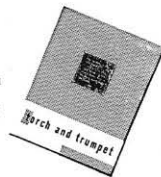




torch and trumpet

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torch and trumpet



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TORCH and TRUMPET

TORCH and TRUMPET is a bi-monthly publication devoted to the exposition, defense and application of the Truth as set forth in God's Word and summarized in the following Calvinistic creeds: The Belgic Confession, the Heidelberg Catechism, the Canons of Dort, the Westminster Confession, and the Westminster Larger and Shorter Catechism. Publication dates: the first of April, June, August, October, December, February. Editorial correspondence should be sent to Rev. John H. Piersma, 805 Grandville Ave., S. W., Grand Rapids 9, Michigan. Subscriptions may be sent to Reformed Fellowship, Inc., 63 Jefferson Ave., Grand Rapids 2, Michigan. Subscription rate is two dollars per year post-paid anywhere. All copies mailed flat.

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VOLUME 1, NUMBER 6

PLEASE, A FRANK TALK WITH YOU!

The Reformed Fellowship reviews the first year of *Torch and Trumpet* and concludes that the verdict of the first year is GO FORWARD. The publishers look to the future with determination and hope.

"OUT OF THE HEART . . ."

 2

This is the third in a series of articles on "What Is Reformed Piety?" . . . Instead of slavishly following manmade traditions and rules, the believer seeks to serve the Lord with his whole heart . . . God is concerned first of all with what man is!

FOUNDATIONS

 4

Untrammelled freedom and false science have brought man to the brink of ruin . . . While the foundations are being destroyed, the Christian, according to the Rev. Arnold Brink, lives by faith in the power of Almighty God.

DID GOD CREATE OUT OF NOTHING?

 6

Modern criticism today challenges the historic Scriptural interpretation of Genesis 1. In this article Dr. Edward J. Young ably and convincingly demonstrates the futility of this attack.

PREACHING AND THE ELDERS

 8

Continuing his series on the eldership, Dr. Peter Y. De Jong calls attention to an oft-forgotten but significant aspect of the calling of those who have the oversight in Christ's church.

CHRISTIANITY WITHOUT CREED

 11

Can true spirituality afford to neglect the truth of the Bible? In this article the Rev. Johannes G. Vos demonstrates the necessity of "holding fast the form of sound words."

THE CHRISTIAN SOLDIER AND HIS CONDUCT IN WAR

 13

In how far must the soldier, trained in the art of killing, keep the law of God? If this question puzzles you, be sure to read this informative article by the Rev. Henry R. Van Til.

WHAT IS MENTAL ILLNESS?

 15

Those who claim to be able to draw an accurate line between the normal and the abnormal will find a stimulating and surprising challenge here. How should we deal with those who are mentally afflicted? In this article the Rev. E. Heerema seeks to point the way.

CALVINISM AND RATIONALISM

 16

According to the Lutheran theologian, Francis Pieper, we Calvinists are guilty of following our human reasons instead of living by child-like faith in the Word. Read Dr. C. Van Til's trenchant reply to this charge.

THE CASE FOR CANADA

 19

The coming of thousands of Dutch Calvinists to Canada has created serious spiritual problems for the churches . . . Dare we meet the challenge by facing the doctrinal and church-political issues squarely and thus give positive leadership?

CHRISTIANITY AND THE FAMILY

 21

The implications of the Scriptural teaching that our families belong to the Lord are discussed by Dr. Peter Y. De Jong, who urges the readers to develop a true covenant-consciousness.

HERE I STAND!

 24

The much-disputed doctrines of original sin and eternal election are discussed by the Rev. John H. Piersma in lessons 13 and 14 of his series of studies in the Belgic Confession.

INDEX TO THE FIRST VOLUME

 32

Please, A Frank Talk With You

VOLUME I, Number 6 of *Torch and Trumpet* is in your hands. This means that our magazine is now one year old, since it appears every two months.

Has the magazine proved its worth? Has it expressed the sense of mission for the Reformed Faith that we, its sponsors, stated in the first issue? Has *Torch and Trumpet* lived up to the expectations and hopes of its publishers that it might be a clear and effective mouthpiece for the faith we love and profess?

These questions we must ask ourselves as we look forward to more years of life for our magazine in God's good providence. What shall we say in reply to these questions?

In reply to these questions we would like to say first of all that we have not waited until now to ask ourselves these questions. The Reformed Fellowship, Inc., publishers of *Torch and Trumpet*, have wrestled with the burden of these questions all through the past year. In all earnestness we wish to say to our readers that we meant business when we declared our mission from the start to be the promotion of the interests of the Reformed Faith in clear, vigorous language that is both true to the faith we love and profess and in touch with the world in which we live today.

Throughout the past year we have been tremendously encouraged by the many kind words written and spoken about our effort. Naturally we were pleased to get such an unflinching cordial reaction to the appearance of the magazine. Readers have frequently spoken of the periodical as "the most beautiful magazine" they have seen. Many readers have told us that they are proud to have this beautiful magazine gracing their living room.

But we are especially encouraged by the response to the contents of the magazine. By the response we have received from our readers we are encouraged to believe that at least in some measure *Torch and Trumpet* has lived up to the main reason for its coming into being. From all over the United States and Canada and from abroad have come warm expressions of congratulations upon the clear-cut and positive manner in which *Torch and Trumpet* has raised its voice for our great faith.

We cannot of course begin to print the many messages of encouragement that we have received. Here we present just two, one from abroad and one from "home". *The English Churchman and St. James Chronicle*, in its issue of August 3, 1951, welcomed our magazine with these words: "We offer a welcome to this new magazine, the first two copies of which are to hand. It is attractively produced and will edify and instruct thoughtful Christians."

Letters like the following from the "man in the pew" have been a source of inspiration to us: "In the hope that you may keep up your noble work begun last year for many years to come, and that you may make intensified attempts in making an impact upon our denominational thinking, we hereby submit humbly and with some measure of pride a new subscriber for *Torch and Trumpet*."

In the first issue we declared that our magazine was not intended to compete with or to replace any existing magazine, since it was our belief that *Torch and Trumpet* had a mission and program quite different from any other magazine. We have been pleased to note that our readers have recognized the uniqueness of our magazine.

Torch and Trumpet has sought to bring you a stimulating variety of articles written by men who in many instances are recognized as authorities in the world of Reformed thought and action and by men who in many instances are pastors living close to the hearts of God's people. This combination of talents and sympathies has reflected itself in the articles and has prompted a gratifying response.

We, the publishers of *Torch and Trumpet*, believe the verdict of the first year is — *Go Forward*. We believe the times are such that this voice must continue to speak with clarity and with the reassuring finality that comes from God's sovereign Word. Our earnest prayer is that God may grant us the wisdom, the perseverance and all other needed graces to perform this mission to His glory.

Again we invite you to join us in this crusade. Be sure to renew your subscription promptly. Speak for the magazine. Let your friends see your copy. Why not try to get your friends to subscribe? They will thank you for it. Remember *Torch and Trumpet* at gift-giving time. Pray for our magazine.

To all those who have helped us in the past year, whether by gift, encouraging word or helpful criticism, we express our deepest gratitude. To every subscriber we extend anew the glad hand of fellowship in the bond of our rich Calvinistic faith. To any who may have suffered inconvenience as a result of our exploratory efforts at organization in the first year we offer our sincere apologies.

With your continuing prayers and support *Torch and Trumpet* looks to the future with determination and hope. New authors of repute will soon appear in its pages. Stimulating articles on many subjects of interest are being planned.

We urge you to continue sharing the joy of this mission with us.

REFORMED FELLOWSHIP, INC.

"Out of the Heart . . ."

By A. C. DE JONG

EDWARD HEEREMA

JOHN H. PIERSMA

THE Pharisees were angry. The disciples were afraid. After all, they were identified with Jesus of Nazareth, they followed him and loved him . . . and everyone knew it. But now he has deliberately offended Israel's most important people. "Ye hypocrites, well did Isaiah prophesy of you, saying, This people honoreth me with their lips; but their heart is far from me. But in vain do they worship me, teaching as their doctrines the precepts of men". (Matthew 15:7-9).

God is "a jealous God"

Why did our Lord feel so strongly the need for corrective teaching at this point? What is the issue involved? Is it really so important that apparently sincere people ought to be offended by our reaction to it?

It was no ordinary occasion when all this happened. Matthew tells us (15:1 ff.) that "then there came to Jesus from Jerusalem Pharisees and scribes . . ."

Nor was it just another church squabble with incompatible personalities maneuvering and slandering for the sake of position and advantage.

There was a real issue. It can be stated thus: "May rules and regulations devised and enforced by men, rules that are contrary to or beside the Word of God, ever bind the conscience?" In other words, who is "lord of the conscience?"¹ The Jerusalem delegation maintained that "the tradition of the elders" was binding (Matthew 15:2). They charge Jesus with teaching that this body of traditional laws regulating the conduct of the Jews was not to be obeyed. Their charge is based upon the fact that his disciples fail to wash their hands before eating.

Immediately our Lord replies with obvious indignation.

1. Westminster Confession of Faith, XX, 2.

Does he deny that his disciples fail to keep this law? Does he claim to have been misrepresented? Or is he perhaps convinced that the "law" cited is of very little importance? The answer to all such questions is . . . No!

"Ye have made void the word of God because of your tradition" (Matthew 15:6b).

There is the point! And this is always the point when it comes to the issue of a true, inward piety over against a false, outward piety. The honor of God, the significance of his Word, the glory of his Name is at stake! No wonder Jesus did not stop short of terrible indignation when this issue presented itself, regardless of the prestige of those through whom it came. He could not possibly tolerate a "piety" which denied the sovereign authority of his Father.

The core of true piety

True piety must work from the inside out. It cannot be super-imposed upon the individual. It begins with a new heart, out of which the fruits of godliness alone can proceed.

The Pharisees had forgotten that. It seemed so simple to them. Forget to wash your hands; your food becomes dirty as you eat; your body is likely to suffer because it has taken in contaminated food. We must not forget, of course, that sanitation was not the point in question. The motivation for this law arose rather from a fear lest the Jew might have touched a Gentile, or something owned by a Gentile. So he was commanded to wash his hands before eating in order that all non-Jewish "dirt" be cleaned away.

Against this outward, merely physical, unspiritual kind of religious practice Christ objects.

Calling the people unto him, Jesus preaches a sermon. He explains care-

fully that the piety-problem is a heart-problem. "Not that which entereth into the mouth defileth the man; but that which proceedeth out of the mouth, this defileth the man . . . Perceive ye not, that whatsoever goeth into the mouth passeth into the belly, and is cast off into the draught? But the things which proceed out of the mouth come forth out of the heart; and they defile the man. For out of the heart come forth evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, railings: these are the things which defile the man; but to eat with unwashen hands defileth not the man" (Matthew 15:11, 17-20).

True piety is concerned, therefore, in the first place with what a man *is*, not with what he *does*. It must come forth out of a heart that desires to express itself through the rest of the man as *godly*, *pious*, *devoted*, *consecrated*.

Precious Hiding-place

There is a method for true piety.

The psalmist indicated it when he said: "Thy word have I hid in my heart, that I might not sin against thee" (Psalm 119:11).

This is the only method that really "works"! All other methods promise much, but accomplish nothing. "Evil cannot flow from a heart in which God's law is lodged. That is the tree which sweetens the waters of the fountain."²

This is the real antidote for all artificial "legalism".

"Everybody is doing it"

"Legalism" is a beckoning siren, an ever-present temptress. And many there be who yield to her seductive call.

In Jesus' day on earth "legalism" had all but won the day with the masses.

In our own day millions are ensnared within her clutches. Think of the countless numbers who follow papal decree, anxiously fulfilling certain external, routine practices in the vain belief that such activity will bring spiritual profit. Think of the innumerable host among all religious groups who feel that the way to eliminate a thing is by "declaring it out of bounds" or banishing it out of sight.

2. Alexander Maclaren, *The Expositor's Bible*, Vol. III, pp. 248, 249.

Surely it seems as if "everybody is doing it." It is a fearfully small minority that will not follow the "precepts of men."

All of which illustrates a point. It is this: To externalize that which is necessarily "inward" in character is an ever-present tendency in the human heart because of sin. Beware!

Consequences of externalism

Superficially, intolerance, and insensitivity — these are the end-products of an external, legalistic "piety".

Big words, to be sure, but unusually easy to understand, if you care to try.

The *superficiality* of those in the grips of a merely legalistic piety comes to manifestation especially at our ecclesiastical assemblies; among other places we may find it at congregational meeting, at consistory or session, at classis or presbytery, at general synod or assembly. How?

The order of the day brings a protest from some member of the denomination concerning a point of doctrine. Surely this will evoke some stereotyped answer to be adopted as reply to the protestant, and things continue on their way. But wait: the chairman announces that the report on "amusements" will now be read by the committee chairman. The place is electrified. Animated debate lasting several hours finally produces a decision.

Cigarettes, wine versus grape-juice at the communion service, movies, Rook versus Canasta, these are the issues that arouse many Christians today. Meanwhile the church is languishing because of the ineffectiveness of a half-hearted discipline, our membership is unconcerned for the truth of the Reformed faith, and a dying world without is unimpressed with the measure of our consecration and sincerity.

"We don't do that"

A legalistic "piety" has very weak foundations.

One of the weakest is its appeal to custom and tradition. "We don't do that" is supposed to silence all those who differ. This is cruel intolerance, and utterly foreign to biblical, Reformed piety.

Not that a sound tradition is not to be appreciated. Nor is anything traditional or customary by that token wrong or suspect.

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But tradition and custom are also to be submitted to the test of God's Word. If they fail to agree, precious as they may be, we shall be compelled to leave them forever. Still more: if they prove to be "aside from the Word of God", that is, if it becomes plain that they are merely traditional or customary we must acknowledge this, and never judge others on the basis of such customs and traditions!

Otherwise in the name of piety, we shall be guilty of that merciless judgment that amounts to spiritual murder.

Spiritually numb

A third consequence of an outward, legalistic "piety" is spiritual numbness — spiritual insensitivity to the real issue involved in any particular activity.

Peter VanAmster has three children ranging from five to ten years of age. They have been watching "Howdy-doody" on the neighbor's television set. Naturally they are enthusiastic, and they begin to pester "pa" to buy a set for their own home. "Pa" doesn't know if he should, because he has heard that there are many very poor programs, that much misleading advertising is shown, and that it is hard to control the use of a set in a home with children.

Gossip soon reaches the VanAmster household that certain of the local ministers are using television sets in their parsonages. That settles it. The VanAmsters order a set, and the children need no longer bother the neighbors. If the minister has one, then they can have one too.

This is a pathetic story. It reveals a spiritual impoverishment which is bound to end in spiritual destruction. But this is the end-result of an exter-

nalistic piety — the desire to solve problems on the basis of some man-made law or human example.

Repent!

What shall be our first step toward a genuine, heart-centered piety? It is all wrapped up in that all but forgotten biblical admonition: Repent!

When has a sermon last moved you to do something about your spiritual state? When last did you truly confess before God your unworthiness and sorrow for sin?

