksema gives no proof-text for his assertion concerning what kind of man is a bearer of the image of God, the Scriptures are replete with this truth. Romans 8:29 speaks of those who are predestinated and who are "to be conformed to the image of his Son." Ephesians 4:24 speaks very plainly concerning the image of God. "That ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness." II Peter 1:4 speaks of the sons of God being made "partakers of the divine nature."

Hoeksema writes that a correct understanding of the text is that it holds before the man of God

the purpose whereunto God has called him, that he must be perfect in the midst of the world, without blame and rebuke in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation. And for this end the man of God must have Scripture, the inspired Word of God, as a constant guide and light in the darkness, for it is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness.

Hoeksema continues his critique by referring to the second part of the fifth Specific Principle. His evaluation is that the statement "by seeking in that same dependence upon God to reconstitute the sin-perverted world by realizing God's Kingdom in all spheres of life" is equally bad.

Concerning this, Hoeksema states that there is a possibility that the language does not mean that it is the objective of the school to realize God's kingdom in all spheres of life. But he does not give much probability to this as a possible objection and states that he believes the authors *did* intend to declare that the school must seek to equip the pupil for the task of reconsti-

tuting a sin-perverted world by realizing God's kingdom in all spheres of life.

Hoeksema maintains that this is flighty language. He refers to it as "shooting at the moon." He states that the phrase "in humble dependence upon God" does nothing more than cover up a Pelagian idea, but it does not eradicate the error of the statement concerning the "reconstituting of a sin-perverted world by realizing God's Kingdom in all spheres of life." He says that this is a statement that was too frequently heard in his day. We can assert that this continues to be true today.

If we take the language concerning "the sin-perverted world" very seriously, as we should, the question, "What is the sin-perverted world?" must be answered.

Hoeksema's answer is that, in its context, the phrase must refer to the world of ungodly men, as they live out their life of sin in every sphere and aspect of life and pervert all things. "The world as it is living from the principle of sin corrupts every phase of life: the family, the state, society, business, industry, science, and art. Such is the sin-perverted world."

Hoeksema contends that "the reconstitution of the sin-perverted world" and "the realization of the kingdom of God in the world" must mean either of two things: "that it is the objective of the Christian school to convert all, or the great majority of ungodly men, into citizens of the Kingdom of God; or that it aims at realizing the Kingdom of God and reconstituting a sin-perverted world by way of social reform."

Hoeksema maintains that in the first instance the specific principle is Pelagian. If the authors had in mind the second possibility, they are proclaiming the social gospel.

Hoeksema asserts that in both cases they are wrong, because neither the Christian school nor the Christian church can reconstitute the sin-perverted world or realize

the kingdom of God on earth. Jesus said, "My kingdom is not of this world."

Hoeksema says that the language of the Specific Principle is not the language of Scripture. Although Scripture is cited, the language of Scripture is very specific in that it commands the children of God to be without rebuke and to be willing to suffer with Christ and to keep His commandments. In no place does Scripture assign to the people of God the task of reconstituting the sin-perverted world and of realizing the kingdom of God on earth. That is God's work, not ours.

Hoeksema writes that the fifth Principle cannot and may not be presented or used as the objective of the Christian school. If the Christian school is directed by this principle, it is "inculcating the principles of modernism into the hearts and minds of its pupils." He sees the language of this principle as being exceedingly dangerous because it is done in the name of Christianity and Calvinism.

Once again he proposes a restatement of the fifth Principle. This restatement has also become one of the principles that the Protestant Reformed Christian schools hold and practice in the instruction of children of believing parents.

It is the objective of the Christian School to furnish the pupil with an education which in all its branches is rooted in the principle of the fear of God, as the beginning of wisdom; and thus to co-labor, in its own proper domain, alongside of and in distinction from the home and the church, to equip the pupil with that knowledge and wisdom which is necessary in order that he may be able to walk in the midst of the world worthy of the vocation wherewith God calls His people, and that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.

... to be continued 

The Types of Scripture (1)*

God — so the author of the epistle to the Hebrews sets out — God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spoke in times past unto the fathers by the prophets....

The passage asserts that the speech of God varied as to manner. Not always did God avail Himself of the *word*. It pleased Him often to convey His thoughts to man by means of *transactions*. The sacrificial system of the old dispensation, for example, was so many transactions which God used to transport thought from His own consciousness into the consciousness of man. These sacrificial rites performed a double service: they were signs signifying certain principles or ethical-spiritual truths; and these signs, together with the matters signified, were made to serve as shadows (Paul) or types of good things to come.

