

REDEEMING THE TIME

"Redeeming the time, because the days are evil" (Ephesians 5:16).

VOLUME 7, NUMBER 4

FALL 2015

OUR COMPLETE RELIANCE ON

The Prince of PEACE

With terrorism, mass shootings, millions of refugees displaced by war, evil governments in possession of nuclear weapons and powerful leaders invading and seizing weaker nations, "peaceful" is not an adjective one could possibly use to describe the world we live in.

We as Christians know that the common denominator in all of these things is the terrible wickedness — the total depravity — of man. The Bible tells us that "all have sinned and come short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23). Since the fall of Adam, the world has been filled with manifestations of these tragic things we are seeing in our own day.

But, in the midst of this, the prophet Isaiah tells us that a son would be born — the Messiah — who would be called "Wonderful, Counsellor, the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father..." Concluding this list of names would be "THE PRINCE OF PEACE" (Isaiah 9:6)!

Even Christ's disciples envisioned that He would overthrow the oppression of Rome under which they were then suffering. Yet, Jesus' mission was infinitely

"... and his name shall be called ... the Prince of Peace" (Isaiah 9:6).

more important than this. In Colossians 1, Paul writes concerning Christ: "In whom we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins ..." (Colossians 1:14). Then, Paul relates to us the true mission of the Prince of Peace: "And, having made peace through the blood of his cross" (verse 20)! Paul elsewhere tells us the result of Christ's sacrifice: "Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ" (Romans 5:1). What a glorious promise to the child of God!

When Christ left the earth, He told His disciples: "Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid" (John 14:27). As we enter 2016, may our hearts rejoice that we have been bought with the precious blood of the Prince of Peace. May we rest completely in Christ as we seek to live for Him in the midst of our fallen world.



"Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints." PSALM 116:15

The year 2015 saw the homegoing of a number of God's dear saints. We would like to mention just a few. They were a blessing to all of us and they will be greatly missed.

Dr. K.C. Quek: January 3, 2015. Dr. Quek

was the longtime general secretary of the International Council of Christian Churches (ICCC) and a founding father of the Bible-Presbyterian Churches of Singapore. He was the editor of the *Far Eastern Beacon*, which promoted the work of the ICCC. His accomplishments were many in his local and international service to Christ, as well as in the Singapore government and in founding a number of benevolent works.



Dr. William LeRoy: March 22, 2015. Dr.

LeRoy was a longtime missionary to Brazil under The Independent Board for Presbyterian Foreign Missions. Upon returning from the field he became the general secretary of the Board and served as its President from 2005-2009. His great experience and godly counsel were a real blessing to the Lord's work in general and the work of missions around the world. He was a member of Faith Presbytery, Bible Presbyterian Church.



Continued on page 16

THE DIVISION OF 1937

Between the Orthodox Presbyterian Church and the Bible Presbyterian Church

PART 7

“Modern Dispensationalism”

BY BRAD K. GSELL

It is important to have read Parts 1 through 6 of this series, which have been published in successive issues since the winter 2014 issue of Redeeming the Time. They serve as the general background for understanding this segment and those to come. These may be found on our website (www.rttpublications.org), or we would be glad to mail copies to you. Within a few years of its founding, the Presbyterian Church of America changed its name to the Orthodox Presbyterian Church. Therefore, you will see these names used interchangeably in these articles.

Throughout the 19th and early 20th centuries, a movement arose which eventually came to be known as “Dispensationalism.” It had many proponents within both the Northern and Southern Presbyterian Churches. In a historical study, such as this, it is difficult to give a definition which would accurately cover all facets of this system or thoroughly evaluate its tenets. Further, the beliefs of those labeled “Dispensationalists” varied widely.

Bible Presbyterian founder H. McAllister Griffiths wrote: “Now when one uses terms in discussion, it is a splendid idea to define them. But I never yet have read or heard an exact definition of ‘modern dispensa-

tionalism.’ It is an inclusive term which, like ‘modern art’ or ‘modern politics’ might cover a host of diverse and even contradictory things....”¹

In like manner, Professor Allan A. MacRae once responded to a reader’s inquiry by stating: “It has been my observation that if ten people were asked to give a clear definition [of Dispensationalism] ... at least seven different answers would be given.”²

**“We [premillennialists],
for I held such a belief,
insisted that any
dispensationalism which
denied the unity of
the covenant of grace
was indeed an
anti-Reformed heresy....”**

Carl McIntire
in the Christian Beacon

Perhaps the best-known publication generally representing what became known as the Dispensational system is the *Scofield Reference Bible*, first published in 1909, by Oxford University Press, with a revised edition being issued in 1917. With notes by Cyrus Ingerson Scofield, it was wildly successful and was considered a valued tool by many in Bi-

ble-believing churches. One reason for this is that it is arguably the first time a commentary had been written on this scale right next to the text of Scripture, allowing Christians to read the notes right on the same page with the verses being discussed. Of course, there were other occasions throughout church history, on a more limited scale, such as scribal notes in the margins of some ancient Bible manuscripts. The Geneva Bible, which was brought to the New World by our Pilgrim fathers, also contained many notes, introductions and cross-references.

Another reason for the success of the Scofield Bible was that it upheld the major doctrines of Scripture. Even Loraine Boettner, a Reformed writer who was Postmillennial and a strong critic of the Scofield Bible, nonetheless wrote: “The virtue of the Scofield Bible is that it sets forth an evangelical theology. The primary doctrines of the Christian faith, such as the full inspiration and authority of the Scriptures, the Trinity, the Deity of Christ, the atonement, justification by faith, the resurrection of the body, final judgment, heaven and hell, are set forth clearly and without any compromise with Modernism.”³

In the introduction of this Bible, Scofield defined Dispensationalism as: “a period of time during which man is tested in respect of obedience

to some specific revelation of the will of God.” Scofield proceeded to lay out seven distinct dispensations which he observed in the Scriptures. Some Reformed theologians believed, among other things, that he presented a disjointed view of Scripture which saw men before the death and resurrection of Christ on the cross being saved by obedience to the law rather than saved by grace. Other Reformed leaders, while quick to point out a number of contradictions and statements with which they could not concur, and disagreeing with some of Scofield’s teaching relating to law and grace, nonetheless pointed to the fact that the introduction to the Scofield Bible stated clearly that “From beginning to end the Bible testifies to one redemption. From beginning to end the Bible has one great theme — the person and work of the Christ.”

With the fight against Modernism, Dr. J. Gresham Machen worked closely with a number of Dispensationalists who were strong defenders of God and His Word. Westminster Professor Paul Woolley wrote: “Because they accepted the authority of the Bible, Machen cooperated with these dispensationalists. But their roots and their emphases were very different from Machen’s....”⁴ It is also reported that the venerable Robert Dick Wilson, one of the founding faculty members of Westminster Theological Seminary, had taught with Dispensationalists at the Grove City Bible Conference.⁵

The Sudden Attack on “Modern Dispensationalism”

On the evening of October 8, 1935, the Presbyterian Constitutional Covenant Union (out of which was born the Orthodox Presbyterian Church and eventually the Bible Presbyterian Church) held its first mass rally in the large auditorium of the Central North Broad Street Presbyterian Church in Philadelphia.⁶ Over 1,000 gathered to stand for the

Word of God against the inroads of Modernism.

Dr. Machen had the concluding message that evening, with James 1:22 as his text: “But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only....” Starting the evening had been a powerful message by Dr. Charles G. Trumbull, editor of the *Sunday School Times*. Thomas R. Birch, the managing editor of the *Presbyterian Guardian*, spoke glowingly of the speeches given by both men.⁷ Elsewhere in the same issue one attendee was quoted as saying: “Rarely have I seen an audience so breathless in its attention, so deeply moved. In both of the speeches was an evident passion for souls and love for Christ so sincere and all consuming that at times it transcended mere human eloquence.”⁸

But the coming new year was about to bring many rapid changes, and it is doubtful that just a few months later some of these men would have even considered inviting Dr. Trumbull to speak at such an event. Trumbull, after all, was the biographer of C.I. Scofield and was a champion of Scofield’s notes, with its dispensational framework.

January 1936 saw the publication of an article in *The Evangelical Quarterly* entitled “Modern Dispensationalism and the Doctrine of the Unity of Scripture.”⁹ It was written by Westminster Professor Oswald T. Allis.

About the same time as his article appeared, Allis left Westminster Seminary because of his continued allegiance to the PCUSA. At a Seminary board meeting in January 1936, Machen had relied to no small degree on some who would later become Bible Presbyterians to “save” the Seminary from those who were determined to stay in the PCUSA, despite its apostasy.

Despite this fundamental disagreement, Allis was considered a preeminent Bible scholar, and this article immediately caught the attention of many in the Presbyterian

Constitutional Covenant Union. Perhaps more than any other thing, it brought the subject to the foreground.