These are words which many a church-member today fails completely to understand. Routinely he goes about the business of being a church-member. At least once, often twice on the Lord's Day he worships in God's house. One hundred or more times a year he listens to God's Word proclaimed from the sacred desk. He participates in the celebration of the Lord's Supper. He brings his tithes.

But he never "hears" a single sermon!

So encrusted with custom and routine is his church attendance that nothing seems to be able to "get under his skin."

As ministers we need to preach, and as congregations we need to hear God's Word and use His means of grace as if these meant something. Fearful are the judgments of God upon those who hear but refuse to practise.

The first manifestation of true piety will always remain a true sorrow for sin, and a genuine seeking after God's will.

Love the brethren!

When you sit in the pew on Sunday do you really think of those about you as your brothers and sisters in the Lord?

Another evidence of the weakness of current spirituality, and of the effect of an outward piety, is the fact that we can go through the motions of congregational life without feeling the slightest compassion for the poor, the unfortunate, the aged, the ill, the sorrowing, the confused, the distressed.

Piety may never be *self-centered*. Sometimes one gets the impression that spiritual things serve as a kind

(Continued on page 28)

Foundations

By ARNOLD BRINK

A NEW dictator has risen to power! He is not a member of the United Nations Security Council.

He is not officially recognized by any existing national government. He has not been elected to any office by any constituency. That dictator must be destroyed or we and our children shall be destroyed. But he is very hard to destroy because he lies quite snugly hidden in the almost inaccessible fortress of the human heart.

The name of that dictator is Chaos.

And, like every dictator, Chaos exercises his grimmest bondage upon the minds of men and he does so by his established religion of the state, which has been called by one wise wit: "Confusionism".

How extensive his enslaving power has become may be suggested by a series of three symbolic events:

A short time ago, a practical joker ran a want-ad in a Los Angeles daily paper that ran about like this:

"Wanted: people who are willing to be converted to a new religion and accept a new found secret of happiness." At the bottom of the ad was nothing but a telephone number. Within a short time, thirty people, enough to start a small congregation, had called that number and offered themselves blindly as willing converts to a "religion" they had never heard of, offered by a person whose name they didn't know, and who was only joking anyway!

Lest we think that such extravaganzas can only occur in one section of the country, in a typically midwestern industrial city, an undertaker was called to minister in his profession at a home where an elderly woman had died. As he left the home the family pressed into his hand a folded piece of yellow paper with the earnest request, "Please bury Auntie with this in her hand". He consented, of course,

but when he arrived at his office, he unfolded the paper and saw to his utter amazement a Railroad Ticket from earth to Heaven, all properly dated and signed. This was to be the guarantee of the dead woman's eternal security!

Recently, a tract was offered to me, purporting to answer the age-old question regarding the unpardonable sin. Amazing to relate, the answer was that the ace of all sins was submitting to a surgical operation. The claim was supported by this interesting exegesis: at the building of Solomon's temple, "no sound of iron tool was heard" and, according to Paul and Peter, our body is the temple of the Holy Ghost. So, of course, to lift an iron tool over that temple is to blaspheme the Holy Ghost.

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We do not cite these incidents with any attempt at humor. They are too tragic to be funny. One does not laugh at the ludicrous struggles of a drowning man. And that is what these incidents are. They are the mental and spiritual struggles of souls, going down in a choking morass of religious confusion.

The sorrow of our generation was symbolized in the lobby of a small western hotel. A young soldier came into the hotel and he caught my attention because of the indescribable boredom and unhappiness that was written large upon his face. He changed a dollar into nickels and began playing a pin-ball machine. Each time he thrust a nickel into the machine, the lights flashed and the machinery whirred and his face seemed to lose a little of its mask of unhappiness. Finally his nickels were used up and

he turned away from the machine and it was with almost a shock that I saw his face. It was more miserable and homesick and bored than ever!

That young fellow did not realize that he was a symbol. But to me he was. In him I saw our generation, still wearing the trappings of history's most colossal war, but utterly disappointed and heartsick for not one single glowing humanistic ideal for which we assumed we were fighting has been realized. And in our boredom and unhappiness, we have been pouring hundreds of dollars a week into the coffers of professional entertainment. The lights flash and the machines whirr, but when the artificial light has died from the faces of people, they turn away more heartsick than ever!

Words of Warning

A hundred years ago, the Russian novelist, Dostoyevski, spoke with a seer's vision:

"Freedom, free thought and science, will bring men into such straits, and place them face-to-face with such marvels and insoluble mysteries, that some, fierce and rebellious, will destroy themselves, others, rebellious but weak, will destroy one another, and the rest, weak and unhappy, will crawl fawning to our feet and whine to us."

And these words have been strengthened by one of today's significant international leaders:

"Military alliances, balances of power, League of Nations, all in turn have failed. We have had our last chance. If we do not now devise some greater and more equitable system, Armageddon will be at our door. The problem is basically theological, and involves a recrudescence of the human spirit to coincide with our almost matchless advance in all technical and scientific endeavours."

These are not the words of a wild-haired prophet of doom but are the sober judgment of General Douglas MacArthur, spoken at one of the most significant turning-points in contemporary history: the surrender of Imperial Japan to the Allied Western powers.

All of this need not mean that cataclysmic destruction yawns before us tomorrow, but neither should we for-

get how fast modern events move. Who would have thought, a few years ago, when Russia seemed helpless as a military force, when cartoonists gleefully pictured her as a great hulking helpless bear, bogged in the snow, while little Finland, like a mischievous imp, prodded her with an ox-goad, that a decade would see nation after nation "crawl fawning to her feet to whine" for protection in the impending doom of an "atomic war"?

The very air of this present era of history vibrates with fear . . . a desperate fear . . . a fear that grips not alone the simple mother who looks upon the face of her child and sees visions of a future that spells doom, but a fear in the heart of the greatest and soberest scientific and political leaders of the world.

In a far earlier day, a leader of men looked about him and summed up the whole situation in one statement, found in the Book of Psalms, the third verse of Psalm 11: "If the foundations be destroyed, what can the righteous do?"¹

Nothing so accurately characterizes this period of human history than to say that the foundations are literally destroyed.

Moral Delinquency

The moral foundations are destroyed.

The moral foundations have been destroyed by a false love of security divorced from a God-given sense of moral responsibility. In society, "social security" is the watchword. In world politics, a "security council" symbolizes the ideal. Even in war, one of the aims was, "freedom from want", and another was "freedom from fear". In religion, people want to forsake the battle for truth. They want to immerse themselves in the soft lap of a sense of spiritual security. Away with fine distinctions, away with doctrinal differences, away with challenging service — we want peace! That longing for security came to spritely expression during the insecure days of the Depression, in a comedy ditty: "Please Go 'Way and Let Me Sleep".

1. Compare the marginal translation in the American Standard Version: "The foundations are destroyed, what have the righteous done?" and the Dutch version: "De fondementen worden omgestooten; wat heeft de rechtvaardige bedreven?"

And educators have been dinning into the ears of teachers and parents, that, at all costs, nothing must ever jar a child's sense of security. In the home and in the classroom, a sense of security must be maintained and fostered. Children must not be disciplined into a realization of responsibility; they must be only shielded and catered to. The result of all this is that we are spawning in our schools a brood of moral illiterates who have no sense of right and wrong because they are always shielded from the real issues of life.

The moral foundations are destroyed by a deep and all-pervading utilitarianism in education. We must never ask such embarrassing questions as, "Is it true?" It is enough to ask, "Will it work?"

The moral foundations are destroyed by a conception of human nature that makes any definite instruction in morals as ridiculous as if I should begin quoting the Ten Commandments to a tree-toad. If human nature is only a little above the animal level and there is no difference of kind between children and puppies, but only a difference of degree, then why not treat children as though they were high-grade animals?

The moral foundations are destroyed by the propagation of an utterly false freedom. When the moral libertinists recommend that young couples solve their problems of pre-

"Although the Divine Law contains a most excellent and well arranged plan for the regulation of life, yet it has pleased the heavenly Teacher to conform men by a more accurate doctrine to the rule which he has prescribed in the law. And the principle of that doctrine is this — that it is the duty of believers to 'present their bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God; and that in this consists the legitimate worship of him . . . This is a very important consideration, that we are consecrated and dedicated to God; that we may not hereafter think, speak, meditate, or do anything but with a view to his glory" (*John Calvin, Institutes.*)

marital compatibility by a dangerous series of sexual experiments, the argument is, "They will learn to know life." It reminds us of the argument of the serpent in the garden who said to Eve, "In the day that thou eatest thereof, thine eyes shall be opened, and thou shalt be as God." If we read on a bit, we find that Satan was half right, "They ate of the fruit of the tree and their eyes were opened, and they saw that they were naked." Our generation has heeded the advice of those who wanted them to "know life". Their eyes are opened, but instead of finding that they have become god-like, they find only that they stand naked and ashamed before their moral and social impurity. The moral foundations are destroyed!

Mental Disintegration

The intellectual foundations are destroyed!

"The educated man", we are told, "never makes up his mind until all the evidence is in". It is a plastic way of stating that only open-mindedness is the way to scholarly truth. I surely would not plead for an absolutely closed mind, but certainly an absolutely open mind is entirely too much like a belfry — a nesting place for bats, but hardly a shelter in the time of storm. Such open-mindedness is mental disintegration.

It is perfectly clear that if such a standard of open-mindedness is widely accepted, there can be no room for a definite affirmation of anything that purports to be absolute, infallible, Divinely-revealed Truth. But for this same open-mindedness, denials of the truth gain free play. The result is that when a public school community decides by a vote of 99 and 44/100 per cent that they desire religious training in the public school, and only one atheist raises an objection, the atheist gets his way and the overwhelming majority must simply keep still. Truth may not be taught, but denials of the truth must not be challenged. And be well-advised, this open-mindedness which is simply a prettier name for agnosticism is now in the process of being forced upon us by Supreme Court Decisions, by a Federal Communications Commission

(Continued on page 30)

Did God Create Out of Nothing?

By EDWARD J. YOUNG

Does Genesis I. Teach Creation Out of Nothing?

DOES the first chapter of Genesis teach the doctrine of absolute creation? Did God, according to this remarkable chapter, create all things of nothing? From earliest childhood we have been taught that such was the case. When, even as little children, we looked out upon the beauty of the world round about and unto the glory of the heavens, the majestic opening sentence of the Bible came to mind, "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth".

Our doctrinal standards tell us that we were not wrong in thus using the words of Genesis. The Heidelberg Catechism, for example, speaks of "— the eternal Father of our Lord Jesus Christ (who of nothing made heaven and earth, with all that is in them —)", and to support this reference to the creation appeals to the first verse of Genesis. The Westminster Confession declares, "It pleased God the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, for the manifestation of the glory of his eternal power, wisdom, and goodness, in the beginning, to create, or make of nothing, the world, and all things therein, whether visible or invisible, in the space of six days, and all very good." In support of this forceful statement, among other passages, the Confession appeals to Genesis 1:2 and to the whole first chapter of Genesis.

The Heidelberg Catechism and the Westminster Confession, to mention but two standards, set forth the doctrine of an absolute creation, a creation out of nothing, and appeal for support to the first chapter of Genesis. When as children we looked upon God as the Creator of the wondrous universe in which we live, and the words of Genesis came to our minds, we were in perfect harmony with the mature statements of the great Reformed doctrinal standards.

Are these standards correct, however, in appealing to Genesis one as teaching the doctrine of creation out of nothing? Does the first chapter of the Bible really declare that God, of His own sovereign power, brought into existence things which previously had no existence? Is this wondrous doctrine of absolute creation to be found in the opening of the Sacred Oracles, or are we mistaken in thinking that it is found there?

There are some modernists who are quite sure that if we would find this great and sublime doctrine in the first words of the Bible, we have missed the meaning of those words. Agreeing with these modernists are some who have come under the spell of modern destructive criticism and who, sadly enough, have been willing to accept a view of the Bible which detracts from its majesty and authority.

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In 1948 there appeared a volume known as the Westminster Study Edition of the Holy Bible. This Bible presents an interpretation of the first verse of Genesis which, in the present writer's opinion, is quite out of accord with the clear cut statements of the doctrinal standards quoted above. According to this Bible, when the narrative of creation begins, the earth was already present as a chaos. The purpose of the chapter seems to be, therefore, simply to show how God brings order out of this chaos and to refute certain false ideas of creation which were present at the time when the author wrote. In fact, the Study Bible

suggests that the first verse of Genesis should be translated as a temporal clause. In making this suggestion, it finds itself in the company of many modern scholars. There are many today who believe that the first three verses of Genesis should be translated somewhat as follows: "When God began to create the heaven and the earth — and the earth (i.e., when God began to create) was desolation and waste, and darkness covered the face of the abyss, and the Spirit of God was brooding upon the face of the waters — then God said, Let there be light, and there was light."

It should be perfectly obvious to every careful reader that if this translation is correct, the implications, as far as the Christian Faith is concerned, are tremendous. For this translation declares that when God began His creative work, the material of the earth was already present. If this translation is right, then the doctrine of creation out of nothing is not found here. More than that, if this translation is correct, then the eternity of matter would seem to be implied, for when God begins to create, there, already in existence, is the world, ready for Him to work upon it. There is only one way to escape this conclusion, and that is to assume that previous to this, God created the material of the world, and that Genesis one merely intends to record how God brought formless matter into its present well-organized state. This, however, is such a desperate expedient, and has so many arguments against it, that it is hardly worthy of serious consideration. If the translation suggested in the Westminster Study Bible is correct, or, for that matter, if any translation which makes of Genesis one a dependent clause is correct, then the consequences for the Christian religion are disastrous. No amount of denial will change that fact.

Why A New Translation

In all fairness to modernist scholars, it must be maintained that many of them will not and have not accepted the idea that the first verse of Genesis is a temporal clause. Wellhausen, let it be said to his credit, spoke of such an idea as desperate. Eichrodt in his Old Testament theology believes that this verse teaches absolute creation,

and so does Otto Procksch in his recent *Theologie des Alten Testaments*.

The idea that the first verse of Genesis one is a temporal clause goes back to Jewish rabbis of the Middle Ages. In recent times, however, it has been set forth for two basic reasons. In the first place, it is claimed that the grammar demands it. Secondly, appeal is made to the ancient cosmogonies of Babylonia and Sumeria, most of which began with such a temporal clause. From this it is concluded that the first chapter of Genesis, which some think to have been derived from Babylonian influence, must also begin in similar fashion.

In a short article of this kind it is impossible to go into a detailed discussion of the grammatical structure of the first verse of Genesis and its relation to verses two and three. Suffice it to say, however, that the grammar of these verses does not demand the translation which we have been discussing. When we turn to our English Bibles and read the opening words of the Bible, we may have every confidence that we are reading an accurate translation, and that the English faithfully represents the original. The modern translation is a possible one — that we must admit — but it is not demanded by the grammar of the passage.

The Babylonian Account of Creation

The second reason generally given for adopting a translation such as we have been discussing is that it is said to be parallel to the opening lines of the ancient Mesopotamian cosmogonies. The principal "creation" account of the Babylonians is generally designated in accordance with its two opening words *Enuma elish*, which mean, "When, on high." Thus, this document begins:

"When on high the heavens were not named,

Below the earth was not called (by a) name."

