

The Outlook

LITURGICAL PRIZES OR SURPRISES?
CALVIN'S DOCTRINE OF SCRIPTURE
THREAT OF GOVERNMENT AID



NOVEMBER - 1977

DEVOTED TO THE EXPOSITION AND DEFENSE OF THE REFORMED FAITH

Liturgical Prizes or Surprises?



REV. JELLE TUININGA

Not a few consistory members (and even more members of the congregation who are usually the victims of it) have probably cursed the day on which Synod appointed a standing Liturgical Committee with a sweeping and almost unlimited mandate. Every year again we are faced with a new product of its labors, and each year the confusion increases. Very few consistory members, and still fewer members of the congregation have any idea of the exact status of these proliferous forms. Adding to the confusion is the variety of Psalter Hymnal editions. Supplements to the Psalter, and supplementary booklets containing certain forms. It's pretty difficult to make head or tail out of the whole business.

But bad as that is, it's not the worst feature of the entire matter. In years or decades to come we'll hopefully all have the same up-to-date, standardized hymnals (wishful thinking?).

The worst feature is that one never knows what to expect next in the way of liturgical prizes or surprises (mostly the latter it seems). It's hard to know what direction the Liturgical Committee is actually trying to lead us. Indeed, on paper it sounds good. Synod mandated the Committee "to study liturgical usages and practices in our churches in the light of Reformed liturgical principles. . . ." This year the Liturgical Committee requested Synod to mandate it, along with the Psalter Hymnal Supplement Committee and representatives of the Education Committee, "to devise and present to the Synod of 1978 recommendations for motivating and instructing the membership of the Christian Reformed Church in the history, theology, and practice of Reformed liturgy and music." One of the reasons given for this is that "there is a possibility that our Reformed theology will be undermined by non-Reformed hymnody and liturgy." That is a good and noble motive, and no doubt that danger is not imaginary.

But that's now exactly where I have my problem. I wish I could trust the Liturgical Committee itself on this score. Rather, I see evidence that the Committee itself at times tends (intentionally or unintentionally) to undermine our Reformed theology in some of the newer proposed forms. Indeed, in my worst moments I ask, after the fashion of Nathanael, Can anything Reformed come from the Liturgical Committee?

Every time a new form comes along, crucial elements either seem to be missing or they are present in a much less clear and obvious manner. The sharp edges seem often to be taken off. That was true in the new form for Infant Baptism and also in the new "translation." Only after considerable reaction from the churches is the matter (reluctantly?) rectified to an extent. I often wonder why this has to be the case. Liturgy is supposed to be edifying to the churches; perhaps they should have a greater say in producing suitable forms.

No, I'm not for long forms. Fact is, some of the newly adopted forms, both for the Lord's Supper and Infant Baptism, are *too long*. But the important elements must be present, and what is said must be said clearly. The Reformed teaching, insofar as that has to be present, must be unequivocally stated, so that he who runs may read.

This year the Liturgical Committee has proposed a new form for the Solemnization of Marriage. The first question to be asked is: Who said we needed this? Or was this part of the original mandate too, even though marriage is not strictly an ecclesiastical affair?

In any case, we are presented with it. And here we have another example of what I mentioned above. I miss some important Reformed (Scriptural) emphases, and on that score the present form is far superior to the proposed one. *Again*, I should say. That was and is true, generally speaking, of the older Lord's Supper and Baptism forms also. The new doesn't measure up to the old in that respect. That is true here too, in the Marriage Form.

Look only at the fact that there is no reference at all to the husband being the head of the wife, and thus the vows spoken by both bride and groom are completely identical. In the Preface to the proposed form the Committee says that "there should be a clear and concise statement on what the Bible teaches about the meaning and purpose of marriage. But here a very important part of that teaching is simply ignored. And in the face of a lot of unbiblical ideas nowadays as propagated by the Women's Liberation movement, such an omission is so much the more inexcusable. It does not show a great deal of biblical sensitivity to the spirit of the age. And surely that is what we may expect of the church.

Without a doubt this omission is itself influenced by the Women's Lib movement. But instead of capitulating to the secular spirit of the age, we ought to throw up a bulwark against it.

It won't do to say that in the past the headship role was often misinterpreted or misused. That may

be true, but to fall into the opposite error is equally bad. It won't do either to stress the concept of "mutuality" in subjection to each other. That concept itself is biblical enough, and Paul mentions it in Ephesians 5:21. But right after that he admonishes wives to be subject to their husbands, and not the other way around. Mutual subjection holds for parents and children too, and for servants and masters also. But that does not do away with the unique role or function that each party has to the other. One cannot say that because we all must be subject to one another, children need not obey their parents. Nor does it follow that therefore wives need not be subject to their husbands. The old Form also mentions mutual subjection: "Thus the liberty of both husband and wife is glorified by *mutual loyalty to law*." Real liberation for both women and men comes by obedience to the ordinances which the Lord has instituted for marriage, not in trying to overthrow them or change them around. Too bad the Liturgical Committee didn't understand that.

It is to be hoped that many consistories will send in their reactions to this proposed Form, so that once again the Committee will be forced to back down. And before trying to instruct the membership of the church in the theology of Reformed liturgy, it is well that the members of the Committee steep themselves in it more thoroughly. Or, better yet, perhaps we ought to "lay off" this Committee and call for a ten-year moratorium on liturgical change, for we seem to be getting less liturgical renewal than liturgical retrogression. ●

NOTE

The editor, Rev. John Vander Ploeg, has been hospitalized because of blood clots in the lungs. We are grateful that he is recuperating at home and is greatly improved.

In view of his illness correspondence intended for the editor during November and December should be addressed to:

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"And the three companies blew the trumpets . . . and held THE TORCHES in their left hands, and THE TRUMPETS in their right hands . . . and they cried, The sword of Jehovah and of Gideon" (Judges 7:20).

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CALVIN'S DOCTRINE OF SCRIPTURE

Appeals have sometimes been made to John Calvin in effort to defend higher critical views of the Bible. This conclusion of John Murray's 1959 lecture, of which the first part was in our October issue, should clear up some of the confusion about what Calvin taught and may help us to see more clearly what we should believe about the Bible.

JOHN MURRAY*

A great deal has been written in support of the thesis that the Bible is infallible in matters that pertain to faith and life, to the doctrine of salvation and the kingdom of God, but not in other matters concerned with history or science. And the teaching of Calvin has been appealed to in support of this distinction. Perhaps you will permit a quotation from one of the ablest and most eloquent of the protagonists of this contention, Charles Augustus Briggs. He writes: "It is well known that Calvin and Luther and other reformers recognized errors in the Scriptures. . . . But what do these errors amount to, after all? They are only in minor matters, in things which lie entirely beyond the range of faith and practice. They have nothing to do with your religion, your faith in God and His Christ, your salvation, your life and conduct. . . . The Scriptures are pure, holy, errorless, so far as their own purpose of grace is concerned, as the only infallible rule of the holy religion, the holy doctrine, and the holy life. They are altogether perfect in those divine things that come from heaven to constitute the divine kingdom on earth, which, with patient, quiet, peaceful, but irresistible might, goes forth from the holy centre through all the radii of the circle of human affairs and persists until it transforms the earth and man."¹⁶ It is this distinction which Briggs alleges to be implicit in Calvin's position, and his contention is to the effect that the infallibility predicated of Scripture is, therefore, for Calvin, consistent with the error, which, he alleges, Calvin admits. But it is not only Dr. Briggs who makes this kind of allegation. No one has been a more painstaking student of Calvin than Emile Doumergue. On the question of inspiration he has performed the service of exposing the fallacy of R. Seeberg's contention that Calvin taught mechanical dictation. But Doumergue also maintains that Calvin did not teach literal, verbal inspiration and that for Calvin the important thing was not the words but "the doctrine, the spiritual doctrine, the substance."¹⁷

*From *Calvin on Scripture and Divine Authority* by John Murray. Copyright 1960 by Baker Book House and used by permission.

Here we are brought to the crux of the question. Does Calvin's position on inspiration fall into line with that espoused and defended by Dr. Briggs? Is it true that Calvin did not consider the words important but only the spiritual doctrine? It is this thesis that I am compelled on the basis of the evidence to controvert. In dealing with the question we shall have to take account of several considerations.

1. It is true that Calvin lays great stress, as we found in the quotations from his works, upon the heavenly doctrine of which Scripture is the depository. It is the liability to corruption on the part of men that made necessary the inscripturation of the heavenly doctrine. Thereby it is guarded against the neglect, error, and audacity of men. But that there is in Calvin the kind of alleged distinction between the heavenly doctrine and the Scripture in which that heavenly doctrine is deposited is a thesis which his own statements do not bear out. He affirms most explicitly that the Scripture is from God, that it has come to us from the very mouth of God, and that in believing the Scripture we feel the firmest conviction that we hold an invincible truth. To insinuate that this conviction has respect simply to the heavenly doctrine, as distinct from Scripture as the depository, is to interject a distinction of which there is no suggestion in the relevant passages. In other words, Calvin identifies the doctrine of which he speaks with the Scripture itself. "The Law and the Prophecies are not a doctrine delivered by the will of men, but dictated by the Holy Spirit,"¹⁷ and this is the settled point, he insists, that must be laid down if we are to profit in the Scriptures. And the emphasis is pervasive that we owe to the Scripture the same reverence we owe to God.

2. To say the least, it would be mystifyingly strange that Calvin would have affirmed so expressly that the writers of Scripture "did not utter at random what we have from their hand," that Scripture "has nothing of man mixed with it," that the writers "fearlessly testified that it was the mouth of the Lord that spoke" and that the Holy Spirit "ruled in their mouth as in his own sanctuary,"¹⁸ if his conception of inspiration did not apply to the details of words and to what we might call random statements. For Calvin, there are no random statements in Scripture because the writers did not speak at random but always by divine impulse. And, furthermore, we must remember that he has warned us against the impiety of thinking that there is anything unprofitable or vain in the Scripture; the Holy Spirit has taught us everything in the Scripture it concerns us to know, and all that is taught conduces to the advancement of piety.

3. When we examine the evidence which Doumergue adduces in support of his allegations that Calvin has not taught verbal inspiration, it is nothing short of exasperating to find how destitute of relevance this supposed evidence is. Under one caption Doumergue says, "Words have been added or suppressed"¹⁹ and then proceeds to cite instances. He appeals to Calvin's comments on Ephesians 2:5; Hebrews 9:1; I

Timothy 1:3; James 4:7. Let us see then what Calvin says at these points.

At Ephesians 2:5 Calvin comments, with reference to the words "by grace ye are saved," as follows: "I know not whether some one else inserted this, but, as there is nothing alien to the context, I freely accept it as written by Paul."²⁰ It is quite apparent that Calvin is here reflecting simply on the question as to the possibility of addition in the course of transcription. His own judgment is that these words are Pauline and proceeds to expound their import on this assumption. In short, his judgment is that they were not added. This is clearly a question of the proper text and nothing more. It has absolutely nothing to do with the question at issue.

At Hebrews 9:1 Calvin says: "Some copies read 'first tabernacle'; but I think there is a mistake in the word 'tabernacle,' nor do I doubt but that some unlearned reader, not finding a noun for the adjective, and in his ignorance applying to the tabernacle what had been said of the covenant, unwisely added the word 'tabernacle.'"²¹ Again, this is purely a matter of what Calvin regards as textual corruption by an unlearned reader and to him alone belongs the error, not at all to the writer of Hebrews. In fact, why does Calvin esteem this to be the work of an unlearned reader? Precisely because he is jealous for the accuracy of the original author. If Calvin were, as Doumergue alleges, not concerned about words but about the spiritual doctrine, he would not have bothered to reflect on the folly of the unlearned reader but would have been ready to attribute what he regarded as an error to the writer of Scripture itself.