Some historians have quite inaccurately stated that this opened the fault line between those starting the Orthodox Presbyterian Church who held strongly to Reformed, Covenant Theology and those who believed in so-called Dispensationalism. Such statements belie the facts and are not at all a fair presentation of the truth.

It appears that very little had been discussed about Dispensationalism in the years prior to 1936. Professor MacRae states: “... I do not recall ever hearing the word Dispensationalism as long as I was a student in college or at Princeton Seminary, nor do I recall ever hearing it during my early years of teaching at Westminster. Then I found that the word had become a catch word for infamy, and that certain members of the faculty were constantly attacking what they called Dispensationalism. This was especially the case after we had left the Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A.”¹⁰

OPC Historian Charles Dennison seems to bear this out. He writes: “According to Oswald T. Allis, Machen’s interaction with and response to dispensationalism took place in the last years of his life. It was as if he were learning about it and its dangers for the first time.”¹¹

Very shortly after the appearance of Allis’ article, Westminster Professors John Murray and R.B. Kuiper also began zeroing in on attacking “Modern Dispensationalism.” Shortly before the founding General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church of America (later OPC) in 1936, Professor Murray wrote about “Modern Dispensationalism” in the *Presbyterian Guardian* in his series of articles entitled: “The Reformed Faith and Modern Substitutes.”¹²

Continued on page 4

“MODERN DISPENSATIONALISM”

Continued from page 3

Future Bible Presbyterian founder H. McAllister Griffiths, editor of the *Guardian* at that time, wrote in affirmation of Murray’s position: “As we understand it, the dispensationalism against which Mr. Murray will write is of a kind that denies the fundamental unity of the covenant of grace, which is an essential doctrine of the Reformed Faith.

“Mr. Murray has well expressed this when, in the *Presbyterian Guardian* for February 3rd [1936], he identified the form of dispensationalism against which he will write as that ‘which discovers in the several dispensations of God’s redemptive revelation distinct and even contrary principles of divine procedure and thus destroys the unity of God’s dealings with fallen mankind.’”¹³

Indeed, the Westminster Confession of Faith, Chapter VII:2,3, states: “The first covenant made with man was a covenant of works, wherein life was promised to Adam; and in him to his posterity, upon condition of perfect and personal obedience.

“Man, by his fall, having made himself incapable of life by that covenant, the Lord was pleased to make a second, commonly called the covenant of grace; wherein He freely offers unto sinners life and salvation by Jesus Christ; requiring of them faith in Him, that they may be saved, and promising to give unto all those that are ordained unto eternal life His Holy Spirit, to make them willing, and able to believe.”

Charles Hodge describes this covenant of grace: “It was not mere faith or trust in God, or simple piety, which was required, but faith in the promised Redeemer, or faith in the promise of redemption through the Messiah.... The covenant of grace, or plan of salvation, being the same in all its elements from the beginning, it

follows ... that the people of God before Christ constituted a Church, and that the Church has been one and the same under all dispensations. It has always had the same promise, the same Redeemer, and the same condition of membership, namely, faith in the Son of God as the Saviour of the world.”¹⁴

“A Catch Word for Infamy”

Much of Dr. Murray’s writing in the *Guardian* was well founded, but “Modern Dispensationalism” increasingly became a “catch word for infamy,” to quote Professor MacRae, with rumors spreading that this man or that man was a dreaded Dispensationalist. Sadly, it is the tendency of many to overstate the views of their opponents, or attribute the most unreasonable views of a few with that of the mainstream. How well we have seen when, for instance, those holding to the Reformed faith are dismissed as “fatalists,” when they are not fatalists at all.

By the fall of 1936, things were only escalating on this front. In September, Westminster Professor R.B. Kuiper wrote in the *Presbyterian Guardian* that the “dispensationalism of the Scofield Bible” was an “anti-Reformed heresy.”¹⁵ It should be remembered that neither Murray nor Kuiper was yet a member of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church, but they were seeking to exert great influence on this new denomination.

Within a few days after the appearance of Kuiper’s article, Attorney James E. Bennet, a Presbyterian elder from New York who had suffered greatly at the hands of the PCUSA, wrote to Dr. Machen protesting strongly Professor Kuiper’s remarks. Machen and Bennet were to carry on a correspondence through the fall of 1936, differing sharply in some details. Unlike Machen, Bennet was fond of the Scofield Bible. But, he was quick to say that “[it] is not that I am holding Scofield’s notes as

sacred because I do not. In fact, I disagree with him in some of his conclusions.... It is immaterial to me what kind of a view Professor Kuiper takes of Dr. Scofield’s notes, because they are not inspired, neither are they sacred....”¹⁶

Shortly thereafter, Carl McIntire, in a *Christian Beacon* editorial, likewise questioned Kuiper’s position as being an attack on Premillennialism¹⁷ (see discussion in the Winter 2014 issue of *Redeeming the Time*). Many have used this one article by McIntire to paint him as a “Modern Dispensationalist.” What was happening behind the scenes at Westminster Seminary undoubtedly influenced McIntire’s article. Machen, who was much in demand as a speaker and writer, and with added responsibilities as editor of the *Presbyterian Guardian*, was not as close in touch with what was happening at Westminster Seminary as some would have liked. It was reported that there was much criticism of even Machen in his last years among those at the Seminary.¹⁸ There was a growing concern that he was not aware of some of the teaching which drew an incorrect link between some who were Premillennial with Dispensationalism.

There is nothing to be found in McIntire’s editorial to suggest his support for any of the objectionable features being opposed. Dr. Machen was not happy. He defended Kuiper, saying that he was ONLY talking about a dispensationalism contrary to the teachings of Scripture, and was not attacking Premillennialism as such. It is of note that Machen’s stated objection to McIntire’s editorial was that he felt McIntire had drawn faulty and unfair conclusions about what Kuiper had written, NOT that McIntire was an advocate of an unbiblical Dispensationalism.

But, Bennet and McIntire were not alone in how they viewed Kuiper’s article. The Presbytery of California of the new Presbyterian Church

of America (OPC) issued “Overture No. 3 from the Presbytery of California to the OPC October 12-14, 1936, Second General Assembly,” in which they stated: “With all our souls we are averse to any hyper-dispensationalism which would proclaim salvation as possible in any age apart from God’s redemptive work wrought out on Calvary. We think it, therefore, decidedly unfair to confuse the issue and make every premillennialist to be a hyper-dispensationalist.”¹⁹ The editors of the *Guardian*, to their credit, printed a statement in which they sought to divorce Kuiper’s words from the issue of Premillennialism.²⁰ The Presbytery acknowledged this, but was quick to say that, if they had misunderstood, their assessment was derived quite independently from McIntire’s comments in the *Beacon*.

Machen wrote to his good friend J. Oliver Buswell, President of Wheaton College, lamenting what was happening. Machen was encouraged with Buswell’s reply. Concerning Machen’s letters to Bennet about Dispensationalism, Buswell stated that he “did not see anything objectionable in them.”²¹ Machen replied: “It comforts me greatly to know that you think my letters to Mr. Bennet, rather hastily written though they were, were not objectionable.”²² At the same time, Buswell did not believe Machen was being fair to Carl McIntire.

Machen’s Position on “Modern Dispensationalism” and the Scofield Bible

As mentioned previously, it must be remembered that in the early part of the 20th century there were not the plethora of “study Bibles” which we see today. The Scofield Bible was the only one available to multitudes of evangelicals. Despite its weaknesses, quite a few in the evangelical world felt that there were many good things in the notes which could be

helpful to laymen, and that its inconsistencies and errors could be pointed out. Others felt that because of what they viewed as errors, the whole volume should be cast aside.

With the new spotlight on “Modern Dispensationalism,” Machen viewed with alarm what he regarded as an undue regard for Scofield’s notes in some quarters. In a letter to

“I know that, though certainly not Reformed, it [Dispensationalism] is on Christian ground, and I rejoice very greatly in that. The feeling that I have when I listen to Dispensationalist preachers is that the real fire of Christian faith is there, though almost choked out by mountains of slag. Here and there the flame bursts forth. There is a true evangelical note. My heart leaps for joy.”

J. Gresham Machen
in a letter to J. Oliver Buswell

Dr. Buswell, he stated: “... The Scofield notes have usurped *practically* the place that rightly belongs only to God’s Word. I know pastors who regard it as a particular mark of piety that they have Scofield Bibles, and not just Bibles, in the pews of their churches. I am bound to say that I should think that kind of attitude toward the Scofield Bible to be sinful even if I thought the Scofield notes to be the most orthodox notes that had ever been written.... I do think that the Bible without note or comment ought to be restored to its former place in the love and veneration of the people. I do think also that in our interpretation of the Bible we ought to return from these elaborate schemes and divisions to the grand

simplicity of that exhibition of God’s dealings with men which is set forth in the Reformed Faith.”²³ Machen closed by stating to Dr. Buswell: “I just feel that in you I have a very sympathetic correspondent.”