It will be perfectly obvious that the account begins with the word "when". Now this word "when" (*enuma*) really means "on the day". The Sumerian account likewise begin with the Sumerian word which means the same

thing. The Bible, however, does not begin with the Hebrew equivalent. The Bible begins with something quite different, namely, the unique expression, "in the beginning". There is no equivalent to this expression in these ancient pagan cosmogonies. If therefore, the writer of Genesis was simply following the introductory phraseology of these ancient documents, where did he get this unique phrase "in the beginning"? Why did he not begin his account as do the accounts which he was supposed to be following? The language of these accounts, therefore, does not at all demand the translation of the first verse of Genesis that some seem to think is required.

There is a further point that must not be overlooked. The pagan cosmogonies are garbled and erroneous accounts, characterized by gross and coarse polytheism. At the same time they do purport to be accounts of creation. They do not claim to set forth merely how this present world was refashioned, but rather how it was brought first into existence. Of course they do not present the doctrine of absolute creation, but they do purport, in their own garbled and darkened way, to tell how things first came to be.

If, therefore, the writer of Genesis One was patterning his own account on these models why did he so deviate as to change entirely the nature of his account? He, if the modern theory be correct, was telling only how God refashioned the earth, not how God created it. His models, however, claimed to speak of the origin of all things. Now why did the writer of Genesis thus deviate? This is a question which has never been satisfactorily answered. It goes to show that the first chapter of Genesis is utterly unique, and that it stands out from the ancient pagan cosmogonies as a fair flower in the barren desert.

The Nature of Genesis I.

If we are to understand the nature of Genesis One, we shall not receive much help from the Babylonians. It is quite possible that Moses knew of the Babylonian accounts of creation, but what he wrote was inspired of God. If there are any similarities of phraseology, the Spirit of God per-

mitted Moses to employ only that which accurately expressed His will. We must approach the first verse of Genesis as absolutely unique.

In the present writer's opinion, the first verse of Genesis is a grand comprehensive declaration of the fact of absolute creation. This verse is followed by three statements or descriptions (verse two) which express the conditions in existence at the time when God said, "Let there be light". The thought of the first three verses of Genesis may be paraphrased as follows. "What is the origin of the heaven and the earth? The origin of the heaven and the earth was through a creative act of God. At the time when God said, 'Let there be light' (and we cannot tell how much time elapsed from the point of absolute creation until God thus spake) the earth was without form and void, darkness was upon the face of the deep and the Spirit of God was brooding upon the face of the waters".

In a brief article of this kind it is impossible to set forth in any adequate way the grounds for making such a paraphrase. Suffice it to say we believe that this paraphrase accurately brings out the meaning of these verses. The modern Christian need not be disturbed by the notion that his confessions of faith are wrong in finding the doctrine of absolute creation in the first chapter of the Bible. They are not wrong. At this point as at so many others they have seen correctly the true meaning of the Bible. When therefore we turn to these grand words which form from the opening of the Bible we may accept them at their face value. And when the glory of the created universe breaks in upon our souls, we will not be drawn away and worship the sun and the moon and the stars but will bow before Him who in the beginning did create the heaven and the earth.

I believe hundreds of Christian people are being deceived by Satan now on this point, that they do not have the assurance of salvation just because they are not willing to take God at His word.

Moody

Preaching and the Elders

By PETER Y. DE JONG

WE are living today in a highly critical age.

People no longer are afraid of attacking anything or anyone. Even the Lord of heaven and earth is openly criticized and blasphemed as if He were mere man.

And surely if they fear not God, they have lost all respect for the Word and the service of the Lord. It need not surprise us therefore that one of the fashionable parlor-games of our generation is the criticism of the ministers of the Word. And although some of it may be justifiable, those who desire honesty and justice and love will admit that most criticism in this field is petty, abusive and false.

There is, however, a sort of criticism which although exceedingly rare ought to be assiduously cultivated in the church of the Lord Jesus Christ. In spite of the unsavory aroma which clings to the term "criticism", we should remember the original meaning of the word. It is derived from a Greek word which means "to judge." Hence a critic, properly speaking, is "one who expresses a reasoned opinion on any given matter, involving either a judgment of its value, truth or righteousness, or an appreciation of its beauty or technique."

A critic, therefore, is a person who is able to judge. He possesses for himself and is aware of and able to employ certain basic standards. In the light of these alone he seeks to make an adequate judgment, by which he assesses in how far any given object under consideration approximates the ideal for that subject.

Now in this sense of the word all God's children must be critics. "Beloved, believe not every spirit, but prove the spirits, whether they are of God; because many false prophets are gone out into the world." (I John 4:1)

Everyone who has received the anointing of the Holy Spirit is in duty bound before God to assess the "spirits", that is, those who speak in the name of God as led by His blessed Spirit. John appropriately warns the young Christians of the danger of being misled. Many in his day, and also in ours, speak in the name of the Lord without being truly guided and led by Him. These are the false prophets whose end is destruction and who draw away with them into this judgment many unwary souls. Therefore John insists that the believers shall act as "critics". They are to evaluate very carefully the words which they hear. And the standard by which these words are to be compared is the Word of God. Only then will the hearers enjoy the assurance that the spirits which they follow are of God.

Now this general task of all believers finds a specific and concrete expression in one of the tasks which is laid upon the eldership. They are to be the "critics" par excellence in the congregation. Never may they take for granted that what they hear is of God, but as the responsible rulers of the congregation they in their official capacity must prove the spirits. This is their great and grave responsibility of safeguarding the pure preaching of the Word in the church allotted to their charge.

The Importance of Preaching

Of all the duties of the eldership none begins to compare in importance with their task of supervising the pulpit.

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This follows directly from the important place which Scripture assigns to preaching in the New Testament congregation. We are to remember first of all that the administration of the Word is the heart of public worship. The service is incomplete without it. All the other elements are to a greater or lesser degree dependent on and subordinate to the proclamation of God's Word.

Moreover, the preaching of the Word constitutes the normal diet for our soul. For us it is the chief means of grace. Indeed, there are unique and precious spiritual blessings which we receive from the Spirit in the use of prayers and songs and sacraments, but all of these derive their significance from the Word by which they are interpreted. The reason why so many churches are empty on the Lord's Day must be found in the tragic neglect of the pure preaching of the Word.

And finally, supervision of the preaching is foremost among the tasks of the eldership, because all the other duties assigned to those in this office will remain undischarged if there is failure here.

Surely there is no need of guarding the sanctity of the sacraments, if the purity of the Word is not prized. Nor will there be any appreciation for the spiritual supervision of the flock in doctrine and conduct, if the supervision of the pulpit is neglected. Unless the Word announces how God's people are to think and live, the elders will have no standard by which to assess the spiritual development and health of the believers. Nor will there be any sense in trying to ward off the wolves from the sheepfold of Christ, if the Word does not first of all plainly tell us who are sheep and who are wolves in the sight of the Lord.

Only when we are deeply convinced of the signal importance of the pure preaching of the Word for the health of the church and the glory of God, will we be able to understand the reason why our Reformed fathers centuries ago insisted that the first duty of the elders is "to maintain the purity of the Word."

Supervising the Preaching

But what, you may well ask, is involved in this task of safe-guarding the purity of the Word?

We are to remember that this deals with the actual content of preaching first of all. Here we believe God's revealed will is to be explained to His people. And every explanation of that divine will necessarily involves interpretation. Hence the duty of the elders is to judge critically and officially whether the interpretation is pure, that is, in harmony with the teaching of the Scriptures.

This, of course, is by no means an easy task.

It involves first of all a rather comprehensive and intelligent understanding of the whole Bible. The elder must be a man who with all his heart loves the Word and lives by it. Without this chief qualification he is unfit to exercise his office.

However, an elder does not function alone. He is one of the body known as the consistory. His office he discharges in fellowship with other elders in such a way that no elder may lord it over his fellow elders. And the whole consistory as well as the entire congregation has expressed itself as agreeing with the confessions. In these our churches have set forth what we believe the Scriptures plainly teach on all salient doctrines. Hence in connection with this task of supervising the preaching we must not forget that all sermons in our churches must reflect the teaching of the confessions. We do not believe that these constitute a standard next to or independent of the Bible. Much rather, we as Reformed churches have bound ourselves to them because we are convinced that they set forth in brief compass the teachings of the Word in an orderly, comprehensive and balanced way. No one who is not in agreement with the confessions has the right to belong to our churches; much less to act as elder; least of all to preach from our pulpits.

But beside knowing the Bible and the teachings of the confessions, the elders in order to supervise the preaching of the Word must understand what a sermon is.

What is Reformed Preaching?

Although this does not mean that they must be able to pass a course in Homiletics (the art of preaching), it is essential that our elders understand what Reformed preaching is.

Let us at the outset disabuse our minds from the erroneous idea that any discussion of the Bible from the pulpit on the Lord's day is a sermon. The sermon differs radically from a talk or address. It is not to be compared with a declamation or an oration, even if in outward appearances it seems somewhat to partake of this quality. It is not an essay on some Biblical doctrine or authorized practice.

Rather, preaching according to Reformed believers is the official proclamation of the Word in the name of Christ by a recognized ambassador in the midst of the congregation under the supervision of the elders.

It is proclamation of the Word! Here is to be declared the full counsel of God as He has sufficiently and infallibly given it to us in the Bible. The words of Scripture must be thoroughly expounded, that is, the congregation must know what the Lord says in His Word. That Word speaks to the Lord's children in their need. Hence the Word must be living, dynamic and relevant. It must be applied to their lives. Hence preaching is not merely a discussion of some doctrine or historical incident or religious law. Rather, it is the declaration of the will of the Lord for the whole of human life as it is lived by His people. It appeals to the mind but also to the will; it stirs up the emotions but also incites to deeds. Such a message comes with the authority spoken of by our Savior, when He said, "He that heareth you heareth me; and he that rejecteth you rejecteth me; and he that rejecteth me, rejecteth him that sent me." (Luke 10:16)

The Word and the Spirit

God did not publish his word to mankind for the sake of momentary ostentation, with a design to destroy or annul it immediately on the advent of the Spirit; but he afterwards sent the same Spirit, by whose agency he had dispensed his word, to complete his work by an efficacious confirmation of that word. In this manner Christ opened the understanding of his two disciples; not that, rejecting the Scriptures, they might be wise enough of themselves, but that they might understand the Scriptures. So when Paul exhorts the Thessalonians to "quench not the Spirit," he does not lead them to empty speculations independent of the word; for he immediately adds, "despise not prophesyings"; clearly intimating, that the light of the Spirit is extinguished when prophecies fall into contempt. What answer can be given to

these things, by those proud fanatics, who think themselves possessed of the only valuable illumination, when, securely neglecting and forsaking the Divine word, they, with equal confidence and temerity, greedily embrace every reverie which their distempered imaginations may have conceived? A very different sobriety becomes the children of God; who, while they are sensible that, exclusively of the Spirit of God, they are utterly destitute of the light of truth, yet are not ignorant that the word is the instrument, by which the Lord dispenses to believers the illumination of his Spirit. For they know no other Spirit than that who dwelt in and spake by the apostles; by whose oracles they are continually called to the hearing of the word.

John Calvin,

The Institutes, Bk. I, Chap. ix, Par. 3

From all this follows very emphatically, and well may our present generation become aware of this truth, that the essence of preaching lies not in its polished form. Much as this may be desired and ought to be appreciated, it is very subordinate. For surely our spiritual sensitivity is in no wise dependent on our aesthetic appreciation.

The question is simply whether first of all the minister is a recognized ambassador of the Lord Jesus Christ, lawfully called and ordained by the congregation.

Thereupon, we are to take note whether that minister knows himself in his preaching as fully bound by the revealed Word. He is not to lecture on some interesting subject. Rather, he is to take a part of the Holy Word and in language which can be understood by the average member of the congregation explain its meaning and show its significance for daily life.

And the elders are called upon to test whether the message of the preacher is of God.

Theirs is not the duty of asking whether the people liked or did not like the sermon. Nor should they be concerned about their personal reaction to the message. They are to act officially and corporately. As a consistory they are to decide whether the message which the congregation heard was the authoritative and living Word of the Lord. Naturally, this is a most delicate and difficult task. It involves the Bible and one who is recognized by the church as an official proclaimer of the truth of that Bible. Here we are dealing with the sacred; with the rich provisions which our heavenly Father has made for the spiritual development and prosperity of His church on earth. It behooves each one of us to move with utmost caution — minister and elders and congregation.

Let the minister prepare each message as a proclamation of the glad tidings of grace, an exposition and application of the Word of life to the congregation, a vital, dynamic and relevant message of the rich Christ for the poor sinner.

Let every congregation submit to the authority of the Word, realizing that the content of the message is far more essential than its form and therefore hungering to be fed with the Bread from heaven.

And let the elders earnestly, conscientiously and reverently test the message in the light of the proper standards. Is it true to Scripture? Is it in harmony with the confessions? Is it a sermon, the exposition and application of the text to the whole life of the believing church?

A Parable

Where, from their mutual source, two
vigorous streams
Scatter incessant misty spray
Down from the lofty heights of
Hermon's hills
Where cedar trees of Lebanon sway,
Flows Galilee's Sea and one called
"Dead",
Their brotherhood no one has
guessed —
Like twins brought forth in one
travail,
Both nourish at earth's flowing breast.

The Sea of Galilee through burnished
fields
Of fertile beauty, feeds the Jordan
plain;
Boasting an outlet, it receives to yield,
And gathers to pour out again.
The Dead Sea clutches in its
boundaries
Brackish, stagnant water, loathe to
give;
Having no issue, it receives to keep.
Death lies entombed, naught in its
water lives.

Help me to radiate thy generous love,
My selfishness, O Lord, I pray, forgive,
And let my heart share lavish all my
days —
"Freely ye have received, then freely
give!"

— *Elsie D. Kuizema*

There is great danger that the elders precisely on this point neglect their task.

Indeed, they will be able to detect gross heresies. And should any preacher have the temerity to preach one of these, he would be summarily dismissed from the Christian Reformed Church. However, when the devil attacks the church with false doctrine, he comes not in wooden shoes but on soft-soled slippers. Insidiously, so that often even the ministers and elders are not aware of the change of emphasis, a new type of preaching so-called arises. The emphasis becomes topical instead of exegetical; man-centered instead of God-glorifying; aesthetically soothing instead of spiritual vital.

How fine it would be if the elders in full consistorial session would talk over the preaching of the Word with the minister. How much easier preaching would become for the minister, if he were informed by the elders what they also felt the congregation needed at any given season. How much deeper would be the love of the elders for a conscientious and faithful minister of the Word, if they would hear from his lips what he aims to do in the preaching of the Word for the people of God. How much stronger the elders would stand over against those people whose petty and unjustified criticisms of the sermons spread like pestilential poison throughout the congregation, and threaten to kill the spirit of the preacher. The question is not whether people like the sermons; whether they measure up to man-made standards of what sermons should be. The sole question is whether the message brought is called a sermon by the living Christ who is Head and King of His church.

When the elders understand their duty of safeguarding the purity of the preached Word and defend the preacher who proclaims the gospel purely, both they and the whole congregation will be delivered from the false standards set by men and grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

Christianity Without Creed

By JOHANNES G. VOS

NOTE: This is the fifth in a series of articles on common contemporary viewpoints which are contrary to orthodox Christianity.