This is the field which we desire to explore. To some of these types we wish to attend in a series of articles.

What Is a Type?

We acknowledge that we do not enter an uninvestigated and hence unknown province. From the beginning of the Christian era, theologians have studied the types of Scripture. But only recently was there an attempt made to discover the principles by which those who

explore the typology of Scripture should permit themselves to be guided. Consequently, the typological views of the theologians of the first half of our Christian era are of doubtful value.

The commentaries of the Greek fathers are noted for their excessive typical and allegorical explanations of Scripture. We must distinguish, in this connection, between an allegory and a type. An allegory is a narrative related for the purpose of representing a higher truth. It is of no importance whatever whether the narrator is relating the events as they literally happened or not. In either case the narrative will serve its purpose. The parable of the prodigal son is an illustration of this. Jesus' purpose was to present to the minds of His hearers a higher truth, viz., that Christ receives with open arms, as it were, the penitent sinner who returns to Him seeking pardon. In projecting this higher truth, Christ availed Himself not of a historical event (a type), but merely of certain images or concepts, which the parable presented to the minds of His hearers. What is the mental picture which the parable suspends before our mind's eye? We see, in our imagination, the image or the picture of a disgruntled son withdrawing himself from under the non-oppressive yoke of a kind father. That son, so the picture informs us, goes traveling and finally settles in a strange land where he recklessly spends his substance and consequently comes to grief. Then that son, according to the picture, comes to himself, he admits his guilt. In contriteness of

heart he returns to his father, who is awaiting his coming. The father receives and pardons him and restores him to his former position.

By means of this picture Jesus lets His disciples see that the triune God is most ready to pardon the penitent. It was not Christ's purpose to relate a past event, and hence it need not be maintained that the events related had ever happened as presented. What must be embraced is the word-picture, together with the higher truth signified. Doing this, we are doing full justice to the sacred text.

We wish to add that we are well aware of the fact that the parable of the prodigal son is, properly, a parable and not an allegory. There is a difference between the two. But the one differs from the other in form only and not in essence. In an allegory, the thing signifying and the thing signified are fused together. "I am the door" (John 10) is an allegory. In a parable, the thing signifying and the thing signified are kept distinct and placed side by side. In the parable of the lost sheep (Luke 15) the thing signified, "I say unto you that joy shall be in heaven over one sinner that repenteth, more than over ninety and nine just persons that need no repentance," is placed alongside of the thing signified, viz., the parable proper.

When we assert that the parable or the allegory is not meant to be a faithful and precise record of past events we do not mean to say that the allegorizer does not derive his materials from life. He does. And he can do so because the

* George Ophoff was Professor of Old Testament Studies in the Protestant Reformed Seminary in its early days. Reprinted here are articles, slightly edited, which Ophoff wrote at that time for the Standard Bearer.

things of the lower realms of life are meant to be and actually are images of things of the higher realm. But these materials the allegorizer may modify and reconstruct to suit his purpose. The parable and the allegory are *based on life*.

What now is a *type*? Let it suffice for the present to say that the type of Scripture is a historical event or transaction or phenomenon which God caused to appear for the purpose of signifying by it a higher truth, or a future event, or an object of a higher province. In a parable or an allegory, it is more or less an invention of the mind that is being used to signify the higher truth. In a type, it is a historical fact, event, or transaction, as it actually happened, that signifies the higher truth.

Ancient Greek Church Fathers on Types

Now, the Greek fathers would allegorize the types of Scripture and the facts and events recorded in Holy Writ as well. Especially was the church father Origen wont to do so. Bearing in mind the above distinctions it is plain what this means. It means that Origen would frequently discover in the sacred text an ethereal or more heavenly meaning and thereupon dismissing as of little consequence the truth or reality of the matters recorded. Fairbairn adduces a few specimens of this mode of exposition. Origen treats Abraham's marriage with Keturah in the following fashion:

There is no end to wisdom and old age sets no bounds to improvement in knowledge. The death of Sarah is to be understood as the perfecting of virtue. But he who has attained to a consummate and perfect virtue, must always be employed in some kind of learning — which learning is called by the divine word his wife. Abraham, therefore, when an old man, and his body in a manner dead, took Keturah to wife. I

think it was better, according to the exposition we follow, that his wife should have been received when his body was dead, and his members were mortified. For we have a greater capacity for wisdom when we bear about the dying of Christ in our mortal bodies. Then Keturah, whom he married in his old age, is by interpretation *incense* or sweet odor. For, he said, even as Paul said, "We are a sweet savor of Christ." Sin is a foul and putrid thing; but if any of you in whom this no longer dwells, have the fragrance of righteousness, the sweetness of mercy, and by prayer continually offer up incense to God, ye also have taken Keturah to wife (*Hom. V. 1, in Genes*).