The very next day, Machen wrote a point of clarification to Buswell: “... By my criticism of the Scofield Reference Bible, and by the expression of my view that the way in which it is employed by a good many people is unhealthy, I did not for one moment mean to imply that the Scofield Bible ought to be made the subject of ecclesiastical action by our General Assembly. Few things, it seems to me, would be more improper than that.... I really feel quite confident that you already understood me perfectly on this point, but I just wanted to make perfectly sure.”²⁴

It is noteworthy that in subsequent correspondence between Machen and Buswell, the few disagreements centered not on matters of DOCTRINE, but rather on peripheral issues, and how Scofield’s words should be understood. For instance, Buswell indicated that he did not see any essential difference between a “study Bible” and a commentary, many of which Dr. Machen greatly valued, despite not agreeing with them on every point. He also doubted that any Bible student would confuse the notes with the actual Word of God. He wrote: “I do not believe there exists any reasonably intelligent Scofieldite who has any confusion in his mind on the difference between fallible human comments and the inspired Word of God.”²⁵

Machen stated his convictions clearly, but like those who would become Bible Presbyterians, he had little interest in demonizing a “straw man,” but rather looked at each matter being discussed with the careful Christian scholarship for which he was known.

Continued on page 6

“MODERN DISPENSATIONALISM”

Continued from page 5

Machen confirmed what was paraphrased earlier in this article from Dr. Allis. He wrote to Dr. Buswell that “My present conviction that the Scofield Bible is a terrible menace has only recently been formed fully in my mind. I have devoted most of my life to the refutation of naturalistic Modernism. The Scofield teaching seemed to me to be a side issue. So far as it was erroneous and so far as I knew anything about it, it was without scholarly representatives. Moreover, though erroneous, it was not so erroneous as to be opposed to all Christianity, as indifferentism and Modernism are. Therefore I just neglected the refutation of it in the interests of what seemed to be more important pursuits....”

“I know that, though certainly not Reformed, it [Dispensationalism] is on Christian ground, and I rejoice very greatly in that. The feeling that I have when I listen to Dispensationalist preachers is that the real fire of Christian faith is there, though almost choked out by mountains of slag. Here and there the flame bursts forth. There is a true evangelical note. My heart leaps for joy.”²⁶

When writing to James E. Bennet, he carefully stated: “... It is important that ‘Dispensationalism’ shall be interpreted in the right way. There is, of course, a sense in which everyone who believes the Bible must hold to dispensations in God’s dealings with men, and the word ‘Dispensationalism’ occurs in the Westminster Confession of Faith. But there is also a sense of the word ‘Dispensationalism’ in accordance in which it is indeed, as it seems to me, an error.... Unfortunately that sense of the word ‘Dispensationalism’ in accordance with which ‘Dispensationalism’ is contrary to the Bible has become increasingly common in recent years.

It has come to be almost the technical use of the word. Yet there are, of course, a great many people who would call themselves ‘Dispensationalists’ and yet do not really hold to the serious errors which underlie ‘Dispensationalism’ taken in this technical sense.”²⁷

Shortly thereafter, the editors of the *Guardian* (including Machen) wrote: “We do not mean, of course, that everyone who uses the Scofield Reference Bible is to be excluded or deposed from the ministry or eldership or diaconate of our Church or other truly Reformed or Presbyterian churches. It is quite possible that many persons know and love the Scofield Reference Bible without really agreeing with the false teaching that is in it.... Of course we recognize that many things in them are true. We do not even deny that some of the worst things in the notes are actually contradicted by other passages that the notes themselves contain. By a happy inconsistency Dr. Scofield is prevented from drawing fully the disastrous consequences of his theory as to the history of God’s dealings with men. We gladly recognize all that.”²⁸ Elsewhere, Machen voiced his strong opposition to some of Scofield’s teaching, but nonetheless wrote: “There is, of course, a great deal that is good and true in Scofield’s notes....”²⁹

In the November 14, 1936, issue of the *Presbyterian Guardian* an article was published by Dr. Buswell entitled: “A Premillennialist’s View.” It is quite interesting that Buswell had sent a draft of his article to Machen, and the two of them corresponded quite graciously about it, with Machen offering suggestions, many of which Buswell adopted.

When the article was published, a note from the editors (including Machen) stated: “While some of the opinions which are expressed in it, including the general estimate of the Scofield Bible, are not shared by us, we rejoice in its defense of the Re-

formed Faith against many of the teachings of Modern Dispensationalism.” With Machen not being fond of ANY “study Bible,” it is understandable that Machen and Buswell would be in disagreement on this. However, what should not be lost in the discussion is that Buswell was commended for his “defense of the Reformed Faith against many of the teachings of Modern Dispensationalism.”³⁰

In the last letter Buswell wrote to Machen (which we have quoted often in this series of articles), he wrote of “the method to be used in correcting dispensational error”: “You are a far more experienced and more capable Christian leader than I, but I have had certain experiences with devout people misguided by dispensationalism, which I think you have not had. I have found that such people will generally listen to specific arguments with definite references but they are not convinced, and I think could not be expected to be convinced, by general phrases such as ‘the dispensationalism of the Scofield Bible.’” Buswell, like a number of others, sensed that some were beginning to erect and attack a “straw man,” and that by not acknowledging and dealing with certain things Scofield stated which seemed to contradict the attacks, the writings of these men were causing “irritation rather than to bring conviction.”³¹

Earlier that fall Machen had written to Attorney Bennet, defending Professor Kuiper, but nonetheless closed his letter by expressing hope that “you and I and the rest of the brethren may still work together, despite our differences of opinion regarding these matters, in these agencies and in this Church.”³² Upon Machen’s death, this spirit was soon to vanish.

A Sharp Turn Following Machen’s Death

The beginning of 1937 was to see a much more aggressive attitude

on the part of the editors of the *Presbyterian Guardian*, the professors of Westminster Theological Seminary and the leaders of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church. Open hostility began to be publicly displayed against those who were to become Bible Presbyterians. Only months following Buswell's election as moderator of the Second General Assembly of the OPC — at Machen's behest — and the publication in the *Guardian* of his "A Premillennialist's View," the *Guardian* published John Murray's scathing attack entitled "Dr. Buswell's Premillennialism."³³ With the removal of Dr. Machen's restraining influence, it appeared to many that the gloves were now off and the Westminster group was out to consolidate its power and to paint any who did not agree with them in every minor detail as not being "truly Reformed."³⁴

Professor Allan A. MacRae, a founding member of the Westminster Seminary faculty, began to see the criticisms of Dispensationalism changing from the careful analysis of Machen to one better characterized as blanket demonization. He stated: "One time I was with a member of the faculty [John Murray] and a lawyer friend [Murray Forst Thompson] and they were discussing The Independent Board which they said was a very bad board. They went through the list of Board members, saying 'this man is a premillennialist,' and 'this man is a dispensationalist,' etc. As far as I could see, knowing most of these men fairly well, the difference was that if a person believed in premillennialism but did not have any great zeal for it, they called him a premillennialist. But if he believed in premillennialism and thought that it was important enough to stand for it even if one suffered loss by doing so then they called him a dispensationalist. That, as far as I could see, was their difference in these two terms."³⁵

Elsewhere, Dr. MacRae wrote: "... There has come to be a fairly

large group of people who think of [this] term [Dispensationalism] as describing some extreme viewpoint that no well-trained expositor would think of teaching."³⁶

By April 1937, just four months after the passing of Machen, Professor MacRae saw no other option than to resign from Westminster Seminary. He wrote: "Despite the time-honored use of the term 'dispensation' throughout Christian history, a straw man has been erected and called 'Modern Dispensationalism.' To this straw man this group attributes views which are emphatically denied by most if not all of those who call themselves 'Dispensationalists.' Never have I met a man who said that he held the unbiblical views which are attacked. Yet the impression is given that this is closely related to Premillennialism and that the attacked views are actually held."³⁷

MacRae elsewhere cautioned Christians to be careful in their discussion of Dispensationalism. He stated: "If a person doesn't believe in dispensation[s] then surely every command given to the Israelites must apply to us today and we ought to be doing everything exactly as the Israelite did. We have to be dispensationalists — every Christian has to be a dispensationalist. But if by a dispensationalist you mean that you believe that people in the time of Moses were saved by keeping the law and today they are saved through faith in Christ, why that is a belief which has absolutely no support in Scripture."³⁸

But, both MacRae and Buswell indicated that they were quite agreeable to the "dispensationalism" of Charles Hodge, who details his belief in four separate dispensations under the covenant of grace. Hodge stated: "Although the covenant of grace has always been the same, the dispensations of that covenant have changed." He proceeds to outline his belief in the dispensations from Adam to Abraham, from Abraham

to Moses, from Moses to Christ, and the Gospel Dispensation.³⁹ MacRae, as a Premillennialist, stated that his only possible change would be to add a fifth dispensation: the Millennium.