If anything is characteristic of contemporary American Protestantism it is opposition to doctrine. In former times people might be opposed to particular doctrines, such as the doctrine of predestination or the doctrine of hell; but today there is widespread opposition to doctrine *as such*, to the very idea of an authoritative body of Christian doctrine.

This present-day aversion to doctrine exists in various forms. For example, there is downright opposition to doctrine shown in the often-heard slogan, "Christianity is not a doctrine but a life." The person who says that is setting up a false antithesis between doctrine and life, and rejecting doctrine in the interests of "life."

Another common form is *doctrinal indifference*, the prevalent attitude of not being interested in distinctions between truth and error. The doctrinally indifferent person is wrongly called "tolerant." Questions concerning the deity of Christ, the atonement, the inspiration of the Bible, he lightly dismisses as "abstract theology" or "theological hair-splitting." By "hair-splitting" such a person means any exact theological knowledge at all.

Yet another form of aversion to doctrine consists in the *faint praise of doctrine*. When a person says: "Doctrines are important, of course, but what really counts is Jesus' way of life," he is engaging in the faint praise of doctrine; what he really means is that doctrines are not important at all, and that we can have "Jesus' way of life" regardless of what our doctrines may be. Similarly, when people discuss Christian doctrine as if it were a luxury or auxiliary ornament to be added

to our religious faith and life, as if we could first live the Christian life and then afterwards perhaps acquire a modicum of doctrine, they are engaging in the faint praise of doctrine; doctrine is not a luxury to the Christian any more than bones are a luxury in the human body.

Another form of opposition to doctrine is *skepticism concerning the existence of absolute truth*, a spiritual blight which is extremely common today. According to this view, truth is not permanent but changes with the

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times; what was true yesterday may be false tomorrow. The person who says the Westminster Standards were a good expression of Christianity for the seventeenth century but are not suited to the twentieth century is suffering from this spiritual blight. The Westminster Standards are either true or false; if false, they were false 300 years ago when first written; if true, they are still true today.

None Unaffected?

All the tendencies that have been mentioned are at bottom anti-doctrinal in that they are all contrary to the recognition of the true place and importance of the body of Christian doctrine that has crystallized in the great historic creeds of the Church. These tendencies are all characterized by aversion to sustained, systematic preaching and teaching of a recognized body of Christian doctrine. These tendencies are so prevalent today that it may safely be asserted that there is not a Protestant church in America that has not been influenced by them

to a greater or less extent. Some denominations have succumbed to these anti-doctrinal tendencies, while others are struggling nobly against them.

The contemporary aversion to doctrine makes the task of the minister far more difficult than it would otherwise be. The minister who would be faithful to his calling must, as it were, undertake the removal of a great stone from the door of his people's minds; he must first cope with the almost universal prejudice against doctrine before he can hope to impart to his hearers any adequate knowledge of the doctrinal system of the Bible. That is to say, the present situation cries urgently not merely for faithful preaching of the doctrines of the Christian faith, but for convincing people that Christianity is essentially doctrinal and that its doctrines are therefore *absolutely* important so that without them Christianity cannot exist, and there can be no saving gospel.

An Element of Truth

There is indeed a certain element of truth in the anti-doctrinal spirit of modern religion. It may be regarded as a reaction against that type of religious formalism which regards Christianity as *merely* a body of doctrine. Such a perversion of the Christian religion is often called "dead orthodoxy." A more correct term for it, however, would be *dead orthodoxism*. For *orthodoxy* really involves a *hearty acceptance of the truth*, and a really hearty acceptance of the truth cannot coexist with a lifeless formalism in religion. The person whose religion is devoid of true spiritual life is never really orthodox, for he does not accept the doctrines of Christianity in their true intent and purpose but only externally or as a mere matter of form. His religion therefore should not be called "orthodoxy"—not even with the word "dead" added—but "orthodoxism."

Undoubtedly the dead orthodoxism of the past is at least partly responsible for the aversion to doctrine which characterizes the present. The churches have reacted against a perversion of Christianity which seemed to have nothing but a bare body of doctrine, and have in many cases swung clear over to the opposite extreme of favoring a perversion of

Christianity which regards a body of doctrine as unnecessary or even harmful. Both extremes are wrong; both destroy the Christian religion. To revert to the figure of the bones and the body, we may compare the Christian religion in its totality to the human body, and the doctrinal system of Christianity to the bones of the body. Now obviously a structure of bones is not only highly desirable, but absolutely necessary, for the existence and functioning of the human body. Bones are not a luxury; they are an absolute necessity. Similarly the doctrinal system of Christianity is absolutely necessary for the existence and activity of the Christian religion. Doctrines are not a luxury; they are an absolute necessity. Christianity without doctrines is as impossible as a human body without bones. On the other hand, a body consisting of nothing but bones cannot live and function, either; it is not really a body, but only a skeleton. And in like manner a type of religion which has nothing but a bare body of doctrines cannot really be Christianity; it can only be a perversion or travesty of the Christian religion.

The element of truth in the slogan "Christianity is not a doctrine but a life", then, is that Christianity is not *only* a doctrine, but *also* a life. This is the element of truth which dead orthodoxism has denied, in practice if not in theory; and the neglect of this element of truth has certainly been one of the factors leading to the aversion to doctrine which exists today.

Influence of Modern Science

It would, however, be a mistake to lay all the blame for today's aversion to doctrine on yesterday's dead orthodoxism. Other powerful factors have also been at work. Today the people in general, including the membership of the churches, are under the influence of science and philosophy as never before. Modern science is almost completely under the domination of modern philosophy, and both have had a tremendous effect on the religious life and thought of our day. Modern science and philosophy have championed a view of the world and of human life which is utterly incompatible with the Christian religion. This modern view of life implies that many of the doctrines of Christianity,

such as the doctrines of creation, the fall of man, miracles, the virgin birth of Christ, his bodily resurrection and ascension and second coming, the infallibility of the Bible, supernatural regeneration and salvation, *cannot be true*. As a result of this there has been a tendency on the part of many faint-hearted Christians to quake and tremble at the blasts of science, and to seek to take refuge in a non-doctrinal form of Christianity that would be beyond the reach of the attacks of science and philosophy. Such people say in effect: "Science has shown that the modern mind can no longer accept the doctrines of old-fashioned Christianity. But never mind; we can still be Christians, for these doctrines, after all, are not *essential* to the Christian religion; they are only the outward form or husk of Christianity; what really counts is the kernel, and we can retain that, even though science requires that the husk be abandoned." Thus modern religion seeks to retain a non-doctrinal something as the real essence of Christianity; and that "something" usually turns out to be merely a vague mysticism or an ethical ideal of kindness and good will. Christianity has been "re-interpreted" and divested of its doctrines—robbed of its structure of bones—until it is no longer recognizable as the genuine article. The net result is that each person decides for himself what he considers good and praiseworthy, and labels his self-made religion "Christianity."

A Subversion of Christianity

Against the anti-doctrinal spirit of the present day, it must be asserted and insisted upon without apology that *Christianity is first of all a body of doctrine*. It is indeed more than that, but it is that first of all. The Bible is the special revelation of God to mankind, and the Bible is essentially a message of truth. It answers the two basic questions, "What is true?" and "What is right?" and in answering them gives us the materials for constructing the system of Christian doctrine and Christian ethics. The Bible furnishes the infallible data; it is the Church's task to put them together in systematic form—a task for which Christ promised the illumination of his Holy Spirit to the Church (John 14:26; 16:13).

The fundamental purpose of the Bible is to furnish the data for the system of Christian doctrine. This basic purpose of the Bible is often neglected, it is true. It was reported a few years ago that a certain fashionable women's college offered its students two courses in Bible study: a course on the Bible as literature, and a course on the Bible as history. Now of course the Bible is literature, and contains history; yet neither of these constitutes the basic purpose of the Bible; the basic purpose of the Bible is to present doctrinal truth. As well not study the Bible at all, as to study it merely as a book of literature and history. We are not really studying the Bible to any profit unless we study it as what God intended it to be, the source of doctrinal truth.

The Truth Shall Make You Free!

The body of truth revealed in the Bible, and exhibited in systematic form in the creeds of the Church, is not an adjunct of Christianity, but the absolutely necessary foundation of the Christian religion. Our Lord said, "Ye shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free" (John 8:32). Thus doctrine—for doctrine is simply the truth started in logical form—is the foundation of the Christian life and is essential to salvation.

Christian doctrine consists, first, of a body of facts, such as the creation of the world, the birth, life and crucifixion of Christ, his resurrection and ascension to heaven. These facts are absolutely essential, yet of themselves alone they do not constitute Christian doctrine. To these facts must be added the God-given interpretation of the facts. Thus the fact of the crucifixion of Christ, plus the meaning of that fact revealed in the Bible, yields the doctrine of the substitutionary atonement of Christ. To say that *Christ died* is to state a fact of history; to affirm that it was *for our sins* is to set forth the revealed explanation of the fact; the combined statement *Christ died for our sins* is the central doctrine of the Christian faith, the substitutionary atonement. All the other doctrines of Christianity are similarly constituted.

(Continued on page 32)

The Christian Soldier's Conduct in War

By HENRY R. VAN TIL

IN previous issues we have concerned ourselves with the question of the lawfulness of participation in war for the Christian, and the Scriptural doctrine concerning God and his purposes in sending wars.* We came to the conclusion that the Bible warrants such participation and that war does not mean that God is no longer the ruler of the world, but rather that he vindicates his sovereignty by punishing sin and calling his people to repentance by war. In this article I wish to reflect upon the practical problems facing a Christian soldier in battle and in occupation service. We turn once again to the Word of God for guidance, since it is our rule for faith and practice; since we believe that it is sufficient and clear also with respect to this problem.

We, Protestants, believe in progressive revelation. This is not to be identified with the evolutionary view of religion held by the modernists. According to their view Amos had a higher conception of God than Abraham simply because the human spirit had made great advances. That is the subjective and naturalistic view of revelation, as though truth proceeds from man. Our Reformed view is that God revealed more of Himself to the church in N.T. times than in O.T. times. It is true that Amos had more light than Abraham, but this light came from above. It was the activity of God's self-revelation to his people by which the prophets understood more of the counsel of God than the patriarchs. The apostles in turn knew far more than the prophets, since the Word of God had become INCARNATE.

What the Bible Says *

Hence we must especially look to the New Testament. Besides many things that took place in the Old Testament are not given to us as

*See Oct.-Nov. and Dec.-Jan. Issues.

normative; they merely present without recommendation the historical picture of what took place. The general principle of the New Testament that we should love our enemies is valid for us today. We may not entertain hatred toward our fellowmen as creatures and image-bearers of God. Since war is not a matter of personal relations first of all but rather of executing the wrath of God through lawfully constituted government, we may not cherish hatred and seek vengeance in the conduct of war. Therefore all cruelty and inhumanity is detestable. Some Old Testament examples of cruelty by God's saints may not be used as normative, for God clearly condemns man's inhumanity to man through the prophets (Cf. Amos 1, 2). On the other hand, we find some pointed direction in the New Testament concerning conduct by godly men in army service. We refer to John the Baptist's prescription to the soldiers who came to him asking, "And what shall we do? And he said unto them, Do violence to no man, neither accuse any falsely; and be content with your wages" (Luke 3:14).

Repentance Required

For a proper understanding of these words of John we must get the setting. The Forerunner is introduced by Luke as "preaching the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins". But repentance must consist not only in word but in deed. "Bring forth therefore fruits worthy of repentance, and begin not to say within yourselves. We have Abraham to our father." That is to say, your associations with pious people and descent from patriarchs is not going to save you, but you must yourselves indicate the reality of repentance by works. This made a deep impression and the crowds began to ask: "What shall we

do then?" The answer of John was simple. "He that hath two coats, let him impart to him that hath none; and he that hath meat, let him do likewise." John is not introducing communism in economics and suggesting that private property be wiped out. Rather, of that which individuals possess they must freely give to those less favored than themselves. In short, the law of God which says: "Love your neighbor as yourself", is here reiterated with force. That love ought to express itself in deeds. "God", says John, "will judge your profession of repentance by your deeds of Christian charity and mercy."

After having made a particular application to the Publicans who also sought baptism unto the remission of sins, John sets forth the practical application of godliness for the life of the soldier. Here the same general principle applies. The law of God has not been abrogated for those in military service. That law is still binding upon all, and soldiers are no exception to the rule. The idea that so easily takes possession of those who are trained in violence, those who are ordered to shoot to kill, that they are now above the law with respect to their fellowmen is erroneous. And we might add, this simple deduction which possesses the mind of men rests upon the false conception of war. If war be regarded as the execution of the righteousness of God, as the maintenance of justice in the world, its participants would not so easily fall into all kinds of lawlessness. But the misconception arises from the mistaken notion that killing, which is murder, is temporarily sanctioned by

The worst thing that can be said of any Christian community is this: "Thou hast a name to live and art dead." "Thou art neither cold nor hot." Our Lord Jesus says: "I would thou wert cold or hot. So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spew thee out of my mouth." A church without life and zeal makes Christ sick.

Spurgeon

law. And from killing to rape, theft, false accusation and every other crime is only a short step.

Hence the Way-Preparer of the Messiah warns his audience of military men that the law of God is still inviolate. "Extort from no man by violence" (R.V.) Now a soldier is one trained in violence. It is his business to be strong physically and violent as the situation demands. He must not only learn to shoot straight but also to advance and overcome the enemy in personal, hand-to-hand combat. The enemy must be routed, put out of commission so that he quits the field and surrenders his arms, and gives up the struggle. Any soldier who refuses to fight, to shoot straight, to march and to advance is an unworthy citizen and a rebel against God-instituted authority. We ought to obey the government not only for wrath's sake but also for conscience sake. The boys, who proved to be veritable Nimrods with a twelve gauge shot-gun and always brought back their full tale of pheasant or duck, but refused to shoot straight in the army and were transferred to the quartermaster corps to do household duties were not only bad soldiers but poor Christians.

The Proper Use of Force

However, this violence must be directed and restrained. A soldier may not deal in violence as a private citizen. He may not use his superior physical equipment or his proficiency in arms to pillage the prisoners and the enemy population. That is extortion by violence! That is but plain thievery! Our boys used to refer to this practice laughingly as "liberation". Many American soldiers excused themselves on the basis that the Germans had formerly pillaged the Netherlands and other nations. But if Hitler and his hordes broke the law of God that still does not give us Americans the right to break God's holy law. Whatever the government may take or require the vanquished foe to pay as indemnity for our loss or the loss of the Allies does not give the slightest justification for an individual soldier to steal in this brazen way. The soldier who took watches, paintings, dishes, rugs or any of the innumerable beautiful cultural objects

"Human institutions are really to be molded, not by Christian principles accepted by the un-saved, but by Christian men; the true transformation of society will come by the influence of those who have themselves been redeemed."