Origen proceeds then to show that for each Christian virtue a wife may be taken: for hospitality, for the care of the poor, for patience — for each virtue one.

The above selection shows how some of the church fathers were accustomed to deal with Scripture. The marriage of Abraham and Keturah is made to serve as a representation of the practice of virtue. Their marriage was not denied, but it was treated in such a way that it makes very little difference whether or not the marriage actually took place.

The following selection proves that Origen would set aside an event in sacred history when it baffled him. The selection also sets forth the exegetical code to which he adhered when expositing Scripture.

But as if, in all the instances of this covering the logical connection and order of the law had been preserved, we would not certainly believe, when thus possessing the meaning of Scripture in a continuous series, that anything else was contained in it save what was indicated on the surface; so for that reason divine wisdom took care that certain stumbling blocks or interruptions, to the historical meaning, should take place, by the introduction into the midst (of the narrative) of certain impossibili-

ties and incongruities; that in this way the very interruption of the narrative might, as by the interposition of a bolt, present an obstacle to the reader, whereby he might refuse to acknowledge the way which conducts to the ordinary meaning; and being thus excluded and debarred from it, we might be recalled to the beginning of another way, in order that, by entering upon a narrow path, and passing to a loftier and more sublime road, he might lay open the immense breadth of divine wisdom. This, however, must not be unnoted by us, that as the chief object of the Holy Spirit is to preserve the coherence of the spiritual meaning, either in those things which ought to be done or which have already been performed, if He anywhere finds that those events which, according to the history, took place, can be adapted to a spiritual meaning. He composed a texture of both kinds in one style of narration, always concealing the hidden meaning more deeply; but where the historical narrative could not be made appropriate to the spiritual coherence of the occurrences He asserted sometimes spiritual things which either did not take place or could not take place; sometimes also what might happen but what did not; and He does this at one time in few words, which taken in their bodily meaning, seem incapable of containing truth, and at another by the assertion of many. And this we find frequently to be the case in the legislative portions, where there are many things manifestly useful among the bodily precepts but a very great number also in which no principle of utility is at all discernible, and sometimes even things which are judged to be impossible. Now, all this as we have remarked, was done by the Holy Spirit in order that, seeing those events which lie on the surface can be neither true nor useful, we may be led to the investigation of that truth which is more deeply concealed, and to the ascertaining of a meaning worthy of God in those Scriptures which we believe to be inspired by Him.

Nor was it only in regard to

these Scriptures which were composed down to the event of Christ that the Holy Spirit thus dealt; but as being one and the same Spirit, and proceeding from one God, He dealt in the same way with the evangelists and apostles. For even those narratives which He inspired them to write were not composed without the aid of that wisdom of His, the nature of which we have above explained. Whence also in them were mingled not a few things by which the historical order of the narrative being interrupted and broken up, the attention of the reader might be recalled, by the impossibility of the case, to the examination of the inner meaning. But, that our meaning may be ascertained by the facts themselves, let us examine the passages of Scripture. Now, who is there, pray, possessed of understanding, that will regard the statement as appropriate, that the first day, and the second and the third, in which also both evening and morning are mentioned, existed without sun and moon and stars — the first day even without a sky? And who is found so ignorant as to suppose that God, as if He had been a husbandman, planted trees in paradise, in Eden toward the East, and a tree of life in it, i.e., a visible and palpable tree of wood, so that any one eating of it with bodily teeth should obtain life, and, eating again of another tree, should come to the knowledge of good and evil? And if God is said to walk in the paradise in the evening and Adam to hide himself under a tree, I do not suppose that anyone doubts that these things figuratively indicate certain mysteries, the history having taken place in appearance, and not literally.

So far Origen. The quotation is taken from his *Principiis*, book IV, chapter 1.

According to this particular church father, Scripture is susceptible to a twofold sense: the literal, which he regarded as carnal, and the deeper spiritual sense. It is also interesting to note how the events and phenomena recorded in

the first chapter of Genesis are dealt with. He denies that the matters related are events in history. The latter is regarded as figurative speech embodying a mystery. Origen's mode of interpretation relative to the sacred record of Genesis does not differ materially from that of Dr. Geelkerken. Does not the latter aver that what is recorded concerning the serpent is no fact in history but a figurative presentation of a higher truth? There is not much of anything new under the sun.