The Bible Presbyterian Church and Dispensationalism

In characteristic style, Westminster Professor Paul Woolley stated: "A new denomination, the Bible Presbyterian Synod, was founded a few months later in the spring of 1937 and a new theological Seminary, Faith, was opened in September. Machen was now thoroughly repudiated by these actions, even though no such admission would be made verbally. Reformed orthodoxy and the disciples of Darby, Brookes, and Scofield [all leading dispensationalists] were going their several ways. They were no longer in alliance."⁴⁰ Paul Woolley served with distinction as a professor at Westminster Seminary. However, these remarks of his do not square with the facts, and are sadly irresponsible.

Edwin H. Rian, also a leader at Westminster, lists "differences concerning dispensationalism" first in his reasons why men left the OPC to start the Bible Presbyterian Church.⁴¹ Yet, nowhere in his discussion of Dispensationalism does he mention that the leaders of the Bible Presbyterian Church spoke out repeatedly and in one voice in their rejection of any Dispensationalism which violated the unity of the covenant of grace back to the fall of man.

OPC historians D.G. Hart and John Muether at least state that Buswell and MacRae "disavowed the dispensational label." However, they say that Buswell and MacRae "defended the liberty of OP congregations to use the Scofield Reference Bible."⁴² The truth of the matter is that they held the exact same posi-

Continued on page 8

"MODERN DISPENSATIONALISM"

Continued from page 7

tion as did Machen on the matter. They were not promoting it, but did not think the mere use of the Bible should be a matter of formal ecclesiastical concern (See Machen's letter to Buswell in the third paragraph under "Machen's Position on 'Modern Dispensationalism' and the Scofield Bible" [page 5 of this article]).

It is interesting that there is no evidence that these Bible Presbyterians had made some radical transformation from the days they were sought out by Machen to teach and serve on the Board of Westminster Seminary, or that their views were not known. Up till the time of Machen's death, there were few who were more enthusiastic and effective in promoting the Seminary than Carl McIntire in the *Christian Beacon*. These men believed what they had believed all through the years since their days at Princeton Seminary.

When considering the historical facts, the assessment of H. McAllister Griffiths appears to be much more plausible. He wrote: "I have been forced with extreme reluctance to the conclusion that both these movements [Westminster Seminary and the OPC] have been deflected from the original and sound principles upon which they were founded. I do not say this to the discredit of any individual. I freely recognize the sincerity of those who are responsible for these movements. They believe that they are doing right. I do not judge their conscience or deny their sincerity. But I do believe that they are wrong, and that it can be demonstrated that both these movements have sharply and visibly changed their original courses."⁴³

In truth, the Bible Presbyterians were solid proponents of Reformed doctrine. Some in both the OPC and BPC may have owned Scofield Bi-

bles, and the writings of a few in both denominations, over the 75 years of their existence, may very well have contained weaknesses. It is known that a few Bible Presbyterians used the Scofield Bible in their teaching, but there is also evidence that these men disclaimed their allegiance to those things which they found to be contradictory and misleading, and which did violence to the teaching of the Word of God as outlined in the Westminster Confession.

It is quite clear that the Bible Presbyterians stood firmly on the side of Professor John Murray as to what is unquestionably the main objection to the views detected in some Dispensationalists. With all of the writing on various aspects of "Modern Dispensationalism," Professor Murray stated clearly his central concern, which mirrored Dr. Griffith's statement quoted earlier in this article. Murray wrote: "Herein consists the real seriousness of the dispensationalist scheme. It undermines what is basic and central in Biblical revelation; it destroys the unity of the covenant of grace."⁴⁴

Whereas Murray found extreme statements and sometimes generally attributed them to all Dispensationalists, the Bible Presbyterians believed this was not a fair or scholarly procedure. Murray colored his writing by disparaging the claim of many Dispensationalists that they believed that salvation by grace through faith in the work of Christ on the cross was the only way of salvation through all ages since the fall. Instead of just acknowledging that they taught this, and pointing out their inconsistencies, he virtually dismissed these openly-stated beliefs as some grudging "admission or concession" or that it was merely "their concessions in the pinch of difficulty."⁴⁵

Murray wrote: "Dispensationalists may attempt to reconcile their teaching with the Reformed standards. They may appeal to their admission that God has only one way

of saving, and that saints under the Mosaic economy were saved by the blood of Christ and the grace of God....

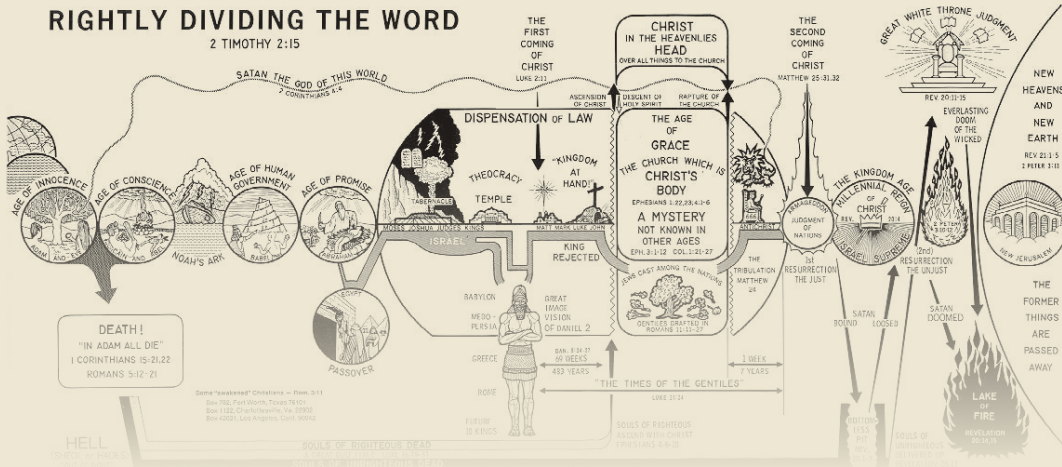
"Some may be surprised when we say that these concessions afford no escape for the dispensationalist, except in so far as he is willing to contradict himself. Our standards are explicit that the Mosaic dispensation was an administration of the covenant of grace. Its ruling principle was the very covenant of grace that comes to its full exhibition in the New Testament revelation. Dispensationalists are emphatic and reiterative that the governing principle of this Mosaic dispensation was the principle of law or covenant of works. The contrast between the two positions is absolute."

He quotes Charles Fineberg, who said: "God does not have two mutually exclusive principles as law and grace operative in one period," and makes the jump to applying this to all Dispensationalists. He does not just point out the great inconsistency, but rather implies that ALL Dispensationalists believe men are saved by obedience to the Law in the Old Testament — despite the clear statements of many Dispensationalists to the contrary.⁴⁶

Dr. Buswell: In contrast, J. Oliver Buswell stated: "This dispensation of law, the moderate dispensationalists say, is not contrary to but consonant with the underlying principle of grace. It is heretical to teach that the covenant of grace was broken off between Sinai and Calvary. It is not heretical, strongly as we may disagree with the teaching, to hold that between Sinai and Calvary there was superimposed over the covenant of grace a legalistic system of hypothetical but impossible salvation by works."⁴⁷ Buswell agreed completely with Murray that to break off the covenant of grace between Sinai and Calvary is a "heresy," but he more accurately presented the view of the

RIGHTLY DIVIDING THE WORD

2 TIMOTHY 2:15



Dispensationalists were known for producing charts which detailed the different dispensations they detected throughout the Scriptures. There were many views as to the number and demarcation of these dispensations. J. Gresham Machen, while no enemy to the concept of dispensations, found many of these unnecessarily complex and believed they placed erroneous divisions without Biblical warrant. Instead he argued for the "grand simplicity" of the Reformed faith. A number of Bible Presbyterians held similar views to those of Machen and expressed their agreement with the way Charles Hodge developed this issue.

many Dispensationalists with whom he had close contact. Certainly Machen agreed with Buswell that many Dispensationalists of this sort were inconsistent and quite wrong on many matters. Yet, Machen worked closely with them — as all sides admit — in defending the faith.

In this same article, Buswell talks about Dispensationalism and states: "We believe that what is objected to is a denial of the unity of the covenant of grace. I wish to register my testimony emphatically for the teaching of the Westminster Confession upon this point. I do not believe that there are any in The Presbyterian Church of America or in our true constituency who really deny the unity of God's redemptive plan ('the scarlet thread,' as we call it, running through Scripture)."

He proceeds to warn against "wrongly dismembering the Word of truth," probably a pointed criticism of Scofield, who presented some of his teaching in a book entitled *Rightly Dividing the Word of Truth*. He also spoke of the "danger" of certain Scofield notes, notes to which he "particularly object[s]," and others which he "reject[s]."