On I Timothy 1:3 Calvin says: "Either the syntax is elliptical, or the particle *hina* is redundant; and in either case the meaning will be clear."²² This is concerned solely with the question of style. An ellipsis is simply an abbreviated manner of speech in which something plainly understood is not expressed and redundancy is simply a manner of speech by which something is expressed which is not indispensable to the meaning.

On James 4:7 we read: "Many copies have introduced here the following sentence: 'Wherefore he saith, God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace to the humble.' But in others it is not found. Erasmus suspects that it was first a note in the margin, and afterwards crept into the text. It may have been so, though it is not unsuitable to the passage."²³ Surely no comment is necessary to show the irrelevance to Doumergue's allegation.

Another caption under which Doumergue derives support for his thesis is that "there are differences,"²⁴ meaning, of course, that there are differences between the biblical writers when dealing with the same subjects, and cites Calvin's comments on Matthew 8:27; Matthew 9:18. That Calvin recognises the differences in the accounts given by the various evangelists we should fully expect. Who with even a modicum of understanding does not observe these

differences? But that these differences constitute any evidence of the lack of verbal inspiration or any such judgment on Calvin's part is precisely what Calvin is most jealous to deny. On Matthew 9:18 he says: "Those who imagine that the narrative, which is here given by Mark and Luke, is different from that of Matthew, are so clearly refuted by the passage itself, that there is no necessity for a lengthened debate. All the three agree in saying that Christ was requested by a ruler of the Synagogue to enter his house for the purpose of curing his daughter. The only difference is, that the name of Jairus, which is withheld by Matthew, is mentioned by Mark and Luke; and that he represents the father as saying, 'My daughter is dead,' while the other two say that she was in her last moments, and that, while he was bringing Christ, her death was announced to him on the road. But there is no absurdity in saying that Matthew, studying brevity, merely glances at those particulars which the other two give in minute detail. But since all the other points agree with such exactness, since so many circumstances conspire as to give it the appearance of three fingers stretched out at the same time to point out a single object, there is no argument that would justify us in dividing this history into various dates. The Evangelists agree in relating, that while Christ, at the request of a ruler of the synagogue, was coming to his house, a woman on the road was secretly cured of a bloody flux by touching his cloak; and that afterwards Christ came into the ruler's house, and raised a dead young woman to life. There is no necessity, I think, for circuitous language to prove that all the three relate the same event. Let us now come to details."²⁵ Calvin's own statement on this very subject we may quote again. "He (God) therefore dictated to the four evangelists what they should write, in such a manner that, while each had his own part assigned him, the whole might be collected into one body; and it is our duty now to blend the four by mutual relation, so that we may permit ourselves to be taught by all of them, as by one mouth."²⁶

Again Doumergue appeals to the fact that "the order of time is not always observed"²⁷ and instances Calvin's comments on Luke 4:5 and Matthew 27:51. We all know that the Evangelists do not always follow a chronological arrangement of their narratives and, of course, Calvin does also. But this is a question of literary form and not of verbal inspiration.

Finally, in connection with Doumergue's contention that for Calvin the words were not important but the "spiritual doctrine," it is Calvin's treatment of quotations from the Old Testament in the New that Doumergue relies on chiefly in this connection.²⁸ He appeals to Calvin's comments on the use made by New Testament writers, particularly Paul, of Old Testament passages. In this connection a distinction must be appreciated. Calvin recognizes, of course, as every one must perceive, that the New Testament writers, in referring to the Old Testament, did not always quote the Old Testament passages verbatim.

And Calvin is fully aware of the difficulty that sometimes confronts us in the use made of Old Testament passages. For example, he says with respect to Romans 10:6: "This passage is such as may not a little disturb the reader, and for two reasons. It seems to be improperly twisted by Paul and the words themselves turned to a different meaning."²⁹ And on Romans 11:8 he thinks that the words quoted from Isaiah are "somewhat altered" and that Paul does not here "record what we find in the prophet, but only collects from him this sentiment that they were imbued by God with the spirit of maliciousness so that they continued dull in seeing and hearing."³⁰ And again on Ephesians 4:8 he says: "To serve the purpose of his argument, Paul has departed not a little from the true sense of this quotation" (*testimonium*).³¹ On the same text with reference to the clause; for the words of the psalm are, 'thou hast received gifts for men,' while the apostle changes this expression into 'gave gifts' and thus appears to exhibit an opposite meaning."

But the all-important point to be observed is that Calvin in each case goes on to justify the apostle and to show that what appears to be an unwarranted change is one perfectly compatible with the designed use of the passage in each case, a use furthermore in perfect consonance with the inspiration under which the apostle wrote. With reference to the apparently improper use of Deuteronomy 30:12 in Romans 10:6, Calvin continues: "This knot may be thus untied" and then proceeds to give what he considers to be the necessary resolution of the difficulty. In like manner on Romans 11:8 he maintains that there is no discrepancy between what Paul elicits from the word of the prophet and what the prophet himself said but that rather "Paul penetrates to the very fountain." And although on Ephesians 4:8 he admits that Paul "deviated not a little from the true meaning" of the Old Testament passage, yet he launches immediately into a defense of the apostle against the charge of having made "an unfair use of Scripture" and protests that "careful examination of the Psalm will convince any reader that the words, 'he ascended up on high,' are applied strictly to God alone.' 'Finally, with reference to the change from "received" to "gave" in the same text, he says: "Still there is no absurdity here; for Paul does not always quote the exact words of Scripture, but, after referring to the passage, satisfies himself with conveying the substance of it in his own language." In this case, however, Calvin thinks that when Paul says "gave gifts to men" he is not intending to quote Scripture at all but uses his own expression adapted to the occasion.

We are compelled, therefore, to draw the following conclusions. (1) When Calvin recognizes that Paul, for example, does not always quote the Old Testament verbatim, he is as far as possible from insinuating that the actual words of the Old Testament were not important. And he is likewise not insinuating to the least extent that the precise and original meaning of the Old Testament passages, as indicated

by their exact terms, was not important. He is not even remotely suggesting an antithesis between the "substance" which the apostle elicits from the Old Testament text and the text of the Old Testament itself, as if the former were important and the latter not. (2) There is not the remotest suggestion that the precise terms used by the apostle in the use of the Old Testament (terms which may deviate from the precise terms of the Old Testament) are unimportant. Indeed, the opposite is the case. It is exactly because Calvin was concerned with the precise terms and words used by the apostle that he entered upon the discussion and resolution of the difference between the terms in the Old Testament and in Paul's use of the same. In reality the only inference to be drawn from these discussions on the part of Calvin, and particularly from the resolution which he offers in each case, is that in his esteem words and terms were of the greatest importance. (3) What Calvin says is that Paul, in quoting from the Old Testament in these instances, elicited from the passage what was appropriate to his purpose at the time. He does not say or imply that for Paul the exact terms and import of the Old Testament passage were unimportant, but simply that it was sufficient for the apostle to derive from the Scripture concerned the particular truth or application relevant to the subject in hand. And, for Calvin, both are important as providing us with the whole truth, the truth expressed in the Old Testament and that enunciated in Paul's interpretation and application. The whole belongs to the spiritual doctrine which the Scripture conveys to us.

In these passages, therefore, there is no warrant for Doumergue's allegation that for Calvin the words were not important but only the spiritual doctrine or substance. This sets up a contrast which Calvin does not entertain and it is a contrast which Calvin's own express declarations do not tolerate.

4. A great deal of scorn has been heaped for the last seven decades upon what has been called the modern "dogma of the inerrancy of the original autographs" and upon the "modern scholastics who have generated this dogma."³² This question of the autographs and of the mistakes that have crept in in the course of transmission introduces us to a most important phrase of the evidence bearing upon Calvin's view of Scripture. We have had occasion to quote several passages from Calvin in which he reflected upon these mistakes of copyists and, in one case, upon the blunder of an unlearned reader. It is not necessary to review these passages. It is sufficient to be reminded that Calvin discusses this matter of the proper text of a particular passage and registers his judgment for the very purpose of ascertaining what was the text penned by the original writer, whether it be Luke or Paul or the writer of the epistle to the Hebrews Calvin was greatly concerned to ascertain what this text was whenever there was occasion to raise any question respecting it. Of this there is copious evidence. Now why this concern? Obviously

because he was jealous to be sure of the autographic text. And is it not this jealousy that lies behind the whole science of textual criticism? Scholars differ in their judgments on particular problems. But they all have interest in getting back to the autographic text. Hence the premise of centuries of labor on this question is the importance of the autographic text.

But in the case of Calvin there was much more at stake than the abstract question of the text of the original author. We have found that his interest is also concerned with the question of veracity. He rejects a certain reading in Hebrews 9:1, for example, because that reading would not comport with the facts of the case as he construed them. He attributes the reading to an ignorant reader. Why such reflections? Surely because he is jealous not to attribute this reading to the writer of Hebrews. And that means that the assumption on which he proceeds is that the original writer could not be regarded as susceptible to such an error.

In reference to this interest on Calvin's part in the autographic text of Scripture our final observation must be that his jealousy for the original text cannot be dissociated from his estimate of Scripture as the oracles of God, that Scripture has nothing human mixed with it, and that in all its parts it is as if we heard the mouth of God speaking from heaven. Errors in scribal transmission Calvin fully recognizes. In some instances he pronounces decisive judgment as to the reason and source of these errors. It is apparent that this jealousy is dictated by his conviction that the penmen of the Scriptures were the amanuenses of the Holy Spirit and could not have perpetrated such mistakes. This is tantamount to nothing less than his interest in an inerrant autograph.

We may with this in view return to the passages quoted at the beginning of this lecture and which were passed over until we should survey Calvin's teaching as a whole. These are Calvin's remarks on Matthew 27:9; Acts 7:14-16; Hebrews 11:21. On Matthew 27:9 he says that "the name of Jeremiah was put down by mistake for that of Zechariah." In view of what we have found, we cannot now suppose that, in Calvin's esteem, this mistake was the work of Matthew. And the term he uses earlier when he says "How the name of Jeremiah crept in, I confess that I do not know" is precisely the term Calvin uses with reference to errors that have crept into the text. There is, therefore, not the least warrant to suppose that Calvin is thinking of an error in the work of Matthew, and there is every warrant to judge the opposite. He is thinking of scribal error.

In reference to Acts 7:16 when he says that there is a fault, that is, *erratum*, in the name Abraham and concludes by saying, "Wherefore this place must be amended," analogy would not allow for any other interpretation than that he is thinking of an error in the course of transcription.

In Acts 7:14 the difficulty connected with the number 75 he likewise thinks may have arisen, in the first instance, "through the error of the copyists" of

the Greek Old Testament. Here he also entertains the possibility that Luke put down the true number and that some man corrected the same out of the Greek Old Testament where the number 75 appears. Yet he thinks it also possible that Luke may have used the number 75 since it appeared in the Greek version with which readers would be familiar and that "it was a matter of no such weight for which Luke ought to have troubled the Gentiles who were accustomed to the Greek reading." This latter statement may be considered along with his comments on Hebrews 11:21. They both fall into the same category.

With respect, then, to these two statements that the number of the souls who went down to Egypt was not a matter for which Luke should have troubled the Gentiles who were accustomed to the Greek reading and that the writer of Hebrews was not so scrupulous but that he could accommodate himself to the unlearned who had as yet need of milk, what are we to say? Some remarks may help to place the question in proper perspective.