It ought to be plain that such a mode of interpretation has the effect of converting the Bible into a book of conundrums. If words lose their meaning and value as soon as they are pressed into service by the Holy Spirit, if nay is no longer nay and yea, yea, the language of Scripture cannot be regarded as the vehicle of which God availed Himself to transport truth from His own consciousness into the consciousness of man. Then, in the words of Fairbairn, the Scripture is converted into a sea of doubt and uncertainty.

To prove this once more, we wish to quote from *Stomata*, of Clement of Alexandria. The way he deals with the history relating to Abraham's wives is peculiar.

For if philosophy professes control of the tongue and the belly, and the parts below the belly, it ought to be chosen on its own account. But it appears more worthy of respect and pre-eminence, if cultivated for the honor and knowledge of God. And Scripture will afford a testimony to what has been said in what follows. Sarah was at one time barren, being Abraham's wife. Sarah having no child assigned her maid, by name Hagar, the Egyptian, to Abraham in order to get children. Wisdom therefore, who dwells with the man of faith (and Abraham was reckoned faithful and righteous), was still barren and without child in that generation, not having brought forth to Abraham aught allied to virtue. And she, as was

proper, thought that he, being now in the time of progress, should have intercourse with secular culture first (by Egyptian the world is designated figuratively); and afterward should approach to her and beget Isaac.

Not only did the Greek fathers use the historical materials of Scripture as receptacles for their imaginings, but they were wont to affix their inventions to the ceremonial institutions as well. Clement even went so far as to weave his fanciful musings into the precepts of the Decalogue.

Ancient Latin Church Fathers on Types

The fathers of the Latin church, however, cannot be charged with going into these extremes. Their expositions of Scripture, compared with those of the Greek fathers, were much more sober. This does not mean, however, that they were not at all given to allegorizing the truths of Scripture, and never yielded to the play of fancy. They did so. Let us quote from the works of St. Augustine, in whom the fathers of the Latin church were fairly represented. The selection which follows is taken from Augustine's reply to Faustus the Manichæan. Let it be said that Faustus denied that the prophets predict Christ. Augustine wants to prove that such predictions are there.

As a wife was made from Adam from his side while he slept, the church becomes the property of her dying Saviour, by the sacrament of the blood which flowed from His side after His death. The woman made out of her husband's side is called Eve, or Life, and the mother of living beings; and the Lord says in the Gospel: "Except a man eat my flesh and drink my blood, he has no life in him." The whole narrative of Genesis, in the most minute details, is a prophecy of Christ and the Church with reference either to the good Christians or to the bad. There is a sig-


nificance in the words of the Apostle when he calls Adam "the figure of Him who was to come"; and when he says, "A man shall leave his father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife, and they two shall be one flesh." This is a great mystery; but I speak concerning Christ and the Church. This points most obviously to the way in which Christ left His Father; for "though He was in the form of God, and thought it not robbery to be equal with God, He emptied Himself and took upon Him the form of a servant." And so, too, He left His mother, the synagogue of the Jews which cleaved to the carnality of the Old Testament, and was united to the church, His holy bride, that in the peace of the New Testament they two might be one flesh.

The above quotation indicates that mere formal resemblances were sufficient to prompt Augustine to place an event in a class with

the types. To be sure, Adam is a type or figure of Christ. We have Paul's word for it that such is the case. But Eve is no type of the church. The resemblance between Eve, the supposed type, and the object typified, viz., the church, is an invention. The church is identified with Christ's blood and made to come forth from the Savior's side.

How indiscreet and capricious, this mode of dealing with Scripture. It should not escape our attention, however, that Augustine is not addicted to that pernicious mode of interpretation which the Greek fathers were wont to apply to Scripture. The passages yield no specimens of allegorical explanations. He does not treat the matters recorded by the sacred text as if they were but emblems or symbols of higher spiritual truths instead of facts or events in history. Hence, though it be true that Au-

gustine seems to take delight in fabricating types, he nevertheless does not injure the sacred text as such by applying to it Origen's allegorical mode of interpretation. He does not maintain that the matters related are not facts in history.

We shall now leave the fathers of the early Christian church. In studying the types of Scripture, we must strive to avoid their extremes, and especially those of the Greek fathers. Their manner of dealing with Scripture must not be ours. To seek for types in every incident and event will not do. He who is unwilling to recognize the truth of the facts and the events of Scripture and is bent on seeing only mystery has already lifted the Bible out of the realm of realities and placed it in the realm of the fanciful. Deny the historical facts of Scripture and you destroy the foundations of Christianity. 