Later in the article, he wrote: "Whereas I am ardently a premillennialist, my own personal views are

quite extremely opposed to what is more commonly called dispensationalism. I thoroughly agree with Charles Hodge, Volume II, page 122, to the effect that the covenant of works completely terminated with the fall."

Buswell even cautioned against the words of Charles Hodge, who said there were "two methods of attaining eternal life: the one that which demands perfect obedience, and the other that which demands faith."⁴⁸ Buswell held that perfect obedience was the only means to *retain* eternal life, already received before the fall. But for all time after the fall of Adam, Buswell wrote: "I insist that there is only one way in any age whereby God has even hypothetically offered to give eternal life to anyone who did not possess it, namely, through the covenant of grace." Indeed this is language often used by Machen, who emphasized that fallen men could not be saved, "even hypothetically," by perfect obedience to the law.

Continuing, Buswell states: "Isaiah being utterly dependent upon the grace of God through the atonement which was to be accomplished, is, I think, upon just as high a plane of spirituality as Paul in his state of dependence upon the atonement which has been accomplished."⁴⁹

If any doubt were to remain, Buswell, in this article, publicly rejected the teaching of his close friend, Lewis Sperry Chafer of Dallas Theological Seminary. He stated "that the opinion expressed by my good friend [Chafer], quoted by Professor Murray, is extreme, and inconsistent with the unity of the covenant of grace. I have argued with this friend hours and days at a time on this very point. I admire his evangelical earnestness but I believe there is a deep inconsistency in his teaching. I understand his books and his conversation to imply that the covenant of grace was suspended in its operation at Sinai. If I misunderstand him on this point, I shall be happy to be corrected, but I must confess that Professor Murray's opinion on that particular part of this friend's teaching is my opinion, and the opinion of many of his closest friends and admirers. However, we ought to remember that this man does actually believe both sides of his inconsistency. He does believe that Isaiah was saved and that salvation is by grace alone."⁵⁰

Chafer took umbrage at Buswell's comments. In uncharacteristic directness, Buswell responded to Chafer: "Man, can't you see it! Reread Murray's article and Allis' also. I do not remember whether Allis mentioned you by name, but Murray did repeatedly.

"Now I am a premillennialist, and you are a premillennialist. I stand for the fundamentals of the Christian faith as set forth in the system of doctrine contained in the Westminster Confession and Catechisms. Mr. Murray stands for that same system of doctrine. My name is closely associated with yours and has in the past been closely associated with Mr. Murray's. Now Mr. Murray attacks my premillennial view in the classroom and does not distinguish it from your dispensational view which he attacks in a se-

Continued on page 10

“MODERN DISPENSATIONALISM”

Continued from page 9

ries of articles. I am responsible for my influence on our Wheaton graduates.... The premillennial view is not identical with your view of the dispensation of law. I defend the premillennial view. You are under attack from the enemies of premillennialism for points of doctrine which I personally do not accept. I regard you as an honored brother in the Lord, but under the circumstances I found it my duty to write the article in the *Guardian*, distinguishing between premillennialism and your interpretation of the dispensation of law.”⁵¹

Chafer distanced himself further and further from Covenant Theology as the years proceeded, but it is only fair to say that he rejected the criticisms against his beliefs on how man is saved. In the Dallas Seminary journal, *Biblioteca Sacra*, he stated that he “yields first place to no man in contending that a holy God can deal with sin in any age on any other ground than that of the blood of Christ.”⁵²

A few months later, Chafer wrote: “Are there two ways by which one may be saved? In reply to this question it may be stated that salvation of whatever specific character is always the work of God in behalf of man and never a work of man in behalf of God. This is to assert that God never saved any one person or group of persons on any other ground than that righteous freedom to do so which the Cross of Christ secured. There is, therefore, but one way to be saved and that is by the power of God made possible through the sacrifice of Christ.”⁵³

Buswell’s *A Systematic Theology of the Christian Religion* deals with the subject of Dispensationalism to a greater degree. He states: “Similar to the error of teaching that eternal life

might hypothetically be attained by perfect obedience, is the error that there has been a ‘dispensation’ since the fall in which the attainment of eternal life was possible on a meritorious basis. There are those who teach [he here quotes from the footnote to John 1:17 in the Scofield Reference Bible] that since the death and resurrection of Christ, ‘the point of testing is no longer legal obedience as a condition of salvation, but acceptance or rejection of Christ, with good works as a fruit of salvation ...’ implying that prior to the time of Christ, legal obedience was the condition of salvation.”⁵⁴

“Whereas I am ardently a premillennialist, my own personal views are quite extremely opposed to what is commonly called dispensationalism. I thoroughly agree with Charles Hodge, Volume II, page 122, to the effect that the covenant of works completely terminated with the fall.”

J. Oliver Buswell
in *The Presbyterian Guardian*

Buswell continues: “I strongly urge that this notion be totally abandoned as inconsistent with the immutable holiness of God.”⁵⁵ However, he continues by showing that this idea is not only found in the Scofield Bible and other Dispensational writings, but is found “inadvertently” in the writings of many Reformed theologians.

Buswell cautions that when one discusses this “error” with proponents of Dispensationalism, it must be “humbly remembered that this ‘dispensational’ idea of eternal life offered by means of legal obedience is inadvertently found in the writings of some of our greatest reformed

theologians.”⁵⁶ He gives several quotations from John Calvin and Charles Hodge — both who were strong proponents of the unity of the covenant of grace. Calvin wrote: “The passage [Romans 10:5,6] is taken from Lev. 18:5, where the Lord promises *eternal life* to those who would keep his law....”⁵⁷ Charles Hodge wrote that during the “Third Dispensation” (the period of time between Moses and Christ) “it was a legal covenant. It said, ‘do this and live.’” Hodge continued: “We are no longer bound to be free from all sin, and to render perfect obedience to the law, *as the condition of salvation*.”⁵⁸

Dr. McIntire: Carl McIntire is often incorrectly labeled as a Dispensationalist, largely based on the October 1, 1936, editorial in the *Christian Beacon* which has been mentioned several times throughout these articles. McIntire also pushed back against the “straw man” attack against all “Dispensationalists,” believing, like Machen, that the word “dispensation” was a good word used in the Scriptures and in the Westminster Confession of Faith. He carried a front-page article by Arthur J. Diffenbacher entitled: “The Faith of a Dispensationalist.”⁵⁹ Diffenbacher had been a member in good standing in the Orthodox Presbyterian Church and later joined the Bible Presbyterian Church. He was fond of the Scofield Bible, but began his article by stating his firm belief in the unity of the covenant of grace back to the fall and that he didn’t agree with everything Scofield had to say. Also, with the *Christian Beacon* being a “religious NEWSpaper,” McIntire occasionally carried articles about those who were known to be “Dispensationalists,” without any negative commentary (very similar to the practice of the *Presbyterian Guardian* while Machen was still alive).

However, for those who care to read what McIntire himself had to say, it is abundantly evident that he

had no use for any theology which violated the unity of the covenant of grace. He stated: “We [premillennialists], for I held such a belief, insisted that any dispensationalism which denied the unity of the covenant of grace was indeed an anti-Reformed heresy....”⁶⁰ It is interesting that McIntire uses the same terminology as was used by Kuiper in his September 12, 1936, article in the *Presbyterian Guardian*. This should silence any who wrongly read a support for the errors found in the teaching of some Dispensationalists in McIntire’s October 1, 1936, *Christian Beacon* editorial critical of Kuiper.

Elsewhere, McIntire stated: “At no place in the handling of the Second Coming of Christ by our Synod was there any reference to dispensation of any kind. There is, however, in the Confession of Faith the use of the term.... It reads: ‘There are not, therefore, two covenants of grace differing in substance, but one and the same under various dispensations.’ The point is that there has been only one way of salvation in the one covenant of grace which goes back to the fall.... If you accept the Westminster Confession and the Covenant of Grace, you can’t be a part of any dispensationalism that does not accept this.

“There has never been any endorsement at any time by our Synod and Presbytery of the seven dispensations of Scofield.”⁶¹ Could Professor Murray possibly have stated the basic Reformed position on this point any more plainly than did McIntire?

One of the greatest sermons I have ever heard was one in which McIntire preached from Galatians 3: “Abraham believed God and it was counted to him for righteousness.” McIntire gloried in the fact that this quotation from Genesis 15:6 showed the unity of the covenant of grace and the church. The words of verse 8 were dear to him: “And the scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the

heathen through faith, preached before the gospel unto Abraham, saying, In thee shall all nations be blessed” (a quotation from Genesis 12:3 and elsewhere). McIntire presented this truth, with remarkable clarity, that Abraham had the Gospel preached unto him and that he was justified by God through faith in the same way as we are today.