1. Calvin does recognize that the writers of Scripture were not always meticulously precise on certain details such as those of number and incident. And this means that the Holy Spirit, by whom, in Calvin's esteem, they wrote, was not always meticulously precise on such matters. It must be emphatically stated that the doctrine of biblical inerrancy for which the church has contended throughout history and, for which the church has contended throughout history and, for which a great many of us still contend, is not based on the assumption that the criterion of meticulous precision in every detail of record or history is the indispensable canon of biblical infallibility. To erect such a canon is utterly artificial and arbitrary and is not one by which the inerrancy of Scripture is to be judged. It is easy for the opponents of inerrancy to set up such artificial criteria and then expose the Bible as full of errors. We shall have none of that, and neither will Calvin. The Bible is literature and the Holy Spirit was pleased to employ the literary forms of the original human writers in the milieu in which they wrote. If Solomon's temple took seven and a half years to build, as we can readily calculate (cf. I Kings 6:37, 38), are we to suppose that it is an error to say in the same context that Solomon was seven years in building it (I Kings 6:38)? Or if a certain king is said to have reigned twenty-two years (cf. I Kings 14:20), we must not impose upon such a statement the necessity of his having reigned precisely twenty-two years in terms of twenty-two times three hundred and sixty-five days.³³ He may have reigned only twenty-one years in terms of actual computation and yet twenty-two years in terms of the method of reckoning in use. The Scripture abounds in illustrations of the absence of the type of meticulous and pedantic precision which we might arbitrarily seek to impose as the criterion of infallibility. Every one should recognize that in accord with accepted forms of speech and custom a statement can be perfectly authentic and yet not pedantically precise. Scripture

does not make itself absurd by furnishing us with pedantry.

2. We need not doubt that it was this distinction between the demands of pedantic precision, on the one hand, and adequate statement, that is, statement adequate to the situation and intent, on the other, that Calvin had in mind when he said that "the apostles were not punctilious as not to accommodate themselves to the unlearned." We are not necessarily granting that Calvin's remarks are the best suited to the solution of the questions that arise in connection with Acts 7:14 and Hebrews 11:21. We may even grant that the language used by Calvin in these connections is ill-advised and not in accord with Calvin's usual caution when reflecting on the divine origin and character of Scripture. But, if so, we should not be surprised if such a prolific writer as Calvin should on occasion drop remarks or even express positions inconsistent with the pervasive and governing tenor of his thinking and teaching. In Calvin we have a mass of perspicuous statement and of lengthened argument to the effect that Scripture is impregnable and inviolable, and it would be the resort of desperation to take a few random comments, wrench them from the total effect of Calvin's teaching, and build upon them a thesis which would run counter to his own repeated assertions respecting the inviolable character of Scripture as the oracles of God and as having nothing human mixed with it.

15. *Op. cit.*, pp. 112, 115, 116.
16. E. Doumergue: *Jean Calvin: Les hommes et les choses de son temps*, Tom. IV, Lausanne, 1910, p. 78. Doumergue's discussion, referred to in these pages, is found in the tome cited above in pp. 70-82.
17. *Comm. ad II Tim.* 3:16.
18. Cf. citations given above.
19. *Op. cit.*, p. 76.
20. *Comm. ad Eph.* 2:5.
21. *Comm. ad Heb.* 9:1.
22. *Comm. ad I Tim.* 1:3.
23. *Comm. ad James* 4:7.
24. *Op. cit.*, p. 77.
25. *Comm. in Harmoniam Evangelicam*, ad Matt. 9:18; E.T. by William Pringle, Grand Rapids, 1949, Vol. I, pp. 409f.
26. "Argumentum in Evangelium Ioannis."
27. *Op. cit.*, p. 77.
28. *Op. cit.*, pp. 78f.
29. *Comm. ad Rom.* 10:6.
30. *Comm. ad Rom.* 11:8.
31. *Comm. ad Eph.* 4:8.
32. C. A. Briggs: *op. cit.*, p. 97; cf. pp. 98, 114.
33. For a discussion of such questions cf. Edwin R. Thiele: *The Mysterious Numbers of the Hebrew Kings*, Chicago, 1951.

SING A SONG OF SIX-PENCE

*It seem\$ we've learned a thing immen\$e,
That only dollar\$ will make \$en\$e.
The mad chase for the dollar bill
Makes sentiment seem\$ rather chill.
And at life's end we stand alone,
A pauper with a heart of stone.*

S.C.W.

The Insignificance of the Minister

FRANK DE JONG

Ordained to the ministry in 1930, Rev. Frank De Jong of San Jose, California first served churches in Luctor, Kansas and in Pella, Iowa. Then from 1938 until his retirement in 1966 he has labored with distinction in church-extension and in mission work in California. He has also remained active in this work at various times and places in California during his retirement years. Always averse to pompous demeanor, while never compromising the important office of its minister, Rev. De Jong writes: "The person himself is insignificant; but, don't forget, his work is a glorious work."

During a coffee break at Synod some years ago one of the Hekman brothers, of the Hekman Biscuit Company, approached me and said, "De Jong, I think you men take yourselves too seriously." He had been an observer during a few of our sessions and made this observation. Perhaps he had the same thought in mind as did the apostle Paul when he wrote to the church in Corinth, saying in effect, "You take us, your ministers, too seriously" (I Cor. 3:1ff). The members of this church had become divided into followers of Paul and of Apollos. There were Paulites and Apollosites.

Paul denounced this division among them. It arises from a carnal heart, he explained. "For while one saith, I am of Paul; and another, I am of Apollos; are ye not carnal?" Carnal, worldly Christians, he meant make too much of the means God uses to establish His Kingdom, namely the ministers of the Word. "I have planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase. So then neither is he that planteth anything, neither he that watereth; but God that giveth the increase." Paul wanted to point to the insignificance of the minister and show that after all, each one of them, regardless of their assignment in the church, were possessed of nothing, considered in themselves. They, the ministers, are insignificant, but, the ministry they bring is supremely significant.

For all of us, both ministers as well as lay-members of the church, the lesson given in First Corinthians 3 is valuable and very necessary. Let Romans 12:3 be our guide in this instruction, "For I say, through the grace given unto me, to every man that is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think; but to think soberly, according as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith."

There are two very important words in this chapter which explain the entire lesson. Everything Paul says centers upon these two words. They are repeated twice — verses 6 and 7: "but God." Paul writes, "I have planted, Apollos watereth; but God gave the increase. So then neither is he that planteth anything,

neither he that watereth; *but God* that [or who] giveth the increase." That explains everything. The minister of the church is only an instrument in God's service, a servant of God (minister comes from deacon, meaning a servant) who is utterly dependent upon the work of the Holy Spirit to bless his labors.

The members of the Corinthian church were mere infants in Christ. As infants they made too much of the men who were only servants of God. Choosing up sides, dividing into Paulites and Apollosites, they envied each other and engaged in bitter strifes. All this happens when Christians who are still carnally minded do not realize how insignificant the person of the minister is. He plants the Word, but God is the source of all the blessings which follow.

I often wonder whether the great Reformer Martin Luther would have put his stamp of approval upon the name his followers chose for the church he founded—the Lutheran Church. Be grateful that the founding fathers of the Synod of Dordt did not decide to call our denomination Calvin Church! Individual congregations, also, should not be called after the name of their pastor, but, always referred to by their official name.

The person himself is insignificant, but, don't forget, his work is a glorious work. Our form for Ordination of Ministers expresses it beautifully, "From these things one can see what a glorious work the pastoral office is, because of the great things accomplished by it; yea, how indispensable it is for bringing men to salvation."

Not only is it a glorious work, it is also very rewarding. In verse 8 Paul speaks of this saying, "every man shall receive his own reward according to his own labor." Unworthy as we are as servants of God, yet, we are told in Daniel 12:3, "And they that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever." Remember it must be, "With good will doing service, as to the Lord, and not unto men; knowing that whatsoever good thing any man doeth, the same shall he receive of the Lord, whether he be bond or free" (Eph. 6:7, 8).

The insignificance of the person of the minister has bearing also upon his conduct and his outward appearance, both in the pulpit and in his daily public life. Immediately after the secession of 1834 in the Netherlands a controversy arose regarding a subject that can be characterized as "much ado about nothing." It was known as the question regarding "Het Ambtsgewaad"—what kind of ministerial robe or garment should a minister wear? Such decisions, it seems to me, should be left entirely to the judgment of the pastor himself. There is one garment, however, which should be in the wardrobe of every preacher and be worn not only on Sunday, but every day of the week. The Lord of the church through his apostle Peter commands its use, saying, "Be clothed with humility: for God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble." Let's just leave the strutting to the peacocks! ●



REV. ELCO H. OOSTENDORP

WHAT
WE

Believe

(9)

THE WAGES OF SIN

This is the ninth in a series of articles on Reformed Doctrine, under the heading, *What We Believe*. The familiar question-and-answer method is being followed. Rev. Elco H. Oostendorp of Hudsonville, Michigan, deals with "The Fall" in this article.

"What Is Sin?"

"Sin is any want of conformity unto, or transgression of, the law of God." This is the 14th question and answer of the Westminster Shorter Catechism. The text referred to in this connection is I John 3:4, "Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law; for sin is the transgression of the law."

Which important distinction do we make regarding sin?

We speak of original sin and actual sins. Original sin is the sin we inherit from Adam, the result of his breaking the covenant of works. Actual sins are the sins we commit in thoughts, words and deeds. As the answer of the Catechism quoted above indicates, these sins can be either by omission or commission. We sin in not doing what the law requires as well as in doing what it forbids. This is clearly taught in James 4:17, "To him therefore that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin." The tenth commandment teaches that actual sins are not only words and deeds, but even the thoughts and desires of the heart, as the Heidelberg Catechism explains, "That not even the slightest thought or desire contrary to any of God's commandments should ever arise in my heart. Rather, with all my heart I should always hate sin and take pleasure in whatever is right" (Answer 113).

What are the two elements of original sin?

Guilt and pollution. Guilt means liability to punishment, deserving the penalty of the breaking of God's commandment. Adam was not only the father of us all, but also our covenant representative. We are not guilty of all his sins, but only for the sin committed in the Garden of Eden, in eating of the

tree of the knowledge of good and evil. It is because of this sin that death came upon all men, because all sinned in Adam (Romans 5:12ff). The so-called "realistic" explanation of original sin explains our guilt in terms of the fact that we, all the members of the human race yet to be born, were in Adam; in his sin, human nature sinned. Rather than this explanation, Reformed theologians prefer the covenantal explanation, viewing Adam as our representative who acted for all mankind. As punishment for this sin we are all born in spiritual pollution, in a condition the Bible describes as being dead in sins and trespasses. This condition is one of total inability and total depravity.

What is meant by total depravity?

Total depravity is not the same as absolute depravity. Our English word depravity comes from the Latin *de*, meaning thoroughly, and *pravus*, meaning crooked. Synonyms for "depravity" are "wicked," "corrupt," "sinful" (full of sin). The devil and his angels are completely and absolutely depraved, they are as bad as they can possibly be and are beyond redemption. But when we speak of men as being totally depraved we mean that the whole of human nature is corrupted by sin. Some would claim that man's reason is still good, or others that he still has a free will; still others find the cause of human sinfulness in the body, and distinguish between man's so-called higher and lower natures. The Bible, however, finds the seat of sin in the heart, we read in Jeremiah 17:9, "The heart is deceitful above all things, and it is exceedingly corrupt: who can know it?" Jesus also speaks of the heart as the source of all kinds of sin (Matt. 15:19, 20). Because of God's common grace the sinfulness of our hearts does not express itself fully; people are restrained by public opinion, government and fear of the consequences. People can still do so-called natural good (e.g., being a good parent), or civil good (e.g., obeying the laws of the land). Man still has a conscience and some sense of right and wrong (cf. Romans 2:14, 15). But we are totally unable to please God by doing spiritually good works. To do these works sinners dead in sin must be born again by the Holy Spirit (John 3:3, 5). J. Dwight Pentecost has well said: "This doctrine (total depravity) has suffered from many misconceptions, for the average person would define total depravity by saying that it means that man is as bad as he can be. We know many men who are good men, kind men, generous men, men who contribute much in the home and in the community. Rather, the doctrine of depravity says that man is as bad *off* as he can be. There is a vast difference between being as *bad* as he can be, and being as bad *off* as he can be. The doctrine of depravity has to do, not with man's estimation of man, but rather with God's estimation of man." (*Things Which Become Sound Doctrine*, pp. 9, 10.)