Marking the Bulwarks of Zion

Prof. Herman Hanko

Thomas Aquinas and Rationalism (2)

Introduction:

The charge of rationalism has often been made against the Protestant Reformed Churches. This charge has originated chiefly with defenders of common grace and the well-meant gospel offer. It is as old as our denomination.

The charge is a sort of defense of the almost intolerable position of those who, while claiming to be

Calvinists, hold to doctrines quite contradictory to Calvinism. Calvinists hold, for example, to divine election; that is, that God from eternity chose His people in Christ and willed to save them and them alone through the sacrifice of His Son. The well-meant offer, while attempting to maintain the doctrine of election, holds that God wills to save all men, especially those who hear the gospel.

This is boldly and blatantly contradictory. God wills to save some and God wills to save all — at the same moment and in the same sense. It is in defense of that

flat contradiction that the proponents of a well-meant gospel offer fall back on what they call either "paradox" or "apparent contradiction." When the PRC maintain that God does not desire the salvation of all men, but that His will and desire to save is in fact His eternal decree of election, the PRC are charged with rationalism for refusing to admit flat-out contradiction.

Now, the position of the PRC is that Scripture has no contradictions, not even apparent ones, and that, therefore, all doctrines of Scripture form a consistent and logical system of doctrine. The

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PRC go a step further, in fact, and insist that, if it is not true that Scripture's system of doctrine is logical, then no truth of God can be known at all. "Apparent contradictions" are contradictions. One cannot believe that God desires both to save all men and to save only some, any more than one can believe that a rose is both a flower and an asteroid.

That makes this question of rationalism an important one. Rationalism is by no means new. Beginning with Marcion (who subjected the Scriptures to rationalistic investigation in the third century) the church has always been troubled by two aberrations: mysticism and rationalism. We discussed mysticism in another connection; now we discuss rationalism in connection with the work of Thomas Aquinas.

The Rationalism of Thomas

Thomas Aquinas' rationalism is not to be found in the fact that he constructed a systematic theology. He did this. It is called *Summa Theologiae*. From the viewpoint of its writing it was a masterful work. It became the criterion for subsequent Roman Catholic orthodoxy and it has continued to have its influence to the present. Popes spoke of it as being a perfect work without any flaw. Others had constructed systematic theologies before Thomas, but his outshone them all.

Thomas' rationalism lay in his entire approach to theology. He consciously determined to integrate the truth of the Word of God with the philosophy of Aristotle. As one writer put it, "He took from Aristotle the frame for his theological system."

Some are of the opinion that Thomas paid this kind of attention to Aristotle because he was afraid that Aristotle's popularity in the universities would lead Europe to abandon the faith of the church. By integrating Aristotle's philosophy with the church's theology, the

faith of the church could be saved.

Aristotle was the last great Greek philosopher. He brought the whole of Greek philosophy to a kind of culmination. While his philosophical system had been unknown in Europe during the time of the barbarian migrations, it entered Europe, partly through translations made by the Mohammedan Arabs, who had penetrated into Europe through Spain and had come as far north as southern France; partly through the crusades, for some crusaders had returned from the East with the priceless manuscripts of Greek and Roman writers; and partly from the increasing trade which Europe conducted with the East. All these events had sparked the Renaissance in Europe, that revival of learning which had made the ancient manuscripts of Greece and Rome its formal principle.

The Renaissance was humanism at its highest and worst. But the Renaissance influenced the whole of Europe, captured the church, insidiously seeped into the thinking of the theologians of Europe, and made Aristotle and Plato the darlings of the universities.

Humanism teaches that man is the center of all things. The world is under man's control, the object of man's investigation, here for man's enjoyment and benefit, and to be used to advance the development of mankind. But humanism also, in its very nature, exalts man's reason to a pinnacle of power. Man's pleasure may be the measure of all things, but man's mind is the measure of all truth.

Aristotle had constructed an imposing philosophical system. Many in the Middle Ages were enamored with it. They considered it to be, although with some imperfections, God's truth itself. If they were, therefore, to do justice to God's truth in its entirety, they were required to meld the philosophies of the ancients with the scriptural revelation. This was the ra-

tionalism of Thomas Aquinas.

Some grounds for this had, of course, to be laid. The grounds were clear and carefully laid out. The unconverted and unregenerated man is capable of discovering natural truth, that is, truth concerning God which can be learned from the speech of God in creation. This is learned by man's reason. "The truths of natural reason cannot be at variance with those given by revelation." Natural man not only knows God, but knows Him as the highest good; and, quite naturally, earnestly desires this highest good — though he is in need of Scripture in order to be saved by it. Hence, a complete system of truth had to incorporate in it the "truths of natural reason" which unregenerated men had discovered.