In my early days at Shelton College, it was McIntire, through his preaching, who impressed on me that the church did not start in the New Testament, but consisted of all the redeemed through all ages. McIntire often pointed this out with great emphasis at the world congresses of the International Council of Christian Churches. Bible Presbyterian minister James L. Blizzard, in our Old Testament Survey class at Shelton College further reinforced this teaching. I had not previously given much thought to this subject in the Baptist churches I had attended. This was one of those clarifying realizations that gave new meaning to all future study of God’s Word. This teaching continued in my studies at Faith Theological Seminary.

Allan A. MacRae commented about the unfair labeling of McIntire as a “Dispensationalist,” stating that because McIntire was a strong Premillennialist “they [the Westminster men] naturally then labeled McIntire as a dispensationalist....” Despite assurances in the *Guardian* the year before, MacRae believed these men did indeed improperly accuse those with strong Premillennial views of having unreformed “extreme views” related to Dispensationalism. MacRae continued: “You would not find such views held by McIntire or by a good many of those whom they labeled as dispensationalists.”⁶²

Dr. MacRae: In his later years, MacRae wrote down much autobiographical material. He tells of his early years and his remembrances of the rise in popularity of the Scofield

Bible. He also recalls attending a Bible conference where a speaker had an elaborate chart pointing out seven dispensations to be found in the Scriptures. Another speaker also presented seven dispensations, but had a different arrangement than the first. MacRae commented: “It seemed to me then that dispensational difference between the Old Testament and the New was very definite, and also the great change that occurred at the fall, but that some of the others were rather debatable, and I felt that in the attempt to reach the number ‘7’ each of the two had made some rather unjustifiable guesses....”⁶³

When Faith Theological Seminary was started, largely under the leadership of Dr. MacRae, it was thoroughly committed to the Westminster Confession of Faith and Catechisms, and the unity of the covenant of grace was clearly taught. Yet the constant barrage of claims that Faith Seminary was Dispensational in its theology, coming from those in the OPC, led to Dr. MacRae answering a number of letters from inquirers.

MacRae, responding to one such letter, stated: “We at Faith Seminary are strongly convinced that no one ever has been saved or ever will be saved in any other way than through the grace of God based upon the merits of the sacrificial death of Christ at Calvary. We feel that the Bible clearly teaches the unity of the covenant of grace.... We do not believe it can be divided into sections which are appropriate only for special dispensations.... Its [the Scofield Bible’s] notations sometimes contradict one another. There are notations in it which clearly teach the unity of the covenant of grace and other notes which set the Old Testament and the New Testament over against each other in a way that can be very misleading. If attention were directed exclusively to these particular notes, I believe that much harm

Continued on page 12

“MODERN DISPENSATIONALISM”

Continued from page 11

could be done.”⁶⁴ This mirrored Machen’s contention that, despite his opposition to it, there was a “happy inconsistency” in many of the Scofield notes.

Faith Seminary Professor R. Laird Harris wrote an article entitled “The Purpose of the Mosaic Law.” In it, he stated: “That the Old Testament saints well knew the typical meaning of these ceremonies and trusted in the Lamb to come is clear from such a precious verse as Isaiah 53:6, ‘The Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all.’” He continued: “We dwell on this teaching that the ceremonial law was intended to portray to those of faith in old time that Christ would come to die for them and that faith in the coming Christ would save them.”⁶⁵

Some have accused Dr. MacRae of being a Dispensationalist because of his work on the New Scofield Reference Bible. It should be remembered that, rightly or wrongly, MacRae lent his renowned scholarship to many endeavors in the evangelical world, particularly as to the Old Testament, his area of expertise.

Among other Bible projects on which MacRae served as a contributor is the Reformation Study Bible, which is widely used and promoted today in Reformed circles. General Editor R.C. Sproul, a popular Reformed speaker, theologian and educator, writes concerning MacRae and the other contributors: “Over the last twenty-five years, I’ve assembled a team of seventy-five pastors and scholars — men I trust — to help me preserve, refine, and expand what I believe are the best study Bible notes we have to date.”⁶⁶ Longtime Faith Seminary professor R. Laird Harris also served as a “trusted” contributor to this work, as did others with Bible Presbyterian roots.

It must further be recognized that many Dispensationalists who held tenaciously to the Scofield Bible were quick to decry the New Scofield Bible for the changes which had been made. MacRae wrote concerning this that in the original Scofield Bible “... you find certain notes which give the impression that the Old Testament was a bad book, inferior to the New Testament and the Jews were rash in accepting the law and they were on legal ground in the things you find in the Old Testament and that even Christ in giving His sermon on the mount was on legal ground instead of on the ground of faith which would apply to us.” MacRae described the inferences made by these notes as “very unfortunate.” He continued: “I don’t believe there’s anybody on the committee that has any desire that such statements should be repeated.”⁶⁷

The introduction to the New Scofield Bible states: “Under the former dispensation, law was shown to be powerless to secure righteousness and life for a sinful race (Gal. 3:21-22). Prior to the cross man’s salvation was through faith (Gen. 15:6; Rom. 4:3), being grounded on Christ’s atoning sacrifice, viewed anticipatively, by God ...; now it is clearly revealed that salvation and righteousness are received by faith in the crucified and resurrected Savior.”⁶⁸

An example of the faulty information which is often repeated concerning the Bible Presbyterian Church, one man wrote on the “Puritan Board Blog,” August 25, 2009: “MacRae was also a founder of the Bible Presbyterian Church which was well-known for its tolerance if not embrace of dispensationalism.”

A Reformed Baptist pastor responded: “If I may, I would like to correct this. I was a student and friend of MacRae. I know from personal instruction and conversation that he was certainly not dispensationalist. He was historic premillennial and covenantal. I can safely say

that he subscribed fully and strictly to the Westminster Confession of Faith as well. Our church had a close relationship with him, as our pastor had also been his student and maintained an ongoing relationship. He often came to speak. He was the primary reason I attended his seminary. He disagreed with dispensationalism, and it was from his influence that our pastor also disagreed with dispensationalism — and hence me too.

“He did, though, regard dispensationalists and amillennarians as genuine brethren, and so he willingly worked together with them.... From my personal knowledge of him, he had a clear conception of when NOT to draw a line of separation from brethren. Genuine brethren who happened also to be dispensationalist and amillennial were allies to him in the defense and proclamation of the faith.

“Pardon me if I am beating this too hard. I just wanted to set the record straight.”⁶⁹

MacRae expressed his own frustration concerning the version of history repeatedly stated by those sympathetic to the OPC. The Fall 1991 issue of the *Westminster Theological Journal* carried an article by OPC Historian Darryl G. Hart. It contained a note that “Allan A. MacRae, professor of Old Testament, was a dispensationalist, while Paul Woolley professor of church history, was a ‘historic premillennialist.’”⁷⁰

MacRae wrote to the editors of the *Journal*: “This misrepresentation shocked me greatly. I am certain that it would not have been made by any of my colleagues of those days, all of whom, to my great sorrow, have already passed on.... Like Paul Woolley, I agree entirely with the teachings of the Westminster Standards.

“I cannot think of any valid ground for anyone to call me a ‘dispensationalist.’ It is disturbing to have an imaginary difference between Paul Woolley and me stated as if it were a fact. I knew Dr. Machen very intimately, and served as a col-

league with him and with Paul Woolley for eight years, without ever having the feeling that there was any important difference between them and me. Paul and I were known to be premillennialists, but I never heard that either of us was criticized on that account. We worked together in great harmony. It was only after Dr. Machen's death that circumstances developed which made me decide to resign from the Westminster faculty."⁷¹ To his credit, the editor of the *Journal* printed these words from MacRae in their fall 1992 issue.

This exchange was posted on "The Continuing Story," a website produced by Wayne Sparkman, the director of the Historical Center of the present-day Presbyterian Church in America (PCA). In the Comments section of this posting, one reader wrote: "Was MacRae a Dispensationalist? I was not aware of this ... and I just recently read a book by him on Isaiah and it didn't register to me that he was Dispensational!" Director Sparkman responded: "No! Dr. MacRae was not a dispensationalist. Rather, some thought he was. Admittedly, he did some things which might have led to that conclusion, like working on the [New] Scofield Bible translation team, but Allen A. MacRae was not a dispensationalist. He was an historic premillennialist."⁷²

Dr. Griffiths: In describing these conflicts relating to Dispensationalism, H. McAllister Griffiths stated that one must be careful in not dealing too simplistically when discussing the subject, cautioning that: "The factors are involved in a complexity of intersecting currents and counter-currents."⁷³

In writing a "Memorandum" to the missionaries of The Independent Board for Presbyterian Foreign Missions, Griffiths states: "Without question there are many errors in the notes of the 'Scofield Bible.' I do not think that anyone could possibly confine himself to an acceptance of

every position taken...." Later he states that "there are some passages in the Scofield notes which make me shiver."⁷⁴ Like the others mentioned before, Griffiths — who originally wrote publicly of his support for

"We feel that the Bible clearly teaches the unity of the covenant of grace.... We do not believe it can be divided into sections which are appropriate only for special dispensations.... Its [the Scofield Bible's] notations sometimes contradict one another. There are notations in it which clearly teach the unity of the covenant of grace and other notes which set the Old Testament and the New Testament over against each other in a way that can be very misleading. If attention were directed exclusively to these particular notes, I believe that much harm could be done."