Why is it important that we confess our total depravity and inability?

As the Heidelberg Catechism teaches, in order to have the right understanding of the way of salvation,

we first of all need to know "how great my sin and misery are" (Answer 2).

This is also the approach of the apostle Paul in Romans. He shows in chapters 1:18-3:20 that both Jews and gentiles are all *under sin* and "there is none righteous, no not one" (3:9, 10).

Pelagianism teaches that man has still a free will and can chose to do the will of God; Semi-pelagianism considers man as sick and weak, but able to contribute something towards his salvation. But the gospel is that since all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, God has revealed a righteousness through faith in Jesus Christ unto all them that believe, and we are justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus (3:22-24).

What other forms of death are the wages of sin?

In addition to spiritual death, or total depravity, the Bible speaks of death in the sense of the separation of body and soul, or physical death. Some believe that there was no death at all before the fall, but there was death in the sense that Jesus used the word in John 12:24, and in that men and animals had to kill plants in order to eat them. However, it is plain from Genesis 3 and Romans 5:12ff that death for men is the result of sin. The third form of death is eternal punishment in hell, called in Revelation 20:14, "the second death, even the lake of fire." Full discussion of death in these two forms belongs under the locus of eschatology or the doctrine of the last things, but the fact that sinners are destined to spend eternity in everlasting separation from God is a reality that resulted from the fall, and a consequence of our being born in sin.

Did Adam's fall have other consequences?

Yes, as we read in Genesis 3:9-21 the fall effected the relationship of men and women, bringing discord not only in the home, but in society in general; it resulted in God's curse on the ground and man's work becoming burdensome; death entered in the form of sickness and pain. We are living in an abnormal world and human nature is perverted as a punishment for sin, revealing God's wrath (Romans 1:18ff). All of creation was subjected to vanity, and groans in travail waiting to be delivered from the bondage of corruption. Accordingly redemption in Christ is a cosmic renewal, the "regeneration of all things." Complete salvation will come with Christ's return and the new heavens and earth wherein righteousness will dwell forever. "And He that sitteth on the throne said, Behold I make all things new" (Rev. 21:5). ●

When life is ebbing low and fast,

When the soul is going home at last,

When hope seems dead, don't stand aghast,

Pray then I say.

J. GRESHAM MACHEN

HENRY W. CORAY



J. GRESHAM MACHEN

Dr. Gordon A. MacLennan, a Presbyterian minister, once paid tribute to J. Gresham Machen at a Westminster Theological Seminary dinner. He said, "What is it in Dr. Machen that stands out above everything else? I have given much thought to my own question. To me the answer does not lie in his scholarship, or in his teaching ability, or in his literary skill, great as all these are. In my opinion the one feature about him that overshadows everything else is this: his burning passion to see the Lordship of Christ exercised in his church."

Unless one understands this he will never understand John Gresham Machen, his moves or his moods. That he was a man of contention, like Jeremiah, is undoubtedly true. The reason? In his day, as in ours, historic Christianity was in conflict, the honor of the Son of God was involved, and Machen was of sterner stuff than to sit under his own vine and fig tree and disregard frontal attacks against his Saviour.

He was nurtured in a godly home in Baltimore, Maryland. At John Hopkins University he was exposed to the finest kind of classical education. He graduated with high honors, studied at Princeton Theological Seminary and later, on a fellowship, engaged in post-graduate work in Germany. He honed his mind on brilliant, if destructive, scholarship. At Marburg he sat at the feet of Dr. Wilhelm Hermann, a renowned but deeply devout liberal. The personal piety of this intellectual giant made a deep impression on him. In consequence he passed through an agonizing period of doubts. Gradually he emerged from the shadows. Years afterward he would sometimes tell his classes that it was chiefly the reading of the Bible that dissipated his doubts. If, like Jeremiah, he was a man of contention, he was also, like Jeremiah, a man of compassion. Having gone through deep waters, he was able to enter sympathetically into the intellectual perplexities of other disciples of Thomas, especially college students subjected to rationalistic and mechanistic philosophy.

He returned to the States and took a post on the

Rev. Henry W. Coray is a minister of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church and the author of the novels *Son of Tears* on the life of Augustine and *Rebel Prince* on the life of Absalom.

faculty of Princeton Seminary. It is true, I think, that some scholars are not good teachers, and some teachers are not too able scholars. Machen combined excellent scholarship with great pedagogy. As one who studied under him for three years, I can testify that his teaching was stimulating, clear, thorough, and always biblically oriented.

His writings projected him into the orbit of international fame. From his pen came books such as *The New Testament Greek for Beginners*, *Christianity and Liberalism*, *What is Faith?*, *The Origin of Paul's Religion*, a masterful apologetic, and the *Virgin Birth of Christ*, hailed as the most complete and exhaustive defense of that cardinal doctrine ever produced; a massive work.

In 1928, Princeton Seminary was organized in a way that virtually insured the locking out of the pure Calvinism that school of the prophets had long stood for. The liberal wing of the (then) Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A. (now the United Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A.) secured a beachhead in the control of the seminary. Machen saw the word *Ichabod*, "the glory has departed," written in gilt-edged letters over that institution. (Subsequent sad developments there have proved abundantly that he was right.) He and three other members of the Princeton faculty, including Cornelius Van Til, left and founded Westminster Seminary in Philadelphia. Ned Stonehouse and R. B. Kuiper were added to the faculty.

In the early 1930's, the Presbyterian Church faced a serious crisis. It came to light that the cancer of unbelief had been actively at work in the official Board of Foreign Missions. Dr. Machen took up the cudgels. He wrote a pamphlet titled, *Modernism and the Board of Foreign Missions of the Presbyterian Church, U.S.A.* He carefully documented his material, never descending, as some do in controversy, to wield the weapon of personal abuse. He took the matter into his Presbytery and called for an investigation of the Board. He decried the blasphemous public pronouncements of Mrs. Pearl Buck, a Presbyterian missionary-teacher laboring in China.

The issue was blandly whitewashed. Machen appealed his case to the General Assembly, the highest court in the church, and got nowhere. With a number of other evangelicals backing him, he set up another organization to serve as a clearing-house for missionaries unreservedly committed to the propagation of the pure, unadulterated gospel of Christ. They called it The Independent Board for Presbyterian Foreign Missions.

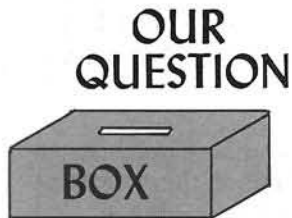
The following General Assembly ordered the members of the new Board to disband. They refused. Machen, together with other ministers and elders identified with the movement, were disciplined and ejected from the church. That same Assembly sent a mandate out to the whole church calling for all its members to give blanket financial support to its official Boards. Not to do so, said this mandate in effect, involved one in sin, just as refusal to participate in

the Lord's Supper did. This brutal ruling, in principle, so elevated the word of man that it placed that word on authoritative parity with the Word of God. Many who watched the proceeding with heavy hearts believed that then and there the Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A. became officially apostate. The iniquitous Confession of 1967, in which the great creedal standards of the church were reduced to a doctrinal shambles became the final step in apostasy.)

Dr. Machen spearheaded the organization of another denomination, now the Orthodox Presbyterian Church. A number of office-holders and laymen, aware of the tragic decline and fall of a once great church, joined those who had been turned out of the Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A. At its first stated General Assembly, Dr. Machen was elected Moderator, and the Orthodox Presbyterian Church was on its way.

Not long after the birth of the new church, the illustrious New Testament scholar was called to be with his Lord.

(To be continued)



REV. HARLAN G. VANDEN EINDE

Rev. Harlan G. Vanden Einde is pastor of the Oakdale Park Christian Reformed Church of Grand Rapids, Michigan. All questions for this department are to be sent directly to his address:

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This department is *for everyone*. No signatures are required and no names will be published. Your questions will be gladly received and answered as promptly as possible.

From a southern subscriber comes a series of questions, from which I select this one as being of most interest to our readers: "What meaning has the gown used by some ministers in the pulpit in this New Testament dispensation?" The author of this question refers to Exodus 28 where the Lord gave directions for the clothing of the priesthood, but the questioner suggests that has been fulfilled and abolished in the sacrifice of the Great High Priest, Jesus Christ.

We do not have, either in tradition or in practice, an officially prescribed clerical garment. Most likely we never will, for the minister's clothing does not belong to the essentials of public worship. And in that sense, we are free from the ceremonial forms of the Old Testament with their detailed prescriptions concerning priestly dress.

But that does not mean that we should be indifferent to the way in which a minister dresses when he leads public worship. Since there is no uniformity in practice among us, it seems that little careful thought has ever been given to this subject. We generally allow absolute freedom of dress on the part of the clergy, assuming that they will use good taste and wear clothing appropriate to their position and function, and to the nature of public worship.

It is true that we must rule out the principle of the ceremonial significance of ministerial clothing on the pulpit. It is also true that we must rule out the principle of a distinctive dress for ministers as if they stand above the community of believers in rank and dignity. But even with those two principles cast aside, I would like to suggest that the robe is an appropriate form of dress for the clergy in the pulpit. I say that for a couple of reasons.

First of all, the minister is not just another speaker addressing a weekly gathering of a convention or a business meeting. He stands before the people of God as a servant of God, called to bring them the Word of God. Let him be robed, not as a sign of rank and dignity, for he is a servant, but as a reminder to himself and the people that as God's servant, he is charged to speak out of serious study and from a wisdom sanctified by the Spirit's direction. This is not to say that that cannot be accomplished in a regular business suit or even a sport coat; but such dress does little to remind us of the uniqueness of the occasion of public worship.

Secondly, there is, apart from the ceremonial significance of the priestly robes in the Old Testament, another kind of symbolism in the robe. It serves to hide the minister and set forth the office. And that is our concern — and God's — in the ministry of the Word, isn't it? No minister stands in the pulpit in himself or for himself. He is an instrument, a voice, speaking God's Word. The people are not interested in his opinions or ideas, but in what message this ambassador of God will bring. Let the individuality of the human person be blotted out as much as possible, and the office with which he comes from God and speaks the revelation of God be emphasized. We robe our choirs; why then be content to have the minister dress in a regular business suit?

I would like to conclude with a quotation from an article written by George Stob which appeared in 1952 in the *Reformed Journal*, and in which he also spoke favorably for the use of the robe by the minister: ". . . we know that there are more essential garments for the minister. God looks for him, we should remember, to be clothed with piety, humility, love, and learning, with priestly wisdom, prophetic

strength, and royal courage. Or to put it another way – if the minister be fully clothed with the Word and Spirit of truth, he is clothed best and as he should be. And yet, it is better, too, if the external garment comport with that best.” ●

reformed women speak

a Godly Grandmother

FREDERIKA PRONK

Miss Johanna Timmer, departmental editor for *Reformed Women Speak*, writes: “The following tender account of one of God’s saints, is by Mrs. Frederika Pronk, wife of the Rev. C. Pronk. You will find it a most pleasing essay about her very influential Christian grandmother. Old and young will enjoy this moving account of an outstanding “mother in Israel.” Anyone wishing to contribute to this department may write:

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One person who has deeply influenced my life is my grandmother. Yet, strangely, for many years I have had very little personal contact with her, since during the last twenty-five years she lived on one side of the Atlantic Ocean and I on the other. My grandmother was not a strong and self-assertive person, but she was the most gentle, self-effacing person I have known. Why then, has she had such an influence on me? Perhaps you will understand if I tell you a little about her.

My earliest memories of her date back to when I was a little girl and lived in the Netherlands. A slight figure, usually dressed in black, with her silver-gray hair pulled smoothly back in a bun at the nape of her neck. She suggested to me those mystical, ageless qualities which I associated with women of the Bible, such as Sarah, Hannah, Elisabeth, Anna and grandmother Lois.