These views have been modified somewhat over the years. A major issue in the common grace controversy in 1924 was exactly this question. The Christian Reformed Church's theologians maintained that common grace enabled the wicked to discover truth in some measure. Many found good in the ancient Greek philosophers. My own Greek teacher, while I was studying at Calvin, often bemoaned the fact that Plato had come within one ladder-rung of God, but had stopped just a bit short.

When I was attending grade school, we were often admonished to become missionaries, for there were millions of unsaved souls who knew God and longed for Him, but who would perish unless we went to tell them about Jesus Christ revealed in the Scriptures.

Thomas did not speak of "common" grace as such, but he did believe much the same thing. He held that man's pure natural powers, which he received at creation, were enhanced by a further gift of "original righteousness," which completed man's perfection. This is the doctrine of superadded grace. While man lost this original righteousness at the fall, he retained his

natural powers of mind and will, and was thus able to discover truth and desire that which is right and good. Just as his natural powers of mind were able to give man knowledge of the truth, so "the natural inclinations of the will serve the divine principle of the Christian life."

This is rationalism with a vengeance. It is to me ironic that those who in 1924 held to these ideas because of their common grace and thus exalted the natural powers of man's reason should charge the PRC with rationalism. One feels like saying, Physician, heal thyself.

Rationalism is totally unacceptable to the believing child of God. It is so on the basis of the biblical doctrine of total depravity. It is true that man remained, after the fall, a rational man. That is not grace; that is the great tragedy of the fall. He was still a man, but now incapable of doing any good, an enemy of God and bound for hell.

But the fall had two consequences when God executed His divine sentence upon man. It ruined his powers of mind, so that the rationality which remains is only a small glimmering of his original excellent gifts (something like the ability of a child in kindergarten to understand differential equations and calculus), and the gifts which he retained were now totally in the service of sin. Man suppresses the truth in unrighteousness (Rom. 1:18). He is an enemy of God. He changes the truth into the lie. He hates God and deliberately constructs idols, so that he will not confess God as the only God who must be worshiped. He cannot and will not come to the knowledge of the truth, as that is made known either through the creation or through Scripture.

Thus the philosophical systems of Greece's greatest philosophers were idols. Sophisticated idols. Attractive idols. But idols

for all that. They were Aristotle's way of changing the truth of the invisible God into the lie and worshipping the creature rather than the Creator.

Rationalism is that kind of exaltation of man's reason, which claims that man has the power to discover truth. This was the rationalism of Thomas Aquinas; this is still the rationalism of today.

The Consequences of Rationalism

We cannot show in this brief article how that rationalism worked out in Thomas' theology. But there is one point that needs to be emphasized. Pelagianism (and Arminianism) is rationalistic. Thomas was a Pelagian. Rome was Pelagian. Thomas was a member and loyal servant of corrupt Rome.

Without denying that Thomas emphasized many truths which are part and parcel of our own inheritance of the Reformed faith, it is necessary to point out that Thomas left room for the meritorious value of good works. He had to if he was to be loyal to his church.

He did this not only by his exaltation of man's reason, but also by teaching that "the natural inclinations of the will serve the divine principle of the Christian life." That is, the human will is free, free to choose for God and for good. Thus man's works merit with God, for man does them to God's glory by his own natural powers.

This had its effect upon Thomas' doctrine of the atonement. Our readers might recall that, some time ago, we discussed the doctrine of the atonement held by Anselm, Archbishop of Canterbury. Anselm taught an absolute necessity of the atonement. That is, Anselm taught that sin was so great and man so hopelessly lost that the only way that man could be saved was by the death of the Son of God. Aquinas did not agree with this great church father. He could not. Anselm's view left no room for human

merit, for man was able to do nothing good. And so Thomas held to a relative necessity of the atonement of Christ. Christ died, partly to atone for sin, but also partly to have a good influence on man, so that man would exercise his natural powers of will in choosing for God. That is a destruction of the atonement. As our Heidelberg Catechism points out, Jesus is either a complete Savior, or He is no Savior at all (Lord's Day 11).

Are the PRC Rationalistic?

One more point has to be made. The PRC reject with vehemence the charge that they are rationalistic in their theology because they deny a well-meant gospel offer. The PRC do not reject total depravity, but insist that "the carnal mind is enmity against God." They have no desire to exalt man's mind as a discoverer and arbiter of truth.