J. Gresham Machen

owned by our enemies, is guilty before God. "Are you truly ready to enter the Kingdom of Heaven," says John, "then bring forth fruits worthy of repentance. Then show by your deeds what you confess with your mouth." "Extort from no man by violence!" Or, as the margin of the Authorized Version gives it, "Put no man in fear". And this applies to the female population especially of conquered territory. The Christian soldier in a conquering army or stationed in garrison in a vanquished country must still keep the law of God inviolate with respect to the seventh commandment as well as the sixth. Also here all extortion by violence or intimidation stands condemned. (In regard to the broader aspects of sexual morality I shall deal more particularly in a following issue).

The following two phrases in Luke 3:14, "neither accuse any one wrongfully; and be content with your wages", are further specifications of this general principle that the law of God must be obeyed by soldiers as well as civilians. To accuse falsely or wrongfully was a rather common practice for those in the military service in John's day. Thereby they stood a good chance of receiving bribes and thus augment their meager daily allowance. This type of blackmail, too, must be resisted by anyone who would live godly. Here is a simple reaffirmation of the ninth commandment for those in military service: "Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbor!"

Christian Contentment

"And be content with your wages". At first blush this injunction may cause some to smile since soldiers from time immemorial have been notorious

for their discontent with wages. In the American army there was a vogue to say that the soldier who does not complain is not happy. One is simply expected to be discontented with the general situation of which wages constitutes a very real part. In the days that our Lord was here among men the soldiers received very little. It was a mere pittance, a meager existence of porridge and a few farthings to spend in an idle hour. Today, in our land of wealth all that has changed, yet soldiers grumble as of old. And the Word of God comes to Christian soldiers saying, "You are to distinguish yourselves from the common crowd by your contentment". Of course, that is the rule for all Christians everywhere. Contentment with godliness is great gain. We are to be content and ready to accept the things we receive and the conditions of life in which by God's providence we find ourselves. This general rule for Christian living also applies to soldiers without diminution. That constitutes the radical power of Christianity. If we would conduct ourselves as disciples of the Lord Jesus while in the service of our country, we must also show our fellow-soldier citizens that our confession is not in words only, but that we are in deed followers of the Christ. Discontent is a festering sore in the lives of many people and it will spoil our effectiveness as witnesses for our King. If Christian soldiers are discontent like the rest we miss one of the finest opportunities to show the men of this world that we are a peculiar people unto the Lord. I venture to say that a soldier who shows that he is content with his wages and does his duty without grumbling from day to day will be challenged by many concerning the cause of his strange behaviour and thus will find an opening to witness for his faith. Such a witness will have the power to convict men and to touch their hearts because it is a testimony not only of the lips but of daily deeds. Even the unbelieving world is impressed by facts and acts. The devil keeps a close eye on the Jobs of God who walk uprightly and flee from evil.

To conclude, then, in the conduct of war the Christian must obey the

(Continued on page 30)

What Is Mental Illness?

By EDWARD HEEREMA

D ID you ever visit a hospital for mentally ill?

Your first visit to such a hospital was most likely a very unsettling experience. Possibly sleep was slow in coming the following night.

You saw such unforgettable faces — faces screwed up into the weirdest expressions, faces with silly grimaces on them, faces whose eyes had lost the luster of hope and life. You heard human voices making groaning noises, strange laughing noises, haunting noises. You were startled when a patient came up to you and said, "The Holy Spirit is after you; you'd better watch out." You saw men and women pacing relentlessly back and forth and you couldn't help thinking of animals in a cage, much as you loathed the thought. You saw young men and young women whose mask-like hopeless faces or profoundly agitated faces tugged hard at your heart.

Then you also saw many patients whose faces seemed so natural and who spoke in steady and wholly intelligent tones. You wondered why that Mrs. Wilson had come to the hospital. She was dressed so neatly and she was so gracious in her manner and speech and contact with others. How had she got out of step with life? And you couldn't forget that Mr. Adams. He seemed to be so wholly capable of taking care of himself and of meeting people.

Your first visit to a hospital for the mentally ill was most likely a startling, bewildering, disturbing, unnerving experience.

Did you go back to the hospital for a second visit? or a third visit? It is to be hoped that you did. Possibly you went back often. Maybe in the providence of God you had to take a close relative or a dear friend to the hospital.

As you returned to the hospital once and again your feelings about the place and the patients began to change. Especially the experience of bringing a dear one there opened your eyes to something very significant, and much of your feeling of frightened revulsion toward the hospital disappeared. What significant thing did you learn? You learned that in general the patients in a hospital for the mentally ill are *people just like you*.

Normal — Abnormal

That brings us to the question of the normal and the abnormal in the whole field of mental disturbances. In our college class in Abnormal psychology we used a well-known text called *The psychology of abnormal people*, by J. J. B. Morgan. This text enjoyed a good reputation in its day. A later text of considerable value and probably named with Morgan's text in mind is called *The psychology of normal people*, by Tiffin, Knight and Josey.

Are the titles to these two texts desirable titles? They seem to imply that there are two classes of people, the normal and the abnormal, and that there is a clearly drawn line of difference between them. Is there such an absolute distinction in the field of mental disturbances?

Yes, there is such a distinction, but it applies to a very limited number of people. This distinction does not apply to most of those who have beds in mental hospitals. In fact, the distinction as an *absolute* distinction hardly applies at all to those suffering from mental illness. To be sure, there most likely is some abnormality in the conduct or reaction of the one suffering from mental illness. He may be *temporarily* abnormal. He may be abnormal for a long time. But that is something other than saying that such a person is to be fixed in a class called "abnormal people."

This is one important reason why we are approaching our subject as we are in this series of articles. Some one may very well ask why we bother with the mentally ill as we consider the inner states and needs of the average person in church and society. "Those people are insane," the person with little knowledge may say; "what do I have to do with them?"

We are concerned with the mentally ill here because they are people like the rest of us. We want to take a close look at their inner needs, tensions, frustrations and "twists" of mind because we will see in sharper outline and in enlarged form the needs, tensions, frustrations and "twists" of mind that mark the lives of us all. The feelings, moods and reactions of those who become mentally ill are not wholly strange, exotic things that belong properly in some distant foreign land. The states of mind of the mentally ill are deepening, extensions, and twisted developments of the states of mind that are common to mankind. He who comes to understand the real nature of many cases of mental illness, both in their present character and in the history leading to them, often says to himself in deepest sincerity, "There but for the grace of God am I."

Parenthetically it can be stated here that it was largely for the reason developed above that the writer of these articles preached regular sermons to the patients during his ten-year residence as hospital pastor at a hospital for the mentally ill. No effort was made to scale the sermons down to some lower level of understanding. Whenever a visiting minister mistakenly felt that he had to "talk down" to what he thought might be the level of understanding of the patients, many of the patients would later express their resentment at the insult. On the other hand not a few patients expressed deep appreciation of the approach regularly employed in the chapel services. This manner of approach helped them to regain a measure of self-respect — a matter of considerable importance in the rebuilding of a broken personality.

(Continued on page 28)

Calvinism and Rationalism

By CORNELIUS VAN TIL

THE Concordia Publishing House of Saint Louis, Missouri, is currently publishing a translation of the late Francis Pieper's book on *Christliche Dogmatik*, or, translated, *Christian Dogmatics*. There are to be three volumes. Two of them have already appeared.

With great force and conviction, Dr. Pieper sets forth orthodox Lutheran theology. For Pieper, Lutheranism is Christianity come to its own. Non-Lutheran forms of Protestantism are said to be defective. And their defective character is due, basically, to a rationalistic attitude toward Scripture.

Theology of Self-Consciousness

Pieper makes a searching analysis of the "theology of self-consciousness," that is, the modern theology of Schleiermacher and his followers. "Invented for the purpose of insuring the scientific character of theology, this theology makes its advocates play the role of the man who, in order to brace his toppling Ego, takes a tight hold on his Ego. Furthermore, the Ego theology is a form, the worst form, of idolatry — self-deification" (vol. I, p. 127).

Reformed Theology and Ego-Theology

But what of Reformed theology? Does Pieper share the frequently stated position that all orthodox Protestants have essentially the same view of Scripture? Does he think that all "fundamentalists" should unite in common opposition to all "modernists", calling them back from their confidence in "experience" to belief in the Word of God? Far from it! Pieper is convinced that orthodox Reformed theology is deeply tinged with the principles of "Ego-theology." Says Pieper: "The desire to go beyond Word and faith, and to walk by sight already in this life, has given rise to

Calvinism, to synergism, and lies at the bottom of the entire modern 'construction theology' (Konstruktions-theologie)." (vol. II, p. 389).

The main objection raised against Calvinism is that of rationalism as based upon and proceeding from an ego-theology. "What we object to in the Reformed theology is this, that in all doctrines in which it differs from the Lutheran Church and on which it has constituted itself as the Reformed Church alongside the Lutheran Church, it denies the Scriptural principle and lets rationalistic axioms rule" (vol. I, p. 186).

Calvin, a Rationalist

As for Calvin himself, says Pieper, he virtually forsook the revealed will of God. "The depths of the Godhead are not hidden to Calvin; they are so clear to him that by them he cancels the revelation in the Word (the *gratia universalis*)" (vol. II, p. 47).

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Calvin's "particularism" is said to have its roots in his rationalistic appeal to the hidden will of God. "Luther lets the Word of God, Scripture itself, tell him what the gracious will of God is, how far it extends, and what its effects. Calvin lets the result (*effectus*) or the historical experience (*experientia*) determine what God's gracious will is" (vol. II, p. 48). "True, also Calvin says that we should not seek to explore the hidden will of God, but rely on Christ and the Gospel. But how can Calvin direct men to rely on Christ and the Gospel since he teaches that only some of the hearers of the Word have a claim on Christ? As a

matter of fact, he does not direct men to Christ and the Gospel, but to their inward renewal and sanctification, or to the *gratia infusa*" (vol. II, p. 46). "Calvin's theology, therefore, is not basically Biblical, but rationalistically motivated" (Idem, p. 276).

Calvinism Virtually Denies the Incarnation

In following Calvin, Reformed theology "through the use of rationalistic axioms, fixes an unbridgeable gulf between itself and genuine Christian theology (vol. II, p. 271). So, for instance, we are told, Calvinism holds to the purely speculative maxim that the finite cannot contain the infinite (*finitus non est capax infinite*). In virtue of this "rationalistic axiom" Calvinism virtually denies the incarnation. "In so far as Reformed theology, in its effort to disprove Lutheran Christology, applies the principle that the finite is not capable of grasping of the infinite, it inevitably denies the incarnation of the Son of God and Christ's vicarious atonement, and so destroys the foundation of the Christian faith" (vol. II, p. 271). In this way, Reformed men commit "theological suicide" (vol. II, p. 167).

Calvinism Virtually Denies the Gospel

Again, Calvinism is said to deny the "Scripture doctrine of *gratia universalis*" because of another "philosophical axiom", namely, "Whatever God earnestly purposes must in every case actually occur; and since not all men are actually saved, we must conclude that the Father never did love the world, that Christ never did reconcile the world, and that the Holy Ghost never does purpose to create faith in all hearers of the Word. This is the chief argument of Calvin in the four chapters of his *Institutes* (iii, 21-24) on Predestination. He disposes of the Scripture declarations which attest universal grace with the statement, repeated again and again, that the result must determine the extent of the divine will of grace" (vol. II, p. 26).

A First Reaction

What should be our reaction to these charges? Should we admit the truth of them and all become Luther-

ans? John Theodore Mueller, professor of Systematic Theology, takes essentially the same position as that of Pieper. Speaking of the confessional Lutheran church, he says: "Its theology is that of the Holy Bible, and of the Bible alone; its doctrine is the divine truth of God's Word. *The Lutheran Church is therefore the orthodox visible Church of Christ on earth*" (Christian Dogmatics, St. Louis, 1934). Surely, we want to belong to the visible Church of Christ.

Perhaps we have been very generous in our attitude toward all "Bible-believing Christians". But here are "Bible-believing Christians" who charge other "Bible-believing Christians" that they are not true to the Bible. Shall we think of Pieper, of Mueller, and other Lutherans, such as Engelder, as being extremists and drop the matter at that?

Such, it may be expected, will be the attitude of "Evangelicals". It is Reformed theology that is singled out by Pieper and his present-day successors as particularly untrue to Scripture. Moreover, it has practically become an unquestioned assumption with Evangelicals that all "Bible-believing Christians" have essentially the same attitude toward Scripture.

But Reformed Christians cannot avoid considering the charge of rationalism against them. This is especially true since they themselves make or should make, the same sort of claim for Reformed theology that Pieper makes for Lutheranism. In previous articles of this series, the contention was made that every form of non-Reformed Protestantism has left-over elements of rationalism in it. Surely we cannot then ignore this counter-charge or counter-offensive.

In fact, this counter-offensive should be heartily welcomed. Here are men of sound learning and piety, who claim that the Reformed Churches are, because of their rationalism, sectarian in nature. True ecumenicity, argues Pieper, can be maintained only by the truly Lutheran attitude toward Scripture. If many true Christians are found in the Reformed denominations this is "due to an inconsistency" (vol. I, p. 26).

We Plead Guilty

Taking the charge of rationalism seriously, we would immediately plead guilty. For rationalism, as Pieper uses the term, involves an unwillingness fully to submit our thoughts captive to the obedience of Scripture. And who is not guilty of this?

But we plead guilty too in a more specific sense. We plead guilty to using our minds, our experience, our intellect, as a standard by which to judge *whether* the Bible is the Word of God. In the last article we charged evangelicals with thus setting up a standard that is *above* the Bible. But we have often been guilty of this sin ourselves. Yet Pieper did not point to this easily available evidence of rationalism in Reformed theologians.

We plead guilty, moreover, to interpreting whole areas of life independently of Scripture. We all too often use our intellect as though it had a field of its own *next to* the Bible. Owing the authority of Scripture in religion we all too frequently own the authority of "reason" in science and philosophy. But again, Pieper did not point this out.

Finally, we plead guilty to charge of sometimes saying or assuming that the Bible *cannot* mean this or that. We are often deductivistic in our exegesis of Scripture. So in affirming the concept of common grace, we assume that there *must be* commonness without difference. Or, in denying common grace, we argue from the doctrine of election and reprobation that God *cannot* at any time and in any sense be propitious to those who are ultimately lost.

Now it is deductivism in exegesis that Pieper has in mind when he speaks of Reformed theology as being rationalistic. And we plead guilty to the frequent employment of deductivism in exegesis. Yet, we do not plead guilty to the charge made against us.

We Are Innocent

Pieper's charge is not that individual Reformed theologians have been rationalistic in their approach to Scripture. His charge is that it is of the genius of Reformed theology as such to be rationalistic. The system

of Reformed theology, he argues in effect, is rationalistically constructed. This we deny.

Pieper has not sought to refute the painstaking exegesis of Calvin and his followers as they deal with the doctrines of predestination, the two natures of Christ, and particularism. If Calvin and his followers had been moved by rationalistic considerations in the formulation of these and other doctrines they would have tried to show how such doctrines are "in accord with reason", in accord with "the experience of freedom". On the contrary, Calvin and his followers have interpreted "the laws of reason" and "the experience of freedom" in terms of Scripture as the only final authority for man. At the very beginning of Calvin's Institutes we are told that man does not see himself for what he really is except he recognize himself as a creature of God. And to recognize himself as a creature of God he must own himself to be a sinner before God. Moreover, Calvin argues further on, to recognize one's sinfulness, he must have learned to know himself in the light of Scripture, of Scripture as understood by the regenerating and illuminating operation of the Holy Spirit.