Instead of wealth, children were the heritage with which the Lord generously endowed her. Many times she almost died in childbirth – but she always came through, even through the traumatic miscarriages. Apparently childbirth isn’t as unhealthy as it is made out to be today, because she lived to a grand old age, keeping a sound mind until the very end.

As her children grew up, she instructed them in the Bible, instilling a holy reverence for God and His Word. Faithfully the children were taken to church and taught to respect the ministers and other office holders. If anyone was in need, she sent one of her off-spring to bring food or other help. “It is our duty to help others if we can,” she taught her children.

Grandma believed that “the effectual, fervent prayer of the righteous availeth much.” And this she practised. Not that she dared call herself righteous. Far from that. Grandma belonged to that now almost extinct breed of Christians who couldn’t so easily appropriate their righteousness before God. She felt herself to be a great sinner, unworthy of the Lord’s grace. But many were the prayers that went up to heaven for herself and her ten children, that they might live godly, useful lives. Her greatest concern was that the Lord would grant them the new birth from above, for only then would they be freed from Adam’s curse which rested upon them from the first birth.

I remember Grandma’s piety most of all. Not that she talked much, but much more eloquently than words, her very being expressed an aura of true piety. When Grandma did talk about her relationship with the Lord, it made a deep impression on me. I sensed that her piety was a living reality and even though I could not understand everything, I knew that she walked intimately with the Lord. She possessed something of great value and she inspired in me a deep sense of the reality of God and His Word.

From early childhood I vividly remember Sunday evenings spent at her house, when the unmarried aunts and uncles and their friends were gathered around the old-fashioned pump organ, singing Grandma’s and Grandpa’s favorite Psalms. Their favorite selections were from Psalm 25, 42, 68 and 103 and the Dutch phrases of these Psalms still linger in my memory, reminding me of Grandma and Grandpa.

Grandpa was the respected head of the family, and Grandma honored him as such. He was intensely interested in public life and Grandma respected his interests. Even though she had to bear the brunt of managing a large and spirited brood of children, she never tried to stop Grandpa from giving his time to the many public functions he loved. He was a self-taught man, and he earnestly wanted to influence society with Christian morals and values. He was a leader in establishing a Christian day school. Therefore he was often away and left Grandma at home to manage as best she could. Her oldest sons took over many of the duties that Grandfather had no time to do. They ran the family farm and disciplined the younger brothers and sisters, which was not always appreciated by them. The only time Grandma would involve herself in Grandpa’s affairs was when he was elected to yet another committee or office. Then she acted not to keep him from giving his time, but to keep him from becoming too important in his own eyes. “Father,” she would say, “don’t forget your sinful nature and become proud of yourself.” Grand-

pa needed such advice, as do all who hold public office.

The supreme sacrifice for Grandma came when, after the Second World War, five of her children decided to leave the little crowded country by the sea to seek more living space for their growing families. When the first son told her of his plans to immigrate, Grandpa raised some objections. But it was Grandma who had the final say: "Children, if you believe that there is a better future there for you and your children, we may not and will not stop you. We have taught you to fear God and serve Him. Do that also in your new country."

She hardly cried when we left to say our last good-byes, at least we saw few tears. But I'm sure that she shed many tears in secret before the Lord, committing us all to His care. Her last words to each of the grandchildren were: "Child, never forget to pray to the Lord for a new heart."

Yet her concern for spiritual things did not prevent her from having a real interest in life. She knew human nature. I will always be grateful for what happened when I first had to wear glasses. Vain thing that I was (and am), I was quite unhappy about having to wear "goggles." Knowing that my parents could hardly afford to buy me glasses, she nevertheless told them: "Be sure you get her nice ones, even if they cost a little more."

Last night my grandmother died—ninety-four years old. On her deathbed she was visited by many of her off-spring, from both sides of the ocean. Up until the end her mind remained clear and sound. Her last words were from one of her favorite Psalms: "Thou shalt guide me with thy counsel, and afterward receive me to glory."

As the years were added to her, she often wondered why the Lord kept her so long on this earth. I think I know why. Although she appeared to be only a simple, insignificant, little woman, I know that she inspired her numerous offspring, to the third and fourth generation, just by being what she was: a godly grandmother. May the Lord give us many more of such godly grandmothers. ●

STATEMENT OF OWNERSHIP, MANAGEMENT AND CIRCULATION

(Act of October 23, 1962, Title 39, United States code).

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THE OUTLOOK (formerly Torch and Trumpet)

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LESSONS FROM I JOHN

REV. HENRY VANDER KAM



Lessons 7 and 8 on I John by Rev. Henry Vander Kam, pastor of the Grace Christian Reformed Church of Kalamazoo, Michigan, are in this issue.

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LESSON 7

I John 2:22-25

The Heresy

Doctrine has always been held in high esteem in Reformed circles. Reformed churches always emphasized the fact that if doctrine is no longer preached and taught, it will be but a short time until we have lost everything. There have always been those who were averse to doctrine. They wanted something far more practical. The Bible, and the Heidelberg Catechism which follows the Biblical pattern, reveals to us that doctrine is indeed very practical. It must be taught showing its practical implications.

John has alluded to the heresy plaguing the church at the time he writes this epistle, but he now mentions it more clearly. He now speaks of *the liar*. That is the person who denies that Jesus is the Christ. Such a person denies both the Father and the Son.

We realize immediately that he is dealing with a heresy which strikes at the very heart of Christianity. Where is the gospel if Jesus is not the Christ? Where is the salvation of His people if Jesus is not the Christ?

There were various errors being proclaimed in the early days of the Church concerning the person of Jesus Christ. The one believed that He was only a

man, even though he may have been the very best of men. Another believed that the Christ had been associated with Jesus from the time of His baptism until the time of His crucifixion. The man Jesus therefore died, but not the Christ. It is rather difficult to determine the exact form of the heresy of which he now speaks, but it clearly did not believe that Jesus and Christ are one.

This heresy cuts the heart out of the gospel. Nice things may be said about the Jesus who taught and worked miracles—but there is no salvation! Observing this heresy also reminds us that the opposition to the gospel has made no progress in these 2000 years.

We must also notice that John several times in this section identifies Christ with the Son. Then we can understand that he is here condemning the denial of the revelation of *God* in Christ. These heretics strike at the nature of God Himself! The question: Who is the Christ?—has been answered in various ways ever since He appeared. However, Christ Himself taught His disciples that this question must be raised in a particular way. The proper question is: *Whose* Son is He! Otherwise there might be many answers. Now the question is sharpened and the answer will reveal faith or unbelief, for the real question concerning the person of Jesus Christ is, “Is He God?”

It can then be understood that those who deny that Jesus is the Christ deny not only Him but also the Father. The doctrine of the Trinity has always been considered a cornerstone of the Christian faith. In fact, those who do not believe in the Trinity cannot be considered within the camp of Christianity. Yet, how can this doctrine be explained? It can't. The Catechism says that we believe it because God has so revealed Himself. But, if God did not exist in Trinity there would be no salvation! He did not send someone to work out our salvation, He came Himself! The Son, who is the Christ, is Divine. Jesus is the Christ. Those who do not believe this are anti-christ. They speak the opposite of the teaching of the gospel.

Those who deny that Jesus Christ is the Son of God deny the Father too. One of the most beautiful teachings of Christ was His instruction to His people to address their God as Father. Now, it is precisely this Fatherhood of God which is denied by those who deny that Jesus is the Christ. It is only in Christ that God has become a Father to His people. If that relationship is denied they have struck at the very nature of God for His people. What do they have left?

The pure doctrine, properly and faithfully taught, alone feeds the true faith of believers. Those who are averse to doctrine easily become the prey of every wind of doctrine which blows.

The Apostle has used strong language in condemning the error of those who deny that Jesus is the Christ. He calls them anti-christs. Is this language too strong? Those who come with an “other” teaching often profess to do so in order that they might “improve” the gospel. Their teaching however, is no improvement. Those who deny the Son (and those who deny that Jesus is the Christ do that) have

no Savior. This means that they are still in their sins — have no redemption. When they have denied the Son they have no Father either! There they stand — empty handed! Those who would follow their teachings would likewise deprive themselves of the most needed things.

On the other hand, those who confess the Son are then so enriched that they also have the Father! This confession of the Son is not only in word but is a confession of the heart. The whole person is involved. Upon that confession we can come to the God who made heaven and earth, who upholds and governs all things, and we may address Him as our Father for Christ His Son's sake! His people are unspeakably rich and the heretics are totally impoverished.

Although it is necessary to warn His people at times, they cannot live on warnings. John therefore urges them to continue in the faith. He differentiates very clearly between the heretics and the true people of God. "As for you, let that abide in you which ye heard from the beginning." He seeks to establish them in the faith. God forbid that they should follow the heresies which are the direct opposite of the gospel he has given them. They were not misled by the Apostles who first brought the gospel to them. From the beginning of their faith they have had the sound doctrine. The content of that gospel is clear from this entire epistle. The beginning of the gospel was this that God had sent His Son into the world. In that the great love of God became evident. This Jesus whom He sent gave His life on the cross to pay the debt of sin. They have believed this gospel. Now, stay with it! Regardless of the teachings of others; regardless of the changing times; let this abide in you. They will never get a different gospel — nor do they need a different one. To abide in that faith is often more difficult than to first receive it.

If they abide in that faith in the gospel as they received it from the Apostles, their experience will be the direct opposite from that of the heretics who are seeking to lead them astray. The heretics were left empty handed; the believers will have fellowship with both the Son and the Father. They must abide in the truth of the gospel, and, if they do, they will automatically abide in the Son and in the Father. The blessings God's people receive in this relationship cannot be measured. How tragic if they would exchange their wealth for the poverty of false teachers!

When John speaks of abiding in that which they heard from the beginning, he is using the same manner of speech which Jesus had used. He also said: "If ye abide in my word then are ye truly my disciples" (John 8:31). And again: "If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you . . ." (John 15:7). The word cannot be separated from the Son and the Son cannot be separated from the Father. John now makes it so simple: believe the gospel and all these other relationships are added unto you.

The gospel is full of promises. Some have tried to count all the promises contained in the Bible. John does not seek to enumerate all the promises in the

gospel but speaks of only one: "And this is the promise which he promised us, even the life eternal." That's it. All the promises which have been given His people can be reduced to this one: eternal life!

Of course, this promise must be seen in the light of the previous verses. It is not a promise which He has given to all men, but to us. This promise is to those who abide in the word. To those who abide in the Son and in the Father. This life is the life of Jesus Christ which is given to those who share in the benefits of His sacrificial death. Those who deny that Jesus is the Christ have no claim on this life. It is only found in living relation to Him.

Eternal life is a term which is very familiar and frequently used in the history of the church. What does it mean? Many, no doubt, think of it only as a life without end. Endlessness surely is included in the term. However, the meaning is much richer than that. It is the fulness of life! It is the life in fellowship with the Source of life. It is a life which is not marred by sin. It is the life which only Jesus Christ could restore. It is the life of peace, of joy and of love. No wonder that the Apostle can reduce all the promises of the gospel to this one!

This "eternal life" is both a present reality and a future hope. We now abide in the gospel and it gives us eternal life now. But this life is not complete. We still have to strive against the elements of death within us. In the future, i.e., in heaven, it will be complete. He conquered sin and death to give us eternal life.

If the people keep in mind the beauty, the glory, and the blessings of the gospel, it should not be too difficult to reject the heresies which are offered to them. And, these words are written for our admonition upon whom the end of the ages have come.