Allan A. MacRae

in response to a letter from an inquirer

Professor Murray's articles — began to believe that Murray, Kuiper and others, while writing many good things, were indeed attacking a "straw man," and not dealing as carefully as they should. This "catch word for infamy," as Professor MacRae described it, was being broadly attached to men without the average reader knowing what these men actually believed.

Carl McIntire published a lengthy article in the *Christian Beacon* by Dr. Griffiths dealing with this whole

matter. As it related to Dispensationalism, Griffiths wrote: "Every man who believes the Bible is bound to be one [a dispensationalist], even if he only finds two dispensations. Calvin and Charles Hodge found dispensations in the Bible, to mention only two Reformed theologians among others. In Hodge's scheme there were four...."

"So the attack shifted slightly. We were told that not everyone called a 'modern dispensationalist' was under fire, but only those forms of dispensationalism 'which denied the unity of the covenant of grace.' In simple, nontheological language, what does that mean? It means any denial of the doctrine that since Adam's fall any human being has ever been saved upon any ground other than the death of Christ upon the cross received through faith by the operation of the Holy Spirit. In other words, 'modern dispensationalism' was accused inferentially of teaching that in different dispensations men were saved in different ways. And it was further charged that even if the 'modern dispensationalist' concerned did not admit that his teaching involved some other ground of salvation in different dispensations, yet if this view could by a logical extension be shown to be inescapably involved in his system, he had violated the 'unity' of the covenant of grace, and was therefore not merely 'unreformed,' but positively heterodox.

"With this as a piece of pure logic, there can be no quarrel. If a man *did* teach that lost sinners could in different times be saved on some other ground than Christ's death, or if such teaching by inescapable logical inference lay in his doctrine, it would be fair to call him heterodox. But if a fair examination of a writer shows that he does not teach anything of the sort and that it can only be imputed to him by some process of logical juggling that tries to com-

Continued on page 14

“MODERN DISPENSATIONALISM”

Continued from page 13

mit him to principles which are repugnant to him, he ought to be acquitted....”⁷⁵

Griffiths, while openly stating that some things in the Scofield notes made him “shiver,” nonetheless felt it only fair to take into account the introduction to the Scofield Bible, which read in part: “from beginning to end the Bible testifies to one redemption. From beginning to end the Bible has one great theme—the person and work of the Christ.” Concerning this quote, Griffiths stated: “But to intimate that Dr. Scofield’s notes deny the unity of the covenant of grace is preposterous, and can only be made plausible by the drawing of many gratuitous conclusions from them which are not implied in them at all, and which are utterly foreign to their spirit.”⁷⁶ One may consider Griffiths assessment to be too charitable, yet this in no way makes him a “Modern Dispensationalist.” After all, it was he who as editor of the *Presbyterian Guardian* published Murray’s articles on Dispensationalism and commended them!

Concerning the Scofield Bible, Dr. Griffiths shows his agreement with Machen, when he states: “In the first place, I doubt the wisdom (to put it mildly) of attaching the name of any man to God’s Holy Word. In the second place, I do not believe that all of Dr. Scofield’s notes are equally well-grounded in Scripture. With some of them I frankly disagree.”⁷⁷

Concluding Comments

This writer has been associated with the Bible Presbyterian Church for over 40 years. Some certainly may find the writings of some who were not as clear as they should have been in dealing with these issues. I

suppose the same could be said of any church denomination which has existed for nearly 80 years. However, in Shelton College and Faith Theological Seminary I was taught precisely the teaching of the Westminster Confession of Faith, Chapter VII. It was in the Bible Presbyterian Church that I was first presented the errors and inconsistencies of the kind of Dispensationalism discussed in this article. The denomination has never held to Dispensationalism as its position and I personally have

“Without question there are many errors in the notes of the ‘Scofield Bible.’ I do not think that anyone could possibly confine himself to an acceptance of every position taken.... There are some passages in the Scofield notes which make me shiver.”

H. McAllister Griffiths
*in a “Memorandum” to all
Independent Board missionaries*

never been in a Bible Presbyterian Church where the Scofield Bible has been in the pews or obviously used from the pulpit. With Carl McIntire being the Chancellor and President, respectively, my training at Shelton College and Faith Theological Seminary did not include the use of the Scofield Bible.

Like Machen, the founders of the Bible Presbyterian Church had no problem with a belief in dispensations, since the word and teaching is found in the Scriptures, in the Westminster Confession of Faith and in the writings of some of the staunchest Reformed theologians. Several of the prominent Bible Presbyterian leaders publicly stated their basic agreement with the four dispensations outlined by Charles Hodge.

These Bible Presbyterian leaders were in full agreement with Dr. Murray’s and the other Westminster men’s basic criticisms of Dispensationalism. However, they didn’t always think they were fair in accusing some who had been labeled Dispensationalists of things which these men clearly said they did not believe. They also believed that many of the extreme beliefs being attacked were attributed broadly to all “Modern Dispensationalists,” when very few who were thus labeled actually held to those beliefs. They preferred the procedure of minimizing the use of labels, and rather seeking to deal honestly and specifically with the beliefs of each individual.

While the Westminster men were largely of European background, where “Dispensationalism” and the use of the Scofield Bible were almost non-existent, many of the Bible Presbyterians were pastors of churches where many people had long owned Scofield Bibles, because of its great popularity. Rather than tell their congregants to throw them away, they rather commended the good things in the notes and warned against the inconsistencies and errors which might lead to wrong beliefs or confusion about the unity of the Scriptures. They believed that the same principle should be applied as they had always used in their use of other commentaries. For instance, a Lutheran commentary might have many good notes on many subjects. Thus it might be valued for many things; but, for example, notes on the subject of consubstantiation would be pointed out as being in error by a Presbyterian pastor.

At any rate, the Bible Presbyterians overwhelmingly agreed with Dr. Murray when he stated: “Herein consists the real seriousness of the dispensationalist scheme. It undermines what is basic and central in Biblical revelation; it destroys the unity of the covenant of grace.”⁷⁸ Even if there might have been differ-

ences of opinion on all sides as to how to interpret the words of certain Dispensationalists, the Bible Presbyterians went well beyond mere assent to the fact that the Scriptures present only one way of redemption since the fall of man — which Dr. Murray did not think was of itself sufficient.

The Bible Presbyterians further made it clear that they did NOT agree with any placement of the law which would contradict, interrupt or nullify the covenant of grace. They held strictly to the fact that the covenant of works TERMINATED with the fall of man, and the covenant of grace BEGAN at that time in a unified “scarlet thread of redemption” throughout the entire Scriptures, both Old and New Testaments. This is precisely the grand Reformed teaching of the Scriptures and the Westminster Confession of Faith.

As we have seen, the subject of the Second Coming of Christ often came up in these discussions on Dispensationalism. We will deal with that in our spring 2016 issue. •

¹H. McAllister Griffiths, “‘Since the Syracuse General Assembly’: The Character and Leadership of Dr. Machen,” *Christian Beacon*, September 2, 1937, p. 2.

²Letter from Allan A. MacRae to Alan R. Heinlein, November 16, 1962.

³Loraine Boettner, *The Millennium* (Philadelphia: The Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Company, 1957), pp. 372-373.

⁴Paul Woolley, *The Significance of J. Gresham Machen Today* (Nutley, NJ: The Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Company, 1977), p. 45.

⁵Wayne Sparkman, <http://heidelblog.net/2013/12/sacred-bond-now-available-in-kinde/>, December 27, 2013.

⁶The Rev. Merrill T. MacPherson, vice president of The Independent Board for Presbyterian Foreign Missions, was pastor of this Church. The Presbyterian Constitutional Covenant Union was the precursor of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church and the Bible Presbyterian Church. It has been written about in other places throughout this series of articles.

The Bible Presbyterians made it clear that they did NOT agree with any placement of the law which would contradict, interrupt or nullify the covenant of grace. They held strictly to the fact that the Covenant of works TERMINATED with the fall of man, and the covenant of grace BEGAN at that time in a unified ‘scarlet thread of redemption’ throughout the entire Scriptures, both Old and New Testaments. This is precisely the grand Reformed teaching of the Scriptures and the Westminster Confession of Faith.

⁷Thomas R. Birch, “The Covenant Union Page,” *The Presbyterian Guardian*, October 21, 1935, p. 31.

⁸“Great Presbyterian Rally Opens Covenant Union Drive,” *The Presbyterian Guardian*, October 21, 1935, p. 34.

⁹Oswald T. Allis, “Modern Dispensationalism and the Doctrine of the Unity of Scripture,” *The Evangelical Quarterly*, January 1936.