What the PRC do is insist that the truth is one because God is one and because His revelation is one in Jesus Christ. When the PRC, following the confessional heritage of the church, systematize theology so that all the relations between the different truths are discovered in Scripture and are included in the confession of the church, they are doing what Scripture demands be done. They are showing the glorious unity of God in Jesus Christ as made known in the truth of God's Word. The truth is a logical whole. That is not rationalism. That is the confessional Reformed faith.

We must never be frightened off by the bogeyman of rationalism, so that we are distracted from this great and glorious calling which God has given to the church and which the church carries out in its pursuit of the truth.

But we must condemn rationalism in whatever form it appears.



Congregation Activities

Over the past several months many of you who are members of the PR churches have no doubt thought often of our Pella, IA PRC and what they must be going through. We can only imagine how one would cope with the closing of his church home. This is certainly something none of us would ever desire for anyone, or hope to go through ourselves. After Classis West made its final decision, earlier this year, to proceed with the closing of Pella, they appointed the South Holland, IL PRC to assist Pella's consistory and congregation with their plans to dissolve, and they have been busy with that task. South Holland arranged and received approval from three of our consistories to provide Pella with preaching on consecutive Sundays in October leading up to their disbanding. Rev. Houck preached for them on Sunday, October 14, Rev. Smit on October 21, and Rev. A. Brummel on the 28th, which was their last Lord's Day as a Protestant Reformed congregation. On October 5 the congregation in Pella met and approved selling their assets and giving the proceeds of that sale to our PR churches. The South Holland consistory is also currently working through the details of the manner of dissolution for a not-for-profit corporation and have sought legal advice with which to advise Pella. Some of the families have begun to make plans to move to other of our PR churches. The Pella consistory will continue to meet as long as necessary to finalize the legal details pertaining to the disbanding of their congregation. Even though their final service was held on the 28th of October, it may take some

time before the legal matters of selling the assets and disbanding are settled. Without doubt we should all remember these saints in our prayers, as some are making plans to relocate and to find new jobs during these difficult times.

Members of the First PRC in Holland, MI were invited to attend a special combined society night on October 30. Mr. Deane Wassink, a member of First, gave a presentation on the history of our Psalter and issues relating to it.

Early this past summer, July 5 through 19 to be exact, eight members of the Cornerstone PRC in Schererville, IN were able to accompany Rev. B. Woudenberg and others to Romania. They spent two weeks traveling through the countryside visiting many different villages, where they were able to visit with the people, make some medical visits, and spend some time at various orphanages. The group also brought along funds for a Reformed orphanage and also for a new Christian school in one of the villages.

Evangelism Activities

Many of our congregations took advantage of the church's celebration and observance of the Reformation on October 31 of this year by sponsoring Reformation lectures, as a form of outreach to their communities.

The Reformed Witness Committee, made up of our churches in Iowa and Minnesota, hosted a lecture October 26 at the Hull, IA PRC. Rev. R. Hanko spoke on the subject, "Continuing Reformation through Catechism Preaching."

Rev. A. Brummel spoke at a lecture October 26 sponsored by the Bethel PRC in Roselle, IL on the topic, "The Reformers' Teaching on the Church."

Prof. H. Hanko gave the same lecture twice, first on October 26 at the First PRC in Holland, MI,

and then again on October 29 at the Randolph, WI PRC. He spoke on "Justification by Faith."

October 31 Rev. T. Miersma spoke on the subject, "Jesus the Savior of All?" The Lynden, WA PRC hosted a lecture on November 2 with Rev. M. DeVries speaking on "The Bondage of the Will."

Rev. C. Haak spoke at the South Holland, IL PRC on October 31 on the truth of "Christ Alone," and then again two days later he spoke on the same theme at the 3rd annual Reformation Celebration of our churches' Pittsburgh Mission.

Rev. C. Terpstra spoke at a Reformation Day Celebration at Fayetteville, NC on October 27 under the theme, "Being Right with God: The Call of the Reformation."

Minister Activities


The Lynden, WA PRC continues to wait patiently for our heavenly Father to provide them with an undershepherd of His choosing. Since Rev. B. Gritters' decline in late October, they have formed another trio consisting of the Revs. J. Laning, C. Haak, and A. Brummel.

Rev. C. Haak declined the call extended to him by the congregation of the Hope PRC in Redlands, CA. Since that decline, Hope has extended a call to Rev. M. VanderWal. With him on that trio were the Revs. Slopsema and Terpstra.

From a trio consisting of Rev. Cammenga, Slopsema, and Van Overloop, the Byron Center, MI PRC has extended a call to Rev. Cammenga to serve as their next pastor.