Questions for discussion:

1. If people say nice things about Jesus is this an indication of true faith? What has to be believed concerning Jesus?
2. Explain why the doctrine of the Trinity is so important in the New Testament while the Old Testament doesn't emphasize it.
3. Is it popular to believe the same old gospel? Do changing times and conditions demand a change in the proclamation of the Word or a change in emphasis?
4. Does the term "eternal life" summarize the benefits of the gospel adequately?

LESSON 8

I John 2:26-29

A Call to Steadfastness

In the previous verses John has described the heresy which was attacking the church of his day. He gave an explicit description so that the readers would see clearly which doctrines and teachers he had in mind. This was necessary for the church so that every

one might be alerted. However, believers must not merely be warned. They must realize what they have and must use the gifts which have been given them. The Scriptures are never satisfied only with the negative; the positive is always emphasized. Having warned Christians concerning the enemy, the Apostle now, in the last verses of this chapter, calls to them to defend themselves. All the weapons of defense have been given them. The believers are not helpless in this strife.

The believers have received the whole gospel and they have received the anointing of the Holy Spirit. Having received these two gifts, they have everything a person will ever need to be able to stand in a spiritual conflict. So equipped, they are favored far above any previous generation. Old Testament saints, indeed, had received the Word of God — as far as it had been given in those days. That Word taught them to look forward to the fulfillment of prophecy, of sacrifices and of the ceremonies. Now believers have that fulfillment! Christ has come. In earlier days the Spirit of God had not been poured out. Believing must have been difficult. Now the Spirit of God has been poured out and has made His dwelling in the hearts of those who believe. What a difference there is between the blessings of the New Testament believers and those of the Old. Think of the great responsibilities that come with the great privileges of the New Testament believers! How can they fall for these heresies?

The anointing of which the Apostle speaks is the anointing of the Holy Spirit within them. They must remember the promise of Christ made before His ascension that this Spirit will abide with them. Christ was not going to remain on earth with them. He was to ascend into the heavens to continue His work. The Spirit, however, will remain with them to do His work here. This is the Spirit Who inspired the writers of Scripture. He, Who is the Author of the Bible is the One Who now applies the truth of the Bible to their hearts! This is the Spirit sent from the Father and from the Son. When the believer does not fully understand the Scriptures he should ask the Author for help. Therefore the reading of the Scriptures and prayer should always go together.

Because believers have the anointing of the Spirit they have no need of the teaching of others, says the Apostle. How must we understand these words? Do believers now know everything there is to be known and have they become the intelligentsia of this world? We know better than that. John speaks in view of those who would lead the church astray by their heresies. These heresies always promise a better view of the teaching of Scripture or they contradict that which the Scriptures teach. Having the anointing of the Spirit of God, the believers should be able to identify the heretics easily. They also do not need teachings which go beyond that which the Bible gives them. They are to be satisfied with the Bible! That is all they need and all they will get! Throughout the ages there have been people who thought that the

Bible was not enough. These were disobedient and would lead others astray.

Believers do not need any teaching except the teaching of the Spirit of God. This is the teaching of the gospel. It is the teaching concerning Jesus Christ. The Spirit takes of Christ and gives it to the believer. He does not come with teachings which go contrary to or beyond the Bible. He comes with no other gospel than the gospel of our Savior. Jesus has also informed the Apostles that when the Spirit would come, He would lead them into all truth. They were not able to understand the words of Jesus while He was still with them, much less His deeds, but the Spirit would come and lead them into the truth of these matters. This is the benefit they have now enjoyed for these many years.

The church may not live as though Pentecost has never come! The members of the church have the full revelation of God and they have the Spirit of God dwelling within them. They must, therefore, abide in Him. All they need has been given them and they have no need of the "teachings" of those who would lead them astray. Following such "teachers" would rob them of the divine teaching. The teaching of the Spirit of God is clearly distinguished from the lie.

It is characteristic of John's writing that he emphasizes the closest possible relation which the believers are to have with the Christ of God. This he expresses with the term "abide in Him." The only way they will be able to abide in Him is by holding fast to the gospel of Jesus Christ. They must hold fast to the confession that Jesus is the Christ. But, the believers are not able to do so except through the indwelling of the Spirit of God. Now, this Spirit *unites* with Jesus Christ. Those who believe in Jesus Christ do not only do so with the exercise of the mind, but they are brought into a living relationship with the Christ! This living relationship distinguishes the beliefs of Christianity from all other beliefs. This makes the church a unique institution in this world.

Again the Apostle addresses Christians as his little children. This is indeed a term of endearment, but it is more. Because of the bond which binds each believer to Jesus Christ, it regards them as therefore bound to one another. Thus they are "brothers" and "sisters" and John, as the aged Apostle of Christ, can call them his "little children."

The believers must abide in Christ or they are no believers. Only by means of this relationship to Him will they receive all the benefits He has promised them. So only will they have the joy and assurance of faith and have peace of heart. The Apostle now pursues the matter to its end. He speaks of Christ's return, of the end of time and of the individual's final goal.

John speaks of the manifestation of Christ on the last day when He comes to judge all men. The translation should not read "if" as though it were questionable, but "when." This manifestation of Christ will be in glory. The first coming of our Savior

was in deep poverty and went almost unnoticed. When He comes again He will come in blinding glory. No one will have to be told what is taking place. This will be the decisive day for all men. The judgment will be just and there will be no further appeal. It is the day which brings fear to the hearts of many. John tells the members of the church to which he is writing that they should have boldness and not be ashamed on that day. How can anyone have boldness when the Judge of all the earth comes to judge the lives of men? Do they not have abundant reason to be ashamed when the Searcher of hearts lays everything bare? See to it, says the Apostle, that you will not be ashamed.

It will only be possible to have boldness and not be ashamed on that day — if you are in Him! The boldness is born of the faith that all the believer's sins have been covered. Believers will not be ashamed, have to call to mountains and hills to cover them from before the face of the Judge, because they are in Him! He will not condemn that which He has redeemed! Even now, long before His return, they already have the confidence that when He comes to judge He will declare them to be innocent! That is assurance! I know not what tomorrow will bring; but I know what eternity will bring. That is the assurance His people need and it comes to them by the way of faith and obedience.

You know that He is righteous. He will come with righteous judgments. He is also separated from all evil and has no fellowship with sin. This is clear from the whole gospel of Jesus Christ. Not even His enemies are able to convict Him of sin when He is placed on trial before them. Even today, though many do not believe in Him as Savior and Lord, they speak of "that righteous man." In the world is sin and unrighteousness, but He is the exception.

The world does not produce righteousness. Yet, the people of God have a desire to live not according to some, but according to all the commandments of God. How is this possible? Their desire clearly shows that they are not of this world. Although they are still battling sin — they battle against it! The world doesn't do that. They show that they are growing out of a different root. These are the people who seek to live the life of Christ. Plainly, therefore, those who do righteousness are born of God.

This is not stated as merely a matter of fact, but to assure the believers that when they see this desire within themselves they have proof that they are born of God. There have always been some believers in Christ who seek to live righteously before their God and before men but still wonder whether or not they are children of God. "What more can He say than to you He has said?" The assurance of faith, of which this Apostle speaks so often in this first epistle, ought to be grasped eagerly. The Spirit of God must also apply this word to the heart.

Questions for discussion:

1. Has the Spirit of God led the church into all the truth in her Confessions? Explain.

2. What is the relationship between "and ye need not that anyone teach you" and the ongoing study of theology?
3. Some have said that there will be many surprises on the day of judgment. Do you agree? Why, or why not?
4. Is assurance of faith dangerous? Is it necessary?

Meditation

"TUNE MY HEART TO SING THY GRACE"



Rev. Garret H. Stoutmeyer

For though the fig-tree shall not flourish,
neither shall fruit be in the vines;
The labor of the olive shall fail,
And the fields shall yield no food;
The flock shall be cut off from the fold,
And there shall be no herd in the stalls:
Yet I will rejoice in Jehovah,
I will joy in the God of my salvation.

Habakkuk 3:17-18

It may be difficult for many readers of THE OUTLOOK to remember 1939 when World War II was just beginning. The United States was not yet involved in the growing conflict, but many within this country knew what to expect. The outlook was indeed dark for the whole world, and consequently, I'm told, most people adopted a very pessimistic attitude about observing the traditional Thanksgiving Day. It is reliably reported that even President Roosevelt seriously considered skipping the annual observance because he felt and was advised by many that the "usual" reasons for thanksgiving were absent. However, he did proclaim a Thanksgiving Day in 1939 and in his proclamation he said: "After all we still have God, we still have our faith, and someday we will be done with all wars." IN OTHER WORDS, THERE WAS STILL SOMETHING TO BE THANKFUL FOR!! The idea seemed to be that since it was going to be a very drab and dreary Thanksgiving Day without all the usual abundance of food and festivity, we had better force our attention upon the more "intangible" realities and go ahead with the holiday anyway.

Rev. Garrett H. Stoutmeyer is pastor of the Faith Christian Reformed Church of Grand Rapids, Michigan.

The actual result, however, was that Thanksgiving Day 1939, came closer to imitating the true thanksgiving of the pilgrims than any Thanksgiving Day, before or since! For as we have all learned from our history lessons, that first Thanksgiving Day in the new world was observed in the face of manifold privations and difficulties rather than copious abundance and peace.

That too was the "thanksgiving day" Habakkuk observed long before the pilgrim fathers came to the shores of the United States. His thanksgiving was observed in circumstances quite similar to those that pertain in our world as well as in the world of 1939. But the prophet saw God's hand in nature because he had first seen God's hand in grace!! His heart was "tuned to sing His grace."

If we are to have a similarly blessed Thanksgiving Day, whether it comes for our Canadian friends in October, or readers in the United States in November, it will have to come from more than an official proclamation or a hallowed custom. It will come to us just as it came of old to the Lord's prophet in answer to prayer. The little that we know about the man Habakkuk we have to glean from a study of what he was led to write by the Holy Spirit. We learn from reading what he wrote that he was a man of clear faith; a man of wisdom who carefully studied God's dealings with His chosen people and who observed painfully how unfaithful Israel had been to her husband. He wept over the terrible sins which resulted from the idol worship of his own people. The world was in ruins about him, idolatry rife, the hosts of the Caldeans were coming to destroy the remnant of Israel, and what did the prophet do? He poured out his complaint into the ear of God, not of man. This is just where we find Habakkuk at the opening of this third chapter, on his knees before the Lord, his soul bowed in grief before the One with Whom we have to do.

On his knees a marvelous scene was unfolded before his eyes as he was led to see *God's Guidance*. He saw the wondrous way in which God had led Jacob like a flock and Israel through the desert, spreading terror and consternation among the heathen. Such visions of good filled his heart with exultation and rejoicing.

Next, he saw *God's Goodness*: namely, His presence, His provision, His program and His power. His presence, "thou wentest forth for the salvation of Thy people." His provision, "thou didst cleave the earth with rivers. His program, "thou woundest the head of the wicked for the salvation of thine anointed. His power, "the mountains saw Thee and were afraid." Now on the solid foundation of God's guidance and goodness his eyes were opened to see *God's Gifts*. "Tho the fig tree shall not flourish, neither fruit be on the vine . . .," God will remain faithful and changeless! Crops might fail, flocks be destroyed, fields be left barren, cattle killed, "BUT" God will have an abundant supply to meet every need. Now what greater reason for true thanksgiving could there be?

The application to everyone of us is so self-evident that it does not need to be labored. A full stomach is part of the traditional way of observing Thanksgiving Day, but the child of God knows that a full stomach is NO substitute at all for a changed heart!!! Our heart, not our stomach, needs to be tuned to sing His grace. True thanksgiving can come forth only out of the heart regenerated by God's spirit, filled with His Word, and dedicated to His service.