According to Calvin, man as interpreter of Scripture must first be interpreted by Scripture. And Scripture is the Word of God. The idea of Scripture as the Word of God and the idea of God as speaking through Scripture are involved in one another. Scripture tells us that God is infinite, eternal and unchangeable in his being, wisdom, power, holiness, justice, goodness and truth. Scripture tells us that this God cannot deny himself. It is this self-contained, wholly self-dependent God who speaks in Scripture. It is not rationalism to assert that Scripture *cannot* also reveal a God who does deny himself, a god who creates man with powers equal to himself, who creates little gods next to himself. For Scripture speaking is God speaking. Is God indeterminate? Has he no character?

Lutherans and Irrationalism

At this point, Calvinism and Lutheranism, as set forth in Pieper's work, part company. With unquestioned de-

...to follow Scripture wherever it may lead him, Pieper virtually holds that it may lead anywhere. It may teach "that God intends what is never accomplished". God "intends to save the world through Christ." Nevertheless "God's purpose is not accomplished in a part of mankind" (vol. II, p. 27).

This approach is irrationalist in character. If God's will of decree can be resisted, He is as Luther would say "a ridiculous God." The nature of his power would be indistinguishable from the nature of man's cause. The distinction between God as original or ultimate cause and man as derivative and dependent cause would be done away. Then Luther's words are applicable: "But if I know not the distinction between our working and the power of God, I know not God Himself" (*The Bondage of the Will*, Engl. transl., Grand Rapids, 1931).

Moreover, the irrationalist doctrine of the human will leads away from the Protestant doctrine of Scripture. Romanism required men to have *implicit* faith in the church. From this slavery of men to other men Luther appealed to Scripture. "What say you, Erasmus? Is it not enough that you submit your opinion to the Scriptures? Do you submit it to the decrees of the church also? What can the church decree, that is not decreed in the Scriptures? If it can, where then remains the liberty and power of judging those who make the decrees?" (Idem, p. 22). The very idea of the Bible as a final standard of judgment becomes meaningless on the assumption that there is no God who controls whatsoever comes to pass. Faith would be blind trust in the guesses of men themselves surrounded by Chance.

Lutheran Apologetics

We must now inquire about the nature of Lutheran Apologetics as Pieper and others think of it. Do we not expect him to call upon men simply to believe in the Scriptures as the Word of God? If his doctrine of Scripture is irrationalist in nature, how then can he appeal to reason at all?

Yet, to "reason" he does appeal. "When we compare the Holy Scriptures according to content and style with other 'Bibles' in the world, e.g., with the Koran, — then a reasonable reason cannot do otherwise than conclude that the Scriptures must be divine and confess that it is more reasonable to grant the divinity of Scripture than to deny it. This is the domain of apologetics" (vol. I, p. 310). Again, "Christ is appealing not only to the Scriptures, but also to something which is known even to natural reason — to the omnipotence of God" (Idem, p. 311).

This conception of Apologetics as held by Pieper and other Lutherans is essentially the same as that of other "evangelicals" or "conservatives". Together with other "conservatives", Pieper appeals to the "natural man" as having within him, as standard by which he can judge the truth or falsity of the Scriptural claim to its own authority.

Ego-Theology

The final question now presses itself upon those who hold to the Reformed Faith. The Calvinist certainly believes in the Scriptures as self-authenticating. For believing this, he is virtually labeled as *irrationalist* by the "conservatives" as represented by Carnell. Carnell wants "reason to canvass the evidence of a given authority", including that of Scripture. Again, the Calvinist certainly believes that it is God, the self-contained and self-determinate God, who speaks in Scripture. For believing this he is called a rationalist by the "conservatives" as represented by Pieper.

How is it possible that the various classes of "conservatives", the more rationalist and the more irrationalist types agree in a common opposition to the Reformed Faith? It is because of their common assumption of man as having certain ultimate powers. Even the conservative Lutherans, though they oppose synergism, hold to a view of man that is basically similar to that of Arminianism. In assuming man's "freedom" to resist the counsel of God, conservatives virtually allow that God is confronted with facts over which he has no control. This is irrationalism.

In assuming man's "freedom" to do that which is beyond the bounds of God's plan or providence, the conservative at the same time virtually assumes that God and man are equally subject to laws of logic that operate in a Universe enveloping both. This is rationalism.

Both irrationalism and rationalism are thus seen to spring from a common source. That source is the assumption of man's "freedom" or ultimacy. It is the human ego, unwilling to recognize that it is a creature and a sinner.

Of course, the conservative is neither a rationalist nor an irrationalist at heart. As a true Christian, he, at heart, believes what the Reformed Christian believes. And, of course, the Reformed Christian also harbors remnants of both irrationalism and rationalism in his attitude toward life. But granting this, it is the Reformed system of thought, and therefore the Reformed concept of Scripture which alone makes a serious effort to set forth a consistently Christian position in the world today.

The Reformation

As this is being written, it is Reformation day. Is that a time for forgetting such things as have been spoken of in this article? Apparently, our Lutheran brethren do not think so. Neither do we. It is, to be sure, a time to thank God for what Luther did. It is also a time to thank God for what all "Bible-believing Christians" are doing. But those who would be true to the "Protestant Heritage" must continue, among themselves, to search for the true principle of Protestantism. A Bible as self-authenticating, not subject to a standard resting in man, a Bible speaking the word of the self-contained and self-determinate God, the God who cannot deny Himself, that is, we believe the true principle of Protestantism. But the "conservatives" or "evangelicals" today do not, as a rule, believe in the Bible in this way without qualification. And to the extent that they depart from believing in the Bible as the self-authenticating Word of the self-contained God, they depart from the principle of Protestantism. And a true Christian apologetic is a true Protestant apologetic.

The Case for Canada

By JOHN VRIEND

A GREAT, green wave of Dutch immigration has hit the province of Ontario, splashed over into the rolling prairies of Alberta, and flattened out into the barbaric backreaches of British Columbia. This wave came in 1951, and in 1950, and in 1949, and in 1948; each time the splash was bigger than any preceding one. Thousands upon thousands are preparing to put a period behind their lives in The Netherlands and to start out again with a capital C — Canada, the land of their dreams, the wide-open future! And so they break the chrysalis of a confining, over-populated civilization in order to strike out, free and full of hope, across the Atlantic Ocean and into the unbounded, far-horizoned virgin lands of Canada: the land of unfathomable promise.

The authorities say we have seen but the vanguard of a historic migration. This siphoning of flesh and blood from an overcrowded Holland into a sparsely settled Canada will, if God permits, be a perennial phenomenon; for the population in Holland is increasing quite in defiance of death and immigration, and Canada is insatiable.

As one travels through southern Ontario, or southern Manitoba, or up into Alberta from Granum to Neerlandia, or along the tortuous roads between Abbotsford in southern B. C. and Terrace in northern B. C., he inevitably meets Hollanders of every religious stripe and of every occupation under the sun. He meets townspeople who have taken to the woods, shoe-makers who have taken to the agricultural last, truckdrivers who have become electricians, gardeners who now repair railway tracks, barbers who are in charge of lumber yards. And, what is more, success is in their far-visioned eyes.

Denominationally they run the gamut from being *Hervormd, Gereformeerd, Gereformeerd* (Art. 31, K. O.), *Oud Gereformeerd*, or Mennonite. The thing to remember is that these people either form groups of their own, as for instance in Lethbridge, Westlock, Telkwa, or Terrace, or they join existing groups in various stages of development or decline. Variety of purpose, variety of origin, and variety of sentiment — in a situation where few are really settled — produce an exciting and somewhat perplexing effect.

The Response of the Ministry

What concerns me in this article is how the ministers of the Christian Reformed Church are responding to this situation and how, when they awaken more fully to the nature and scope of the present movement, they may improve their response.

The simple truth is that the men in the field now cannot begin to cope with the situation. There is a fearful shortage of men. Most ministers, if they can find the sheep of their flock at all, have to travel far too widely to pasture them. The Rev. J. Hanenburg who resides in Edmonton, to cite an example, has a charge approximately 1000 miles across. The man should be made arch-bishop at least and given a dozen assistants. This example is extreme but even a much smaller charge, say fifty miles across, in a more densely populated province like Ontario, is too big.

JOHN VRIEND, son of Dutch immigrant parents now living in northwest Canada and thus acutely aware of the life of the churches there, is at present a graduate student in the Classics Department at the University of Michigan.

A greater handicap to adequate ministerial work is the fact that in so many fields the minister is forced to become an immigration officer, an immigrant sleuth, a social worker whose duties cannot be defined. The men now in the field have faced up to this task with cheerfulness and self-denial but, if the spiritual aspect of immigrant life is not to be grossly neglected, more men will have to enter the field.

The Response to the "Liberated"

I shall designate as "Liberated" those people who since 1944 have openly asserted non-conformity to the decisions of two Synods (1939-43; 1943-45) of the *Gereformeerde Kerken*. Owing to a series of depositions and withdrawals from these churches there is now a new denomination, the *Gereformeerde Kerken* (maintaining Art. 31, C. O.). From a history¹ of the period under review, it appears that the Synod of 1942, by continuing itself in office in excess of the tenure allowed and by adding to its agenda, went beyond its jurisdiction, that two professors refused to comply with its decisions, that the following Synod maintained the position held by its predecessor and exacted conformity to its doctrinal and church-political decisions, that several ministers dissented, that such ministers were suspended or deposed, that a sentence of schism was pronounced against many office-bearers in the church and even against an entire congregation (Bergschenhoek), and that, as a consequence, there was an exodus from the existing *Gereformeerde Kerken*. The grounds given for the exclusions were not so much theological as church-political; the sin committed was not so much heresy as mutiny.

The movement had, of course, a theological background — the focus of which was the doctrinal formula of 1905 — and now has a backlash in theology. The Liberated people stress, in their views on the Covenant, that all children of believers are sanctified in Christ and therefore under the Covenant, and that the promises of the Covenant are inseparable from the requirements of the Covenant. In

1. G. Janssen, *De Feitelijke Toedracht*.

their views on the Church they stress the unity of the true church and insist that this unity must come to institutional expression. In their views on Culture, they emphasize that the Christian, no matter what his occupation may be, must live by the grace of God in Christ and reconquer all of life for the coming Christ.

In general, the Liberated do one of four things when they come to Canada. They either join the Protestant Reformed Church, or they organize churches of their own, or they join the Christian Reformed Church and accept what they find there, or they join the Christian Reformed Church in the hope of helping to improve it.

Since the entrance of this last group into the Christian Reformed Church presents a many-faceted problem, it seems time, especially with a view to the continued flow of immigration, for an unprejudiced discussion of some of its aspects. We may not evade our difficulties by saying that we do not like the spirit of these people or that, since they were in trouble across the sea, they are to be viewed with suspicion. We may never, it seems to me, regard a serious breach in the church as a purely human disagreement issuing from inevitable onesidedness on both sides of a debate. If we should so regard the present schism, we would be shunting aside the absolute sovereignty of the Word and embrace a pestilent relativism from whose tentacles few would escape. We would be denying the possibility of actual obedience to God and of actual disobedience to God in precisely that orbit of our life — namely, the church — where obedience or disobedience has such awesome consequences.

In view of these considerations as also the fact of the essential unity of the church, it seems plain that we can admit neither the Liberated nor the Synodical people to our communion without a thorough inquiry into their attitude (1) to the three forms of unity as well as the supplementary doctrinal deliverances — among which are the Conclusions of Utrecht, 1905 — which are binding in the Christian Reformed Church; and (2) to each other as formerly opposing groups within the same church. Admittance

without satisfaction on these two points will cause, and I believe is causing, a great deal of tension.

In order that consistories may perform their present difficult task with greater effectiveness, there must be more DISCUSSION OF THE RELEVANT ISSUES. Consistory members are in the dark about things they are facing right along but cannot settle. For instance, one reason why many Liberated people today organize churches of their own is that they feel, and have some reason to feel, that the mind of the Christian Reformed Church is against them. Another reason is that many Synodical people continue to view the Liberated as pathological troublemakers. On the other hand, the Liberated themselves frequently display an impatient attitude toward the Christian Reformed Church and fail to enter into its historically conditioned modes of thinking. Therefore, in the interest of finding constructive outlets for the tensions now existing, the church press might profitably concern itself with such differences which now tend to preclude the active communion of the saints and to make consistorial work unusually perplexing.

Some of the differences concern the nature of the church and therefore involve the doctrine of pluriformity; some concern the nature of the Covenant and the related doctrines of baptism and regeneration. Still other questions, though necessarily tied in with the preceding, are practical and concrete: If a man was a schismatic in Ethiopia, say, would he by simple transfer to New Zealand cease to be a schismatic? Just when is a man duty-bound to leave his church communion? If a man finds the atmosphere in one denomination uncongenial, should he be advised to join another denomination?

The Way to Improvement

First, as intimated, the existing church papers and local periodicals should more and more face up to the issues now troubling the minds of our constituency. They should not avoid a subject from fear of creating tensions when in fact the tensions are already there and need to be relieved.

Second, in dealing with the immigrants the minister in the field should know that they have a fairly keen ear for good preaching. Any sermons that leave the impression that the salvation of man is central and ultimate, and hence that God is man's lackey, are to the sensitive immigrant just so many Methodistic Sunday-School homilies. In sermonizing the Kingdom of God, to which the salvation of man is subservient, must be sought first. Let ministers exult at the theological sensitiveness of the people in their care and be willing, if necessary, to adjust their own thinking.

Third, relief from the man-shortage problem may come by initiating and implementing plans to support promising immigrant boys through school. The present student aid funds are not adequate to fill the urgent requirements now existing. In catechism classes and from pulpits the call should go forth to young men to prepare themselves for the ministry of the Word. These boys should not have to draw too heavily on the meager financial resources of their parents. If we honestly wish for Canada an indigenous church life, we shall have to help train leaders for that huge and promising field.

To summarize: We need fresh, large-scale thinking on the subject of Canada; we have a right to ask the immigrants to adjust themselves to our ways of thinking and acting only insofar as we are willing to enter into and be influenced by their ways of thinking and acting; this requires free interchange of thought; and finally we should be willing to place ourselves and all that we have at the disposal of Jesus Christ who is gathering his Church also in Canada.

“Again, how would he have freed us from the wrath of God, if he had not transferred it from us to himself? Thus “he was wounded for our transgressions” (Isa. 53). Thus he had to deal with his Father (God) as an angry Judge. This is the foolishness of the cross, which not only exceeds, but swallows up all the wisdom of the world” (John Calvin on Galatians 3:13, in part).

Christianity for the Family

By PETER Y. DE JONG

THE world in which we live differs markedly from that known to our grandparents.

Today we take for granted the many conveniences which were undreamed of half a century ago. Electricity, radio, television, automobiles and planes have become standard equipment in our modern civilization. And not satisfied with enjoying these inventions ourselves, we have through our commercial ventures introduced them to all the peoples of the earth.