Food For Thought

"They that know God will be humble; they that know themselves cannot be proud."

—John Flavel 

Mr. Wigger is a member of the Protestant Reformed Church of Hudsonville, Michigan.

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Announcements

WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

On December 14, 2001, the Lord willing,
JOHN and ELAINE FLIKKEMA
will celebrate 50 years of marriage. We
rejoice with them on this occasion and
thank the Lord for His covenant faithful-
ness and mercy to them. We are blessed
through their fearing the Lord; and they
shall see their children's children and
peace upon the church. (Psalm 128)

- ❖ John and Ruthanne Flikkema
John and Tara Flikkema
Jason and Amanda Jabaay
Christian, Hannah, Connor
- ❖ Karen and Steven Ophoff
Steven
- ❖ Thomas and Amy Flikkema
Caleb, Keagen
- ❖ Gail and Donald Kuiper
Emily, Michael, Andrew,
Abigail, Leah
- ❖ Steven and Pam Flikkema
Jeremy, Ethan, Grant

Grand Rapids, Michigan

NOTICE!!

Classis East will meet in regular ses-
sion on Wednesday, January 9, 2002, at
the First Protestant Reformed Church, Hol-
land, MI. Material for this session must
be in the hands of the stated clerk by De-
cember 10, 2001.

Jon J. Huiskens,
Stated Clerk

CHANGE OF ADDRESS

Rev. and Mrs. Doug Kuiper and fam-
ily now reside at:

225 Pierce
Randolph, WI 53956
Telephone: (920) 326-5642

RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The consistory of Bethel PRC ex-
presses its Christian sympathy to Mrs.
Alice Stob, Mr. and Mrs. Joseph Folkerts,
and their family in the death of their hus-
band, brother-in-law, and dear uncle,

MR. ALBERT STOB.

His earthly pilgrimage is completed
and he is now at peace. May his wife,
Alice, and family find comfort in Al's con-
fession: "We are confident, I say, and will-
ing rather, to be absent from the body,
and to be present with the Lord" (II Cor-
inthians 5:8).

Rev. Haak, President
Mr. Al Meurer, Clerk

WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

On November 27 our parents,
**PASTOR STEVEN and
NANCY KEY,**

celebrated their 25th wedding anniversary. We
are grateful to God for the covenant parents
He has given us, who have raised us in His
fear and taught us the words and ways of the
Lord, and who continue to be a blessing to us.
We pray that God will continue to guide them,
provide for them, and bless their marriage.
"For his merciful kindness is great toward us:
and the truth of the Lord endureth forever.
Praise ye the Lord" (Psalm 117:2).

- ❖ Andy and Stephanie Lanning
- ❖ Michelle Key
- ❖ Elisabeth Key
- ❖ Mary Anne Key

Hull, Iowa

Reformed Witness Hour

Station Listings

Station	Location	Frequency	Time/day
KCCF	Ferndale, WA	1550AM	8:30 A.M./Sunday
KLOH	Pipestone, MN	1050AM	8:00 A.M./Sunday
KDCR	Sioux Center, IA	88.5FM	5:30 P.M./Sunday
KCWN	Pella, IA	99.9FM	3:30 P.M./Sunday
WMRH	Waupun, WI	1170AM	8:30 A.M./Sunday
WYLL	Chicago, IL	1160AM	3:30 P.M./Saturday
WFUR	Grand Rapids, MI	102.9FM	8:00 A.M./Sunday
WFUR	Grand Rapids, MI	1570AM	4:00 P.M./Sunday
WORD	Pittsburgh, PA	101.5FM	10:00 A.M./Sunday
WFNC	Fayetteville, NC	640AM	9:30 A.M./Sunday
WELP	Spartanburg, SC	1360AM	4:00 P.M./Sunday
WFAM	Augusta, GA	1050AM	4:00 P.M./Sunday
WBXR	Huntsville, AL	1140AM	9:00 A.M./Saturday
CJCA	Edmonton, AB	930AM	6:30 P.M./Sunday
KCNW	Kansas City, KS	1380AM	4:30 P.M./Sunday

Topics for December

Date	Topic	Text
December 2	"Water in the Desert"	Isaiah 35:7
December 9	"The Ancestry of Jesus"	Matthew 1:1-7
December 16	"The Wonder of Grace"	Matthew 1:18-25
December 23	"A Pathway Paved by Prophecies"	Matthew 2:13-23
December 30	"Our Short and Evil Life"	Genesis 47:7-10