Thanksgiving day is, therefore, a day for prayer . . . the prayer of the righteous "tune my heart." But this is also, a day for song. For we read in verse one of this third chapter that this prayer of the prophet was set to music. Song follows prayer and is its incense. How blessed are all our prayers and supplications when they have the sweet charter of praise. And how great the difference between the opening and the closing of "the burden of Habakkuk." He began on his knees as a man bewildered and confused but he closed as one who has found by grace all the answers to the questions of his soul. The superficial joy of the wicked ceases when the fig tree ceases to bloom and the vines no longer yield their fruit, but the joy of the righteous deep within the soul is unaffected by the changing circumstances of nature.

The prophet can do without figs, without olive oil or cattle in the shed, but NOT WITHOUT HIS GOD!! Therefore, he vows that he will rejoice in God, in the God of his salvation. As an old, familiar song says, "streams of mercy never ceasing, call for songs of loudest praise." Any man who has tasted of the Bread of Life will have a blessed Thanksgiving Day, whether he sits at a king's banquet or a poor man's table. ●

annual meeting

This year's annual meeting of the Reformed Fellowship was held at the Twelfth Ave. Church in Jenison and the banquet at the Christian school. At the brief business meeting it was reported that A. Besteman, S. De Young, H. Vanden Heuvel, and R. Van Putten were elected to the board.

Leestma on Reprobation

Featured in the afternoon meeting was an address by Rev. Rein Leestma of Lynwood, Ill., on "The Reprobation Issue in the Christian Reformed Church." Rev. Mr. Leestma is pastor of the calling church of Dr. Harry Boer one of our missionaries in Nigeria, who has for some years been finding fault with the doctrine of Reprobation as it is confessed in our churches' creed, the Canons of Dort. Dr. Boer who first, in violation of the promises he made when he was ordained to the churches' ministry, publicly attacked this doctrine, has now submitted his formal objection or "gravamen" against this teaching of the

creed. Such an objection should first be brought to the Consistory to be examined and judged by that body and only thereafter may it be properly appealed to the Classis and then to the Synod. Article 28 of the Church Order states that "A major assembly shall deal only with those matters . . . which could not be finished in the minor assemblies."

The speaker pointed out (1) how, in plain violation of this rule of the Church Order our 1977 Synod decided to accept as legally before it and publicize through its Acts this gravamen against the creed which had never been submitted to the Consistory or Classis. The Synod, by itself disregarding its Church Order in this way makes it possible for anyone to attack any point of the creeds. "We ought not to be surprised if more and more in the church be moved to . . . despair because 'nobody seems to know anymore what we are to believe, not even the leaders in the church.'"

The speaker showed (2) that what is involved is not some "little" point called reprobation which can be detached and treated in isolation from the whole body of Christian doctrine (as the gravamen proposes to do). This gravamen involves nothing less than "our understanding of the nature of God and His relationship to us and our world" and "the program of his redemption . . . unto salvation in Jesus Christ." The point under attack is not (as the gravamen misrepresents it) "some presupposition formulated by theologians but rather the precise declaration of God," "who worketh all things after the counsel of his will" (Eph. 1:11). "The gravamen doesn't like the idea that this proceeds from the eternal decree of God but this is precisely the point of the issue. Is God sovereign in all things or is He not?" The creed acknowledges the problem that arises because God "who worketh all things after the counsel of His will" is also "in no way the cause of sin." Trying to "escape from this problem always results in some kind of reduction in the scope of God's decree or a re-definition of God and His place in the world." The speaker showed how this rationalistic way of trying to escape the problem robs us of all the comfort which we are taught to derive from acknowledging the power of God. It is alleged that the doctrine of Reprobation robs God of His freedom. The exact opposite is true. Trying to make man's decision supreme does that.

The gravamen (3) plainly misrepresents the creed as teaching that reprobation is the cause of unbelief, a view which the Canons explicitly reject as the kind of teaching "the Reformed Churches . . . detest with their whole soul."

(4) The creed speaks of the "express testimony of sacred Scripture that not all, but some only, are elected. . . ." "This is what the creed says because this is what the Bible says." "If the texts are to be explained in the way that the gravamen explains them then the result will be universal election, universal atonement, resistable grace, salvation determined by the will of man and the continuous possibility of the eternal loss of the saints." "What is really involved

here is the sovereignty of God and His glory and . . . the assurance of our salvation and our peace in Christ Jesus."

Palmer on the Course of the Church

In the evening Dr. Edwin Palmer spoke to a large crowd in the big 12th Ave. Church building. Dr. Palmer is the secretary of the committee which for some years has been translating the New International Version of the Bible. He first spoke of the discussion between him and *the Banner* editor in which he has been maintaining that we need to recognize the difference between the Bible as God inspired its writers to write His infallible Word and our present translations and copies which need to be studied and corrected in an effort to bring our versions as close as possible to those inspired originals.

In the body of his speech he considered the direction in which he sees the Christian Reformed Church going. Expressing warm appreciation for its traditionally Reformed orthodoxy, which he, coming from a liberal background had learned to value, he, like many others, is concerned about the church's present course. He sees signs of our following the liberal course in which the larger Presbyterian bodies and our mother churches in the Netherlands have preceded us. He cited such developments as current attacks on Reformed doctrines by L. Smedes and H. Boer, the latter's attack on the inerrancy of the Bible, the appointment of P. Holtrop to Calvin's faculty after he had attacked propositional truth, pressure to compromise the churches' opposition to divorce and waning church attendance as evidences of such deteriorating conviction. With the boldness and vigor to which Gideon was called we must work for correction. That will require (1) personal piety and commitment to Christ as our Savior, (2) prayer, which God promises to answer, (3) relaxation in the sense of not being anxious because we know God is still in control, and (4) fighting for truth while remembering to do so in love, being ready to name names and take on institutions where that is indicated. And don't fall for the temptation to become tired and quit.

The large attendance and obvious interest in the meeting was another evidence that moves us to thankfulness for the growing support being given to the Reformed Fellowship in its efforts to promote and defend the Biblical Faith.

PETER DE JONG

GOVERNMENT AID THREATENS A CHRISTIAN COLLEGE

From a news item in the Sept. 28 *Presbyterian Journal* (pp. 5, 6) we learn of one of the ways in which government aid can endanger the Christian character of a college which accepts it. Covenant College is a well-known Christian institution under the auspices of the Reformed Presbyterian Church Evangelical Synod, located on Lookout Mountain, near Chattanooga, Tennessee. The new Presbyterian Church of

America had begun to consider taking joint control of that institution with the other church body. Negotiations regarding such a proposal have now been postponed for one year because of an unresolved dispute between the school and the U.S. Office of Education regarding the effect of federal aid on the right of the school to maintain its Christian testimony. The Assembly of the P.C.A. was informed that "a representative of the Atlanta office of the U.S. Office of Education was not only insisting that buildings erected with federal aid not be used for religious purposes, but that even a plaque including 'To the Glory of God—in the Name and For the Sake of Jesus Christ' must be taken off the library." Covenant College president Marion Barnes reported that in their latest contacts, federal inspectors had made more stringent demands than the officials with whom the college had negotiated at the time of the original loans.

"When the buildings were erected, we were told that their *primary* use must be non-sectarian," he said. "We now have been told that *no* sectarian use is permissible and apparently the word sectarian means the same thing as the word Christian to these officials."

"Dr. Barnes noted that the federal inspectors were not impressed with the information that all college courses were taught from a Christian perspective. Their concern, he said, seemed to focus upon those courses in which the word Christian appeared in the title of the course.

"As to the disposition of books within the library itself, Dr. Barnes said that the Atlanta inspectors apparently are willing to allow books on Christianity to be scattered throughout the shelves, but objected to collecting any such books in special sections of the library.

"We already have decided that we can remove classes associated with religion from the premises of the library and gymnasium," president Barnes said. "But we intend to make a fight over that memorial plaque which honors one of the principal donors, in whose name the library was dedicated."

Consider the implications of this development for our Christian schools which are under increasing pressure to seek government aid in these times of rising costs. And consider too what it shows regarding the Anti-Christian movement in our traditionally "Christian" and nominally free society.

PETER DE JONG



BOOK NOTES

Recent Reprints

REV. JEROME JULIEN

PSALMS, by Charles Haddon Spurgeon. A one volume edition of a condensation of "The Treasury of David" by David Otis Fuller. Kregel Publications, Grand Rapids, Mich., 1976. 703 pp. \$14.95.

This edition of Spurgeon's *Treasury*... contains quotations collected by Spurgeon and quotes from the "Prince of Preachers," himself; on each of the 150 Psalms. Names like John Calvin, J. A. Alexander, Andrew Bonar, David Dickson, Jonathan Edwards, Wm. Gurnall, Matthew Henry and many more appear here. This is a fine volume of quotations. On some Psalms it is more helpful than others. However, it will not take the place of *The Treasury of David*, which incidentally is in print once again.

SIGNS OF THE APOSTLES: OBSERVATIONS ON PENTECOSTALISM OLD AND NEW, by Walter J. Chantry. Banner of Truth Trust, Edinburgh. Second edition, revised, 1976. 147 pp., paper. \$1.95.

This book was first published in 1973 and reviewed in the October 1974 issue of *THE OUTLOOK*. This new edition has some minor additions and corrections. It also contains a brief but excellent discussion of I Corinthians 12, 13 and 14, a discussion of the Holy Spirit and revivals. The writer contends that miracles are "extraordinary works of God's power" with the emphasis on *God*. Unfortunately, he does not want to make a distinction between "miracles" and "acts of extraordinary providence." Here is a valuable book which answers the very current dilemma brought about by neo-pentecostalism. Hopefully, it will be used of the Lord to bring us back to a true Biblical view of revival.

THE STILL HOUR, or COMMUNION WITH GOD, by Austin Phelps. Banner of Truth Trust, Edinburgh. 91 pp., paper. \$1.65.

First printed in 1859, this book of 14 devotional chapters on prayer is the outgrowth of a sermon on prayer given by the author in the chapel at Andover Theological Seminary. In a day when almost countless books appear on the subject of prayer—usually from a sentimental and extra-Biblical point of view—this book is a helpful antidote. It calls us back to a sane approach to prayer. Though the book sounds like the nineteenth century, it is a thoughtful, devo-

tional, helpful and encouraging publication on prayer. For a spiritual treat read it. You will be glad you did!

LETTERS OF GEORGE WHITEFIELD, FOR THE PERIOD 1734-1742. Introduction by S. M. Houghton. Banner of Truth Trust, Edinburgh, 1976. ix, 570 pp. \$10.95.

This is a facsimile of Whitefield's works, volume I, published in 1771, including 497 letters to various well-known and little-known people. Also included are 34 other letters not published in the original collected works and notes on all the letters published in this volume. As other letters of that age written by Christians, so these, too, are full of beautiful devotional thoughts. The letters to John Wesley are particularly revealing of the tensions existing between these two leaders of "Methodism." The period of history covered is the exciting one of revivals in the U.S., England and Scotland. It is a beautiful volume—a credit to the Trust. You say that letters don't interest you? Well, read these. They will! You will find them to be a spiritual treat.

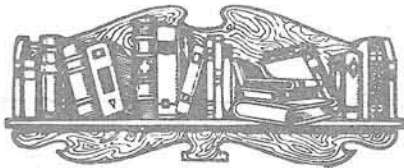
DIVORCE, by Loraine Boettner. Presbyterian and Reformed, Nutley, N.J., 1972. 38 pp., paper. \$.75.

This short booklet on divorce first published in 1960 gives a discussion of adultery as a Biblical ground for divorce. Boettner also explains that this breaks the marriage bond thus opening the door for remarriage. He further gives both sides of the desertion-as-Biblical-grounds-

for-divorce issue, taking a position that it can be permitted.

MALACHI'S MESSAGE FOR TODAY (The Morgan Library), by George Campbell Morgan. Baker Book House, Grand Rapids, Mich., 1972. 131 pp., paper. \$1.95.