The Days of Our Years

This process has radically changed the cultural and spiritual climate in which we and our families are living. The ties to the old order of things in which our parents and grandparents lived have been progressively loosened. To use the phrase of Walter Lippmann, "the acids of modernity" have eaten away at the fabric of human society. Everywhere we witness, if only our eyes are open, the gradual dissolution of the family, state, education, religion, and culture as our Western world once understood them. Life no longer manifests the basic integrity and unity which was once characteristic of it. Not only are we wrestling with the problem of growing diversity. This has changed into strident contradiction in which the various philosophies strive to dethrone each other in the heart of the multitudes. Waves of materialism, secularism, and godlessness are engulfing our Western civilization which once upon a time was Christian at least in name.

Nowhere has this radical change in cultural climate become more apparent than on the mission fields which have received a large share of the attention and prayers of God's people. In his illuminating pamphlet, *Het Oosten op Drift* (The Orient Adrift), Dr. J. C. Rullman, an outstanding

missionary in Indonesia, sketches for us the deteriorating results of Western civilization on the large masses in the Orient.

This is, however, not first of all a problem for the Christians in traditionally heathen lands. They have simply received from us not only the Christian gospel but also a modern, secularized and therefore anti-Christian approach to life which has woven its subtle spell first of all over the traditionally Christian lands. Our basic problem is that we all too often fail to understand the very world at our doors. Too little do we realize that we have a stupendous battle on our hands. Living as most of us do within the narrow confines of our local churches and communities, we fail to come to grips with the present world. It is more than time that we begin to understand that the only way of lasting hope is to be found in taking the offensive consciously, continually, and consistently against those who are the enemies of Christ and his gospel.

All this demands that we again take stock of ourselves and assess our spiritual resources.

Once and again we will have to be able to give a reasonable account of the hope that is in us. We must understand who we are, the children of God by sovereign grace. We will have to grasp the implications of the rule by which we live, the blessed gospel of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. We are to commit ourselves unreservedly to propagate our faith, not as an abstract theory, but as a vital and practical message in the light of which alone the major issues of life are resolved.

This requires on our part a true *covenant-consciousness*. Our point of departure will necessarily be the Word of God which plainly teaches that his children are a peculiar people in this

world. And this personal relationship to God must influence life around us. Besides controlling our individual lives, the gospel of sovereign grace speaks eloquently of the covenant relation which our families sustain to the God of heaven and earth.

In this and a succeeding article we would concern ourselves with some of the implications of this scriptural teaching that our families belong to the Lord.

Christianity —

A Covenantal Religion

Quite in contrast with all other religions in the world, Christianity is at heart a covenantal religion. The definition of this as the spiritual bond which unites us to God and comes to expression in blessed fellowship with him as our Creator and Redeemer has been delineated in a previous article in this series.

Among the non-Christian religions we find one of two tendencies. Among some of them there is a strong drift towards individualism and an atomistic view of the individual's relation to God or the gods. This is especially noticeable in those religions which are palpable deformations of the Christian faith, such as Christian Science, Theosophy, Spiritualism, and others. On the other hand the major traditional faiths of the world, though not entirely ignoring personal needs and hopes, have to a large extent succeeded in submerging the individual in the group. Thus in Confucianism the chief religious rite is the veneration of the ancestors, by which the family or clan unites itself with previous generations. Likewise Hinduism with its rigid caste system has in its consistent forms no gospel for the individual. Islam today, especially in the Near East, Pakistan, and Java, is more a nationalistic political movement than a dynamic personal religion. All the primitive religions take their rise in the sense of awe occasioned by the mysterious powers evident in this world, and this awe reflects itself in certain rites and taboos practiced by the whole tribe.

Only the gospel of Jesus Christ does full justice to both the personal and social aspects of man's life. God him-

self is a covenant God manifested in the eternal unbroken fellowship which the three persons of the Blessed Trinity sustain to each other.

Man as image-bearer reflects this perfect relationship when in his social life he is conscious of the spiritual tie which binds him first of all to God as he has revealed himself in his Word. This tie has implications for the whole of his life which has been created by and is under the reign of God. His duty is to yield himself to the will of God in all things, living in dependence and obedience and loyalty to his covenant God. Only this gives abiding value to his life and assures him of the meaningfulness of every experience which has been woven into the fabric of his existence. Thus his communion with God as Creator and Savior manifests itself not only in personal godliness but also in social contacts. God is the God of the social order as well as of the individual man. And in this social order, of which the family is the basic unit, the will of God is our law and the glory of God our goal.

The Bible — A Covenantal Book

That God has embraced in his gracious covenant this aspect of the social order which we call the family is abundantly evident from Holy Writ. No one can rightly understand the Bible, unless he realizes that this book has been written for and given to God's people.

First of all, in the Old Testament, in the light of which alone the teachings of the New Testament become plain, God dealt very specifically with families. The announcement of the mother-promise (*protevangelium*) in Genesis 3:15 speaks not merely of the individual but of the race which has succumbed to the ravages of sin. Thus it makes liberal use of the word "seed." In the first unmistakable use of covenant language (Gen. 7:18f.) God addressed himself not only to Noah but in Noah also to his family. The gracious and miraculous deliverance of this hero of faith was accompanied with God's loving care for his wife, his sons and his son's wives. In the formal establishment of the covenant

after the deluge, God included in that new relationship to himself not only Noah but also his seed after him.

With the establishment of the covenant with Abraham the social aspect of the covenant becomes increasingly clear. The promise of grace is extended to the seed of Abraham throughout their generations. Thus the children of Israel, as descendants of Abraham, were formally recognized as the family of God at the time of the covenant-revelation at Mount Sinai. Repeatedly Moses and the prophets allude to this act of God and make it the ground for appealing to the Israelites to train their children in the fear and admonition of the Lord.

The same truth is abundantly clear from the New Testament.

God's Gracious Promise to the Family

The argument is often advanced that while the Old Testament dealt with families and nations, the New Testament is concerned directly and chiefly with individuals. However, a careful study of the relevant passages demonstrates that its secondary authors do not recognize as mutually exclusive and contradictory God's concern for the individuals and his dealings with the group. To present the problem of individual-group in this form is a meaningless abstraction, since nowhere does man appear as pure individual in distinction from society.¹

Concretely this implies that no one can live the Christian life in accordance with God's will apart from social relationships. The glory of the Chris-

1. The problem of "individual-society" is approached from the aspect of marriage in a recent symposium of Dutch Calvinists presented under the title *Wijfgeerte en Levenspractijk* (Philosophy and Life).

"Underneath the formulation of Dooyeweerd (that is, on marital problems) there lies a totally different perspective (than in the construction of other philosophers). Here we find the recognition that the individual is an "abstraction" which cannot be found in reality, while we also cannot speak meaningfully about "the community in a general way."

There are always specific individuals, placed by God in a variety of social relationships.

And each actual entrance into a new relationship is an enrichment. Each new growing into such another relationship signifies therefore enrichment, because the personality is always receiving a new calling to serve the Lord in this relationship and to taste the blessedness of being permitted to live according to His law.

In this (construction) is presented clearly the structure of the Christian concept of personality" (p. 65).

tian gospel is that it announces the extension of God's sovereign mercies to those who live in these relationships. Thus the family receives its true significance when it is a Christian family, that is, when it is the object of divine grace and demonstrates its power in the lives of the individuals who comprise the group.

Thus the New Testament speaks in the same vein as the Old, when it declares the extension of divine grace to the families of believers.

God's concern for little children is taught us repeatedly. Some of the outstanding passages are found in the gospel according to Matthew. There we read that Christ replied to the chief priests and scribes, "Yea: did ye never read, Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings thou hast perfected praise?" (21:16) Again he said, "Suffer the little children, and forbid them not, to come unto me: for to such belongeth the kingdom of heaven" (19:14). Thereupon he laid his hands on them and blessed them. Speaking of the little children he said, "But whoso shall cause one of these little ones that believe on me to stumble, it is profitable for him that great millstone should be hanged about his neck, and that he should be sunk in the depth of the sea" (18:6).

Still clearer from other passages of the New Testament is the connection of these children to their parents as both embraced in God's covenant mercies. Peter plainly announces in his Pentecost message, "For to you is the promise, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call unto him" (Acts 2:39). We read repeatedly of whole families who together embraced the Christian religion. Thus the families of Cornelius, Lydia, the

The truth is that nurture of the children is rooted deeply in the commands of the Word of God. According to Reformed doctrine, baptized children are members of the Church. They are children of the covenant. Surely then they should be treated as such.

— J. Gresham Machen

jailer at Philippi, and Stephanas, to speak of no more, were baptized by the apostles.

The gracious promises of the Lord are extended to the children of the families in which only one of the parents is a believer. Thus Paul writes to the Corinthians, "For the unbelieving husband is sanctified in the wife, and the unbelieving wife is sanctified in the brother: else were your children unclean; but now are they holy" (I Cor. 7:14).

Covenant Life in the Home

The implications of this covenantal relationship for Christian living in the home are referred to repeatedly by the writers of the New Testament. The duty of the Christian husband to love his wife for Christ's sake is often emphasized (I Cor. 7:11; Eph. 5:25; I Pet. 3:7). Likewise, wives are exhorted to subject themselves to their husbands as to the Lord (Eph. 5:22; I Pet. 3:1). They are to be grave and exemplary and faithful in all things, in order that through their conduct the cause of Christ may not fall into disrepute (I Tim. 3:11; Titus 2:4; I Pet. 3:1). Parental duties are by no means ignored. Fathers are commanded not to provoke their children to wrath but to nurture them in the fear and admonition of the Lord (Eph. 6:4; Col. 3:21). Especially those who bear rule in the congregations of the Lord ought to set worthy examples to all by being able to rule their own house and children well (I Tim. 3:4, 12). The example of Lois and Eunice who trained Timothy in the knowledge of the Scripture is lauded by Paul (II Tim. 1:5; 3:15). And those who fail to provide for their families are regarded as worse than unbelievers (I Tim. 5:8).

From this summary it becomes clear why the Christian Church has administered the sign and seal of the Covenant of Grace to children of believers as well as to adults who were able to profess their faith in the Lord Jesus. The former as well as the latter were regarded as belonging to the Lord and enjoying his favor. Promises are given to the children of believers as well as to their parents. Thus God's grace is received and enjoyed by Christian families in the generations. The obligations to serve him in all things must

One Fleeting Day

The earth lay wan and still,
The night had wrapped its sable cloak
Around both vale and hill.

My flagging spirits, too, were dull and spent,
The day was long, each task seemed duty-bent.

And now, when all earth's sounds
were strangely silent,
My thoughts reflected on the ebbing day.

Those hours now garnered in eternity,
Like wisps of grain, swift-gathered in the field,

Would they receive the Master's
blessed 'Well done'?
And would my deeds abiding fruitage
yield?

God grant that one day from his lips
divine,

I'll hear these precious words, "Lo,
thou art mine,

Behold thy works have followed thee."

— *Elsie D. Kuizema*

be urged upon the children by their believing parents. And although we must guard against the danger of inferring that divine grace is passed on by the natural process of birth and training, we may never obscure the fact that the Christian home according to God's testimony is the seed-bed in which he is pleased to bring true faith to fruition.

Children of Believers and the Church

That God's gracious covenant is extended from parents to children has not always been clearly recognized in the history of the Christian Church.

In the apostolic and post-apostolic era this emphasis was relatively prominent. This need not surprise us at all. Large numbers of the first disciples were Jewish converts to whom the covenant with Abraham was a precious and vital reality. In the light of

the covenantal emphasis alone can we correctly assess many passages of apostolic teaching. Nor may we forget the close association of church and home in those years. Not only did the early believers often meet in the homes of prominent members, but upon several occasions we read of whole families who received baptism. In many cases religion was apparently a family affair. Mention of such biblical instances as Mary the mother of John Mark, Timothy, and Philemon serve to remind us of this important truth.

Basically the same emphasis can be found in the apostolic fathers who in large measure merely reproduced the teachings of the New Testament. In several letters they reminded the believers of serving the Lord as families. In Polycarp's epistle we read, "And let us teach, first of all, ourselves to walk in the commandments of the Lord. Next, teach your wives to walk in the faith given to them, and in love and purity tenderly loving their own husbands in all truth, and loving all others equally in all chastity; and to train their children in the knowledge and fear of the Lord" (Ep. IV).

Historical Perspectives

After two or three centuries the spiritual climate within the Christian Church began to change radically. Several reasons may be adduced for this. In spite of severe persecution, large numbers of heathen were baptized, in consequence of which the spiritual tenor of the congregations was lowered. Gradually the distinction between believers and unbelievers was obliterated, especially after Christianity was recognized as the state religion. In reaction to the increasing worldliness which came to prevail, many became ascetics. The ascetic ideal with its depreciation of marriage and all natural relationships spread widely throughout the Church.

Another significant change must be found in the new emphasis on the sacraments as the chief means of grace. Instead of being regarded as signs and seals of divine favor, they were presented as channels by which grace was actually conferred. As a result the relation of the believer to God was con-

(Continued on page 31)

Here I Stand!

(A Series of Lessons on the 37 Articles of The Confession of Faith,
A Reformed Creed usually called The Belgic Confession.)

By JOHN H. PIERSMA

Lesson 13

Article XV

Original Sin

We believe that through the disobedience of Adam original sin is extended to all mankind; which is a corruption of the whole nature and a hereditary disease, wherewith even infants in their mother's womb are infected, and which produces in man all sorts of sin, being in him as a root thereof, and therefore is so vile and abominable in the sight of God that it is sufficient to condemn all mankind. Nor is it altogether abolished or wholly eradicated even by baptism; since sin always issues forth from this woeful source, as water from a fountain; notwithstanding it is not imputed to the children of God unto condemnation, but by His grace and mercy is forgiven them. Not that they should rest securely in sin, but that a sense of this corruption should make believers often to sigh, desiring to be delivered from this body of death.

Wherefore we reject the error of the Pelagians, who assert that sin proceeds only from imitation.

Scripture References:

Romans 5:12, 19 (The guilt of Adam's first sin is imputed to all men).

Romans 3:10-12 (The universality of sin).

Acts 17:26 (All men are children of Adam since all are made "of one blood"; the organic unity of the human race).

Romans 7:18; 8:7 (Original sin is a "corruption of the whole nature").

James 1:14, 15 (Original sin is the source of actual transgressions).

John 3:6 (Natural generation results in the birth of a sinful human

nature; regeneration, or the new birth, produces a new nature).

Romans 7:23, 24 (Against the Christian's will sin remains throughout this life, proceeding from the old nature).

Psalms 34:16 (God hates sin, and will punish men for it).

Psalms 65:3 (God forgives his children their sins).

Questions:

1. Why does the Belgic Confession devote an entire article to the subject of original sin?

Because it is one of the most basic of biblical ideas, and therefore it is very important that we understand it as clearly as possible. Actually it is this doctrine which indicates man's real need for the Gospel of redemption through Jesus Christ. The late Dr. Walter Maier of Lutheran Hour fame once said that because we no longer see the problem of man's sin in the light of his original sin the Gospel has lost its pertinence and power for this generation. This statement is not too strong! We hope that the crucial importance of the doctrine of original sin will become plain to all of us as we attempt to explain this fifteenth article.

2. What is the central idea of this article?

The central idea is that because Adam was our representative head in the Covenant of Works his fall plunged all mankind into sin, which sin is "so vile and abominable in the sight of God that it is sufficient to condemn all mankind."

3. What is meant in this article by "the disobedience of Adam?"

This refers to Adam's first sin in Paradise, the eating of the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Only that sin is imputed or reckoned to the whole human race on account of the Covenant of Works. The rest of Adam's sins were committed by him simply as an individual, since by his first sin he had lost his position as head or representative of the human race. That is why we need so desperately our Lord Jesus Christ, the "second Adam," who can so represent us that by his redeeming work we can be saved from our sins.

4. Are there any who object to the teaching that all men are sinners by nature because of Adam's one transgression?

Yes. The article mentions at its close that "we reject the error of the Pelagians, who assert that sin proceeds only from imitation." In addition to this objection we have those who say that God will not condemn anyone because of Adam's sin. These assert that men are lost only if they reject the salvation offered in Christ Jesus.

5. Has Pelagianism very many adherents today?

Pelagianism has millions of adherents today, and we ought to be on our guard against them. Roman Catholicism is largely Pelagian. In addition, all those who stress that men are born innocent, and that sin is only the result of those who lead us astray by their evil example are following out this heresy. In our

day this theory lies at the bottom of much effort toward social reform (slum clearance, equalization of wealth, social security, etc.). Certainly the Christian heartily endorses consideration for the poor and the down-trodden, but he will never leave the impression that merely to provide men with an improved environment will prevent him from giving expression to his sinful nature! Men are in need of the Gospel first of all, and any "reform" not based upon Christ and his regenerating grace will not long endure. This ought to stimulate us to renewed zeal for a truly Reformed, Christian missionary activity.

6. Why is this doctrine denied by so many who claim to be Christians?

Very likely because this doctrine is so humiliating for the sinner. It makes impossible any kind of salvation through our own effort. Original sin means that salvation must be a free gift of God's grace, or else we perish in our sins.

7. Will you suggest an answer for those who object to the biblical teaching that Adam, as the representative head of all mankind, brought sin and suffering upon all of us?

The best answer I have read to this question is offered by the Rev. J. G. Vos in his exposition of the Westminster Larger Catechism (*Blue Banner Faith and Life*, nos. 4-6, p. 48): "Whether we like it or not, the Bible teaches that God deals with humanity on the basis of the principle of representation, both in the Covenant of Works and the Covenant of Grace. The principle of representation functions constantly in ordinary human life and no one objects to it. The United States Congress declares war, and the life of every individual in the country is affected by it. Parents decide where they will live, and the nationality of their children is determined by it. If it be objected that the people elect

their representatives in Congress, whereas we did not choose Adam to be our representative, the answer is: (a) The decisions of lawful representatives are binding whether those represented chose the representatives or not. The acts of Congress affect millions of people who are too young to vote. A child does not choose its own parents, yet its life is largely affected by their actions and decisions. (b) It is true that we did not choose Adam to be our representative, but God chose him; and who could make a wiser, better or more righteous appointment than God? To object to God's appointment of Adam as our representative in the Covenant of Works is not only to deny the *sovereignty* of God, but also to set ourselves up as wiser and more righteous than God."

8. What is the extent of our sinfulness as a result of the fall?

Our Confession states that by virtue of original sin the "whole nature" is corrupt. It states also that this original sin functions like a "hereditary disease, where-with even infants in their mother's womb are infected." This teaching is usually called "total depravity."

9. What is the effect of this original sin in the lives of men?

Original sin is a root, out of which proceeds the corrupt fruit of sin. "Sin always issues forth from this woeful source." To read a description of the sorts of vile and abominable sin which men practice and delight in because of the corruption of their nature turn to Romans 1:18-32.

10. Does total corruption of nature mean that the unbeliever can in no sense do anything good?

By God's common grace, sinful men are prevented from doing all that they might do consistent with the root of sin within them, and within the civil or human sphere do things which are considered noble, heroic, self-sacrificing.

The Reformed faith historically has often taken the position that even this "outward good" is to be attributed to God, whose common grace makes it possible, for the benefit of His children. Of course, this good never proceeds from the right motive, namely to love, serve, and please God.

11. We hear much about the evils of "liberalism" and "modernism"; what is the attitude of this type of theology over against such things as are taught here in connection with original sin?

The modernist denies everything taught in this article. For example: (a) Modern "liberalism" teaches that men are children of God by nature, and therefore need only to realize that fact to come into blessed communion with God. Over against that we believe that all men are "conceived and born in sin" (Psalm 51), and are therefore enemies of God by nature. (b) The modernist despises all talk of God's wrath upon sin, choosing deliberately to reject all biblical teaching with respect to the justice of God, preferring to speak only of His love. (c) "Modernism" follows the Pelagian idea that all men are born in innocence. (d) "Modernism" speaks of sin as something typically human and social, rather than as personal guilt before God which deserves divine punishment.

12. Does the Christian have trouble in this life with sin even after he is regenerated?

The Confession here emphasizes this truth, thus militating against all those who claim that somehow the present-day Christian can say that he is here and now free from all sin. Because of regeneration it is no longer true that the sinner persistently delights in sin, but it is also painfully true that he is compelled daily to plead for mercy that his sins may be forgiven.

13. But isn't this a good excuse for our practise of sin, especially those "character sins" which so easily beset us?

Nothing is a good excuse for any of our sins, since we are all guilty in Adam, whom God created good and after his own image. Anyone that sins deliberately, excusing himself by saying that he couldn't resist it or that "he is just built that way" is deceiving himself, and not acting as a true child of God. So this article declares that we may not "rest securely in sin, but that a sense of this corruption should make believers often to sigh, desiring to be delivered from this body of death." In this connection read Romans 7.

14. What is the real importance of this teaching?

The real importance of the biblical explanation of the doctrine of original sin is that it offers us God's own instruction as to the possibility of being saved by his Son, Jesus Christ. The pattern is this: By one man sin entered the world, because all men were comprehended in Adam. Therefore, by one man, our Lord Jesus Christ, the more abounding grace of God comes to all the elect. Representative salvation is possible because of the fact that God so constructed the human race that it is possible for one to be the "root" out of which many brethren may come forth unto eternal life. Whoever objects to this truth must also reject the truth that the second Adam can bring us salvation.

Lesson 14

Article XVI Eternal Election

We believe that, all the posterity of Adam being thus fallen into perdition and ruin by the sin of our first parents, God then did manifest Himself such as He is; that is to say, merciful and just; *merciful*, since He delivers and preserves from this perdition all whom He in His eternal and un-

changeable counsel of mere goodness has elected in Christ Jesus our Lord, without any respect to their works; *just*, in leaving others in the fall and perdition wherein they have involved themselves.

Scripture References:

Ephesians 2:4, 5; Deuteronomy 4:31 (God is merciful).

II Timothy 4:8; Revelation 16:5-7 (God is just).

Ephesians 1:3, 4 (God is the author of predestination).

Romans 8:29 (Men are the objects of election).

I Timothy 5:21 (Angels are the objects of election.)

II Thessalonians 2:13; Romans 11:5 (Election is unto salvation).

Romans 9:13f.; 11:7; I Peter 2:8 (Reprobation is unto damnation).

Questions:

1. What is the subject matter of this sixteenth article of our Belgic Confession?

The doctrine of predestination is stated in this article. Predestination is God's eternal and unchangeable decree with respect to the destiny of men and of angels. It is divided into two parts, the election unto salvation of all who are in Christ and the reprobation unto eternal punishment of all those left in "the fall and perdition wherein they have involved themselves."

2. What does the Bible say about the truth of divine predestination?

The Scriptures teach that the eternal destiny of men is decided according to God's decree. God has made everything for his own purpose, including the wicked for the day of evil (Prov. 16:4). God declares to Rebecca, before the children were born that the elder should serve the younger, for Jacob has he loved but Esau has he hated (Rom. 9:10-13). Romans 9:11 makes reference to Pharaoh over whom God exercises his divine right to harden whom He wills, to the elect Isaac and the reprobate Ishmael,

and above all to those famous twins, Jacob and Esau. God's Word speaks of "the book of life" in which the names of the elect are written (Rev. 21:27). As many as are ordained unto eternal life believe (Acts 13:48). The Scripture speaks repeatedly concerning the doctrine of predestination.

3. Isn't this one of the most often repudiated biblical doctrines?

Most certainly. Fact is that all non-Reformed individuals repudiate this very important doctrine, plain as the Scriptures are in teaching it. It requires real courage to stand for this truth in today's world.

4. By whom and how is this doctrine denied?

(a) The Arminian teaches that God's election is based upon foreseen faith. God knew who would believe, and therefore he elected them. Thus in reality there is no longer a significant electing choice on God's part. Fact is that God chose us not *because* we believe, but *in order* that we might believe.

(b) Some deny that God elects certain individuals personally, and teach that election has to do merely with the group. This is, of course, an impossible teaching, since how can we conceive of a group of individuals apart from the identity of the individuals? Over against this the Scriptures say: "*Jacob* have I loved."

(c) Those who believe in a *universal atonement*, that is, the unbiblical doctrine that Christ actually died for the sins of all men, and now it is up to the individual to take advantage of it, find it necessary, of course, to alter the doctrine of predestination accordingly. This is a very common error in our day.

(d) Modern "neo-orthodox", dialectical theology, represented by such famous thinkers as Karl Barth, Emil Brunner, Reinhold Niebuhr and others, uses the terminology of the Scriptures

freely at this point. However, the biblical idea of predestination as something finished and settled even from eternity is rejected in favor of the idea that "all are in the process of becoming elect; election is a way, a way in which all men can and will walk upon as it leads upward in Christ" (C. VanTil, *The New Modernism*, p. 280). Thus there are not two groups of men, the elect and the reprobate, but all men are reprobate, and all men will become elect in Christ. This, of course, eliminates the biblical idea of predestination entirely.

5. What is the necessary "point-of-view" adopted by this article?

It is expressed in the opening words: "We believe that, all the posterity of Adam being thus fallen into perdition and ruin by the sin of our first parents . . ." This same basic assumption is expressed in the Canons of Dort, first head of doctrine, article 1: "As all men have sinned in Adam, lie under the curse, and are deserving of eternal death, God would have done no injustice by leaving them all to perish and delivering them over to condemnation on account of sin . . ." It is very easy to see that this starting-point must be adopted if we are to think correctly on this matter. If we abandon this starting-point we shall, of course, find ourselves constantly perplexed, to put it mildly, at the thought of God's final, unchangeable, eternal predestinating decrees.

6. In the case of divine election is eternal life the only thing to which men are elected?

No, but as the Westminster Larger Catechism, question 13, explains: "God, by an eternal and immutable decree . . . hath chosen some men to eternal life, and the means thereof . . ." (italics mine, J. H. P.). The elect have also been chosen to receive the means of obtaining eternal life. Thus it is fore-ordained that a certain person

will hear the preaching of the Gospel, repent, believe on Jesus Christ as His personal Savior, etc. So also the Canons of Dort say: "The elect in due time, though in various degrees and in different measures, attain the assurance of this their eternal and unchangeable election, not by inquisitively prying into the secret and deep things of God, but by observing in themselves with a spiritual joy and holy pleasure the infallible fruits of election pointed out in the Word of God — such as, a true faith in Christ, filial fear, a godly sorrow for sin, a hungering and thirsting after righteousness, etc."

7. In the case of those whom God has "passed by", is there a reason why they have not been chosen to eternal life?

To us the reasons why some are "passed by" are not given by the Scriptures. The ground of God's decree of reprobation is always presented as His sovereignty, that is, God's supreme authority, not the character or works or life of the persons involved. The Belgic Confession uses the term "of mere goodness" to indicate that the elect are elect for no such reasons as superior endowments, nobler character, etc. So also the reprobate are not reprobate because they lack certain qualifications but because God in His sovereign authority has so decreed. This does not mean that God is arbitrary or capricious in His decree of reprobation. On the contrary, He reveals His justice precisely in this decree!

8. Why are the reprobate ordained to eternal condemnation, and not, say, annihilated by God?

They are ordained to everlasting punishment because of their sins. The Confession rightfully states that God leaves the reprobate in their fall and perdition "wherein they have involved themselves." Men are not punished because God passed them by, but they are punished be-

cause God's justice requires that the sinner shall be rewarded according to his sin. In hell they will recognize and acknowledge that God has dealt with them according to strictest justice. And that is why annihilation is impossible. Sin calls for vindication of God's justice, which would be impossible if men were merely obliterated by God as sinners. This idea that God will not punish the unbeliever with everlasting punishment has been popularized in our day by the Jehovah's Witnesses sect, and has proven, of course, to be a very attractive feature of their heretical religion.

9. What about that oft-raised objection: "If I'm elect I'll go to heaven and if not, what can I do about it!"

This betrays a complete misunderstanding of the doctrine of election. Those who are elect will believe and will become Christians, because that too is involved in the decree of election. If an individual seriously practises such an attitude it is a certain indication that he is not a child of God. We ought to be very careful here, because it is so easy for sinners to make themselves believe that they are not obligated to serve God since they can do nothing apart from his grace anyway. I do not believe, under ordinary circumstances, that this position can be held with sincerity!

10. Wouldn't it be better to avoid mention of the doctrine of predestination since men so often misuse it?

All doctrines can be misused. We must take care not to be wiser than God, who makes frank mention of the doctrine repeatedly in his Word. Not only is it mentioned and expounded in the Bible, but it is also used as something which ought to be a source of comfort to the believer. That the unbeliever finds no joy in this truth is not hard to understand. Actually he finds no comfort in any truth of Scrip-

ture. To the believer, therefore, it is of great usefulness for his encouragement and assurance to know that God's unchangeable decree rests beneath his salvation in Christ. Let us use this doctrine aright, not as an excuse for an attempt to discover the hidden will of God, but as a basis for all our service as Christians.

11. Mention two ways in which this doctrine is abused.

Indifference and false passivity are two ways in which this doctrine is often abused. The indifference assume the attitude of "what do I care about something which is altogether in the hands of God." They thus wrest this truth unto their destruction. The inactive are fatalist in their attitude. They are so preoccupied with their inability that they practise a kind of passivity which appears very pious. Actually they are in complete misunderstanding of the doctrine of God's predestination. When God speaks to us of his Son, it is not for us to speculate as to whether he has chosen us to eternal life, but rather to obey his Word in which he calls us to believe, to repent, to live the life of sanctification, etc.

12. But isn't there a special difficulty involved in this doctrine?

Yes, there is the difficulty of harmonizing God's election with man's free agency as a responsible creature. Please notice that the Confession merely states the doctrine of predestination without attempting to solve this problem. Fact is, that the Bible teaches both: God's sovereign election and man's responsibility, and we do well to accept in faith its teaching, regardless of its difficulty.

13. How must we use this truth?

(a) We ought first of all to heed the apostle's admonition "to make our calling and election sure" (II Peter 1:10). This is to be done by walking in the way of God's will as revealed in the Scriptures.

(b) We ought to be impressed with our responsibility to a Sovereign God. If God is sovereign, surely we must serve him obediently and zealously. "Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