¹⁰Typewritten document by Allan A. MacRae, “My Experiences at Westminster Seminary,” January 24, 1983, p. 23.

¹¹Charles G. Dennison, *History for a Pilgrim People* (Willow Grove, PA: Committee for the Historian of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church, 2002), pp. 113-114.

¹²John Murray, “The Reformed Faith and Modern Substitutes, VI: Modern Dispensationalism,” *The Presbyterian Guardian*, May 18, 1936, p. 77.

¹³H. McAllister Griffiths, “Eschatological Freedom,” *The Presbyterian Guardian*, May 4, 1936, p. 52.

¹⁴Charles Hodge, *Systematic Theology*, Vol. II (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1981), pp. 372-373.

¹⁵R.B. Kuiper, “Why Separation Was Necessary,” *The Presbyterian Guardian*, September 12, 1936, p. 227.

¹⁶Letter from James E. Bennet to J. Gresham Machen, October 7, 1936 (Archives of the PCA Historical Center).

¹⁷Carl McIntire “Premillennialism,” *Christian Beacon*, October 1, 1936.

¹⁸MacRae, “My Experience at Westminster Seminary,” pp. 20, 21.

¹⁹Minutes of the Second General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church of America, October 1936, p. 16.

²⁰“The Second General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church of America,” *The Presbyterian Guardian*, November 14, 1936, pp. 1-2.

²¹Letter from J. Oliver Buswell to J. Gresham Machen, October 12, 1936 (Archives of the PCA Historical Center).

²²Letter from J. Gresham Machen to J. Oliver Buswell, October 14, 1936 (Archives of the PCA Historical Center).

²³Letter from J. Gresham Machen to J. Oliver Buswell, October 19, 1936 (Archives of the PCA Historical Center).

²⁴Letter from J. Gresham Machen to J. Oliver Buswell, October 20, 1936 (Archives of the PCA Historical Center).

²⁵Letter from J. Oliver Buswell to J. Gresham Machen, October 21, 1936 (Archives of the PCA Historical Center).

²⁶Letter from J. Gresham Machen to J. Oliver Buswell, October 19, 1936 (Archives of the PCA Historical Center).

²⁷Letter from J. Gresham Machen to James E. Bennet, September 16, 1936 (Archives of the PCA Historical Center).

²⁸“The Second General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church of America,” *The Presbyterian Guardian*, November 14, 1936, p. 42.

²⁹Letter from J. Gresham Machen to James E. Bennet, September 16, 1936 (Archives of the PCA Historical Center).

³⁰J. Oliver Buswell, “A Premillennialist’s View,” *The Presbyterian Guardian*, November 14, 1936, pp. 46-47.

³¹Letter from J. Oliver Buswell to J. Gresham Machen, December 4, 1936 (Archives of the PCA Historical Center).

³²Letter from J. Gresham Machen to James E. Bennet, October 7, 1936 (Archives of the PCA Historical Center).

³³John Murray, “Dr. Buswell’s Premillennialism,” *The Presbyterian Guardian*, February 27, 1937, pp. 206-209.

Continued on page 16

"MODERN DISPENSATIONALISM"

Continued from page 15

³⁴MacRae, "My Experience at Westminster Seminary, p. 17.

³⁵Typewritten document by Allan A. MacRae, "Machen and Bennet," 1984, p. 2.

³⁶Letter from Allan A. MacRae to Alan R. Heinlein, November 16, 1962.

³⁷Letter from Allan A. MacRae to Harold S. Laird, Secretary of the Board of Trustees of Westminster Theological Seminary, April 26, 1937 (See *Presbyterian Guardian*, May 15, 1937, p. 50).

³⁸Rough draft of letter to an inquirer entitled "Difference Between Covenant Theology and Dispensationalism," March 13, 1958, p. A-47.

³⁹Hodge, pp. 373-377.

⁴⁰Paul Woolley, p. 45.

⁴¹Edwin H. Rian, *The Presbyterian Conflict* (Willow Grove, PA: The Committee for the Historian of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church, 2013), p. 168.

⁴²D.G. Hart and John Muether, *Fighting the Good Fight* (Willow Grove, PA: The Committee on Christian Education and the Committee for the Historian of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church, 1995), p. 47.

⁴³Griffiths, "'Since the Syracuse General Assembly'...", pp. 1-2.

⁴⁴John Murray, p. 77.

⁴⁵*Ibid.*, p. 79.

⁴⁶*Ibid.*

⁴⁷Buswell, "A Premillennialist's View," p. 47.

⁴⁸Hodge, p. 117.

⁴⁹Buswell, "A Premillennialist's View," p. 47.

⁵⁰Letter from J. Oliver Buswell to Lewis Sperry Chafer, May 24, 1937 (Archives of the PCA Historical Center).

⁵¹*Ibid.*

⁵²Lewis Sperry Chafer, "Dispensational Distinctions Denounced," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 101, July 1944, p. 259.

⁵³Lewis Sperry Chafer, "Inventing Heretics Through Misunderstanding," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 102, January 1945, p. 1.

⁵⁴J. Oliver Buswell, *A Systematic Theology of the Christian Religion* (Singapore: Christian Life Publishers PTE LTD, 1994), p. 314.

⁵⁵*Ibid.*, p. 316.

⁵⁶*Ibid.*, p. 319.

⁵⁷John Calvin, *Commentaries on the Epistle of Paul to the Romans* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1981), p. 387.

⁵⁸Hodge, p. 493.

⁵⁹Arthur J. Diefenbacher, "The Faith of a Dispensationalist," *Christian Beacon*, September 9, 1937, pp. 1,8.

⁶⁰Carl McIntire, "A Letter to Presbyterians," *Christian Beacon*, April 18, 1957.

⁶¹Letter from Carl McIntire to Brad Gsell, June 6, 1995.

⁶²Typewritten document by Allan A. MacRae, "Experiences With Carl McIntire," June 24, 1985, p. 5.

⁶³Typewritten document by Allan A. MacRae, "Dispensationalism," October 25, 1976, p. 5.

⁶⁴Letter from Allan A. MacRae to M.R. MacKay, June 17, 1949.

⁶⁵R. Laird Harris, "The Purpose of the Mosaic Law," *The Bible Today*, October 1943, p. 14.

⁶⁶R.C. Sproul, <http://reformationstudy-bible.com/contributors>.

⁶⁷Rough draft of letter to an inquirer entitled "Difference Between Covenant Theology and Dispensationalism," March 13, 1958, p. A-48.

⁶⁸*The New Scofield Reference Bible* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1967), p. 1124, note 2.

⁶⁹S.P. Smith, Oak Harbor, Washington: <http://www.puritanboard.com/showthread.php/52471-Premillennialism-and-the-Westminster-Cession-of-Faith/page2>.

⁷⁰Darryl G. Hart, "The Legacy of J. Gresham Machen and the Identity of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church," *Westminster Theological Journal*, Fall 1992, p. 213, note 4.

⁷¹Letter from Allan A. MacRae to the editors of the *Westminster Theological Journal*, January 21, 1992.

⁷²Wayne Sparkman, continuing.wordpress.com/2012/07/23/a-note-on-millennial-views-in-the-early-days-at-westminster/#comments, July 27, 2012.

⁷³Griffiths, "'Since the Syracuse General Assembly'...", p. 1.

⁷⁴H. McAllister Griffiths, "Memorandum," 1937, p. 1. (This nine-page document sought to answer accusations by those in the OPC against The Independent Board for Presbyterian Foreign Missions.)

⁷⁵Griffiths, "'Since the Syracuse General Assembly'...", p. 2.

⁷⁶*Ibid.*, pp. 2,6.

⁷⁷*Ibid.*, p. 2.

⁷⁸John Murray, p. 77.

"PRECIOUS IN THE SIGHT OF THE LORD ..."

Continued from page 1

Mr. Raymond Clark: April 2, 2015.



Mr. Clark was an elder in the Bible Presbyterian Church of Collingswood, NJ, for many years. As an engineer, Mr. Clark designed the communications antennae atop the World Trade Center in New York City. He was the son-in-law of Dr. Carl McIntire.

Dr. Ralph Colas: October 22, 2015.

Dr. Colas served for many years as the Executive Secretary of the American Council of Christian Churches, following a long ministry as a pastor. He was a Christian statesman who was loved by all those in the various denominations in the ACCC.



Rev. Al Bean: November 22, 2015.



Rev. Al Bean was a member of Faith Presbyterian, Bible Presbyterian Church, and served as its moderator for 29 years. He pastored the Ebenezer Bible Church in Fayetteville, NC, since 1972. Rev. Bean served in the 82nd Airborne Division in World War II. Spending his final days in the North Carolina Veterans Home in Salisbury, NC, he was a joy to all who visited him.

"... Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord ... that they may rest from their labours; and their works do follow them."

Revelation 14:13