Originally printed with the title *Wherein?* the six chapters here reprinted were given as lectures to the student body of the Moody Bible Institute many years ago. They are not sermons, but lectures. They do not give a verse by verse commentary, but rather a discussion of the themes which run through this last book of the Old Testament. He shows us how this book is very applicable to today. A study of Malachi would be illumined through a reading of these studies by a world famous Bible expositor. When you read this book you will soon sense the author's views on the return of Christ, though, thankfully they do not stand out.



Books about the Ministry and Preaching

(Note: The books that follow are all reprints of earlier well-known works in this area by Baker Book House. Baker is to be commended for making these, and many others available in the "Notable Books on Preaching" series, all with introductions by Ralph C. Turnbull.)

THE CRAFT OF SERMON CONSTRUCTION, by William Edwin Sangster. Baker, Grand Rapids, Mich., 1972. 208 pp., paper. \$2.95.

The well-known minister of London's Westminster Central Hall (Methodist) who served during the trying years of World War II gives us a helpful little book on the sermon. Presented in an interesting manner are thoughts on kinds of sermons, how to begin and conclude a sermon, and his method of preparation. The last chapter on "Mistakes Commonly Made" is one every preacher should read, simply to refresh our memories.

IN CHRIST'S STEAD. BEING THE WARRACK LECTURES ON PREACHING FOR 1925, by Arthur John Gossip. Baker, Grand Rapids, Mich., 1968. 247 pp., paper. \$2.95.

Another great preacher and teacher of preaching speaks about the love of his life: preaching. Students who heard these lectures in the Colleges of the United Free Church of Scotland could

not help but have burning hearts to preach. These lectures lay before the reader the sermon and, really, the whole spectrum of worship. His thrust is "preach Christ."

THE HEART OF THE YALE LECTURES, by Batsell Barrett Baxter. Baker, Grand Rapids, Mich., 1971. xiii, 332 pp., paper. \$3.95.

Beginning in 1871, and continuing to the present, lectures on preaching have been given at Yale Divinity School. Many eminent preachers have been asked to speak on preaching, including Henry Ward Beecher, Wm. M. Taylor, Phillip Brooks, John A. Broadus, James Stalker, John H. Jowett, to name only a few. Of course, the men invited represented every theological camp available, with very few exceptions. Professor Baxter has done us a service in organizing the more valuable thoughts of the lectures along the lines of introductory thoughts including the definition of preaching, the preacher, his qualifications and attitudes, the sermon as to style, delivery, its setting and its types and the congregation and how the preacher must approach the flock. Here is a helpful book full of food for thought, well outlined so it is easy to read at short settings.

THE MINISTRY OF THE WORD, by George Campbell Morgan. Baker, Grand Rapids, Mich., 1970. 252 pp., paper. \$2.95.

The minister who for many years served at the famous Westminster Chapel (Congregational) in the heart of London and who published many volumes of Scriptural expositions gave these lectures in the early part of the 20th century. They develop the whole idea of the ministry of the Word from a Scriptural perspective. After the lectures on the Biblical perspective there follow some applicatory lectures which discuss the present day situation, the obligation which is ours, preparing for the ministry and the actual work of the ministry. Last, but not least, is a short chapter on the necessity of prayer.

THE CRAFT OF SERMON ILLUSTRATION, by William Edwin Sangster. Baker, Grand Rapids, Mich., 1973. 124 pp., paper. \$1.95.

The much abused use of illustrations in sermons might be rectified through a study of this delightfully easy to read book. The author gives some direction as to the general use of illustrations in sermons. He gives a rundown of types and sources of illustrations and how to keep track of what we have found. All the way through and especially in the last chapter are warnings regarding the use of illustrations which ought to be taken to heart. The value of this "how-

to" book would have been increased if more emphasis had been given to the Bible as a source of illustrations.

EXPOSITORY PREACHING: PLANS AND METHODS, by Frederick Brotherton Meyer. Baker, Grand Rapids, Mich., 1974. 127 pp., paper. \$1.95.

Written by a well-known English Baptist (1847-1929), the purpose of this book is to encourage much needed expository preaching. Meyer correctly contends that this method of preaching feeds, nourishes, and inspires the flock. By these chapters he attempted to encourage ministers to try exposition. Along with the six chapters there are six expositions of Scriptural passages. While we may not follow Meyer's method, the expositions give some insight as to "how-to" while the chapters explain and challenge to this very rewarding method of preaching.

LECTURES ON PREACHING: THE YALE LECTURES ON PREACHING, 1877, by Phillips Brooks. Baker, Grand Rapids, Mich., 1969. 281 pp., paper.

Certainly a preacher known as "a prince of preachers" throughout the English-speaking world cannot be ignored when he speaks on preaching. His famous definition of preaching has come under fire by many homiletics: "Preaching is the communication of truth by man to men. It has in it two essential elements, truth and personality." In these well-known lectures he deals with the preacher, his work, the sermon, the congregation and the value of the human soul. Perhaps this volume would be good to read when times of discouragement come. No, you will not like all that Brooks has to say, but you will benefit by a few hours with this book.

HOW TO PREACH TO PEOPLE'S NEEDS, by Edgar Newman Jackson. Baker, Grand Rapids, Mich., 1972. 191 pp., paper. \$2.95.

The purpose of the Rev. Mr. Jackson, pastor of a Methodist congregation in New York state and President of the New Rochelle Guidance Center is to show how the sermon can be used to speak to specific needs of the 20th century people. His main emphasis is on "the healing Word." Guilt, sorrow, fear, alcoholism, insecurity, loneliness, anger, doubt, inferiority, agedness, immaturity, family problems, and more are dealt with. The idea of the book is good. We preach in an age of great problems—what age is different? Whether he has come to the core of the problem and, therefore, the cure, is the question. A bibliography containing recommended books by Karen Horney, Seward Hiltner, Carroll Wise and Leslie Weatherhead is included.

(From the James Stewart Library Series)

A FAITH TO PROCLAIM, by James S. Stewart. Baker, Grand Rapids, Mich., 1972. 160 pp., paper. \$1.95.

This is another volume of Yale Lectures on Preaching (1952) This well-known Scottish minister outlines the grand and broad themes of evangelical preaching: the incarnation, forgiveness, the cross, the resurrection and, of course, Christ Himself. What we believe we are to proclaim, he contends!

HERALDS OF GOD, by James S. Stewart. Baker, Grand Rapids, Mich., 1972. 222 pp., paper. \$1.95.

The author begins the preface: "I have chosen the title of this book to stress one fundamental fact, namely, that preaching exists, not for the propagating of views, opinions and ideals, but for the proclamation of the mighty acts of God." What follows in these Warrack Lectures (1946) are chapters dealing with sermon construction and delivery. The last chapter is a much needed one on the preacher's inner life. It is an easily read book full of references to history and literature. Perhaps this volume along with others noted here would be good to include in a reading program — one book a year on the subject of the ministry or homiletics.

A HALF CENTURY OF THEOLOGICAL, G. C. Berkouwer, Translated and edited by Lewis B. Smedes, Wm. B. Eerdmans Publ. Co., Grand Rapids, Mich., 1977, 268 pp., paperback, \$6.95. Reviewed by Rev. Elco H. Oostendorp of Hudsonville, Michigan.

This is a translation of *Een Halve Eeuw Theologie: Stromingen en Motieven van 1920 tot Heden* published in 1974 by J. H. Kok. We are thankful to Dr. Smedes for making this book available to those who do not read the Dutch. It is a brief review of Dr. Berkouwer's theological journey from his student days in the 1920s. One can hardly say it reveals where the author stands on any given subject, but rather it traces how his thinking has changed over the years. The sub-title "Movements and Motives" uses the word motives not in the sense of personal motivation, but refers to prevailing tendencies and themes that can be traced in modern theology.

The eight chapters of the book cover such a wide variety of subject matter that one cannot begin to do justice to them in a brief review. Using copious references and mentioning many names Berkouwer traces the changes that have taken place in theology as theologians wrestled with the impact of science and modern philosophy on Christian dogma. He includes Roman Catholic as well as Protestant writers and movements, reflecting his experience in Protestant-Roman Catholic dialogue and at the Second Vatican Council.

Although he mentions Herman Hoeksema and C. Van Til the author's concern is almost exclusively with European theology, and most of the writers quoted are German. Fundamentalism and developments among evangelicals are hardly mentioned. Most prominent is Karl Barth, to whom he devotes an entire chapter. It is obvious that Barth has greatly influenced Berkouwer, and that over the years he has become increasingly sympathetic to him. In the index there are 120 references to Barth; the next highest is H. Bavinck with 53. Moltmann and Pannenberg receive a lot of attention also.

One illustration of Barth's influence can be found on page 101 where Berkouwer says of H. N. Ridderbos' view of predestination: "In this 'predestination gospel' we encounter a view totally different from that which has played — particularly in connection with Romans 9 — so great a role in traditional predestination doctrines." The review of the decisions of the Synods of the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands should be of special interest to members of the Christian Reformed Church who will be studying Dr. H. Boer's gravamen about reprobation.

This is a book that in a learned way raises many important questions and elaborates on many difficult problems, but doesn't give many positive answers.

JOHN CALVIN — A REFORMATION DEBATE — JACOPO SADOLETO. John C. Olin (ed.) Baker Book House, 1976. Reprint. Reviewed by Rev. John H. Bratt, head of Religion and Theology at Calvin College (retired).

John Calvin was evicted from Geneva in 1538 in a dispute with the City Council over the liturgy. In his absence (a three year pleasant interlude at Strassbourg) an eloquent, scholarly Roman Catholic apologist, Jacopo Sadoletto by name, sought to win back Geneva to the Roman Catholic cause. This bishop of Carpentras (later elevated to the cardinalate) wrote a 20-page letter in March of 1539 to the Geneva City Council urging them to return to the bosom of the Church. The missive was relayed to Calvin in Strassbourg and in September of 1539 he penned his reply. Both of these letters are reproduced in this paperback along with an appendix containing Calvin's views on justification as opposed to the position on it taken by the Council of Trent. Lester De Koster, noted Calvin scholar, wrote a foreword to this monograph.

Sadoletto's letter contains flattery, accusation and argumentation. He praises the Genevans for their "noble city" and the virtues of its citizenry, especially that of showing hospitality to strangers; he casts suspicion on the Reformers, calling them "crafty men, enemies of Christian unity and peace," "men seeking dissension and novelty," who

"boasted of certain hidden interpretations of Scripture" and "sowed wicked seeds of discord." Then he launches his argumentation, advancing the thesis that the primary goal of salvation is preparing the soul for heaven, and that the Roman Catholic Church, by virtue of its antiquity, universality, unity and inerrancy, is proved to be the only true church. (This fourfold argument has been used since time immemorial). The Protestants, says he, are a new sect who teach a new doctrine of faith, namely that of "mere credulity and confidence in God" and are hopelessly fragmented. This fragmentation, he continues, is a sure indication that they are espousing falsehood because "Truth is only one; error is varied and multiform."

In a magnanimous reply twice the length of Sadoletto's letter, Calvin acknowledges purity of motivation on the part of Sadoletto, defends himself against the charge that frustrated ambition led him to cast in his lot with the Protestants, makes passing reference to his "sudden conversion," and counters Sadoletto's arguments step by step. He defends the key doctrine of justification by faith alone, charges the Roman Catholic Church with wholesale corruption in doctrine and in life, asserts the meaning of salvation to lie not only in guarantee of eternal destiny but in service here to the Lord, and vindicates the Reformation as an attempt to restore "that ancient form of the Church, faithful to the Scriptural Word." Luther praised his reply saying, "This answer has hands and feet, and I rejoice that God raises up men who will give the last blow to Popery, and finish the war against Antichrist that I began."

The upshot of this debate is that Sadoletto failed to win the Genevans back. The City Fathers determined to remain Protestant and this confrontation served but to point up anew the crucial issues that separated Protestantism from Roman Catholicism in that 16th century historic break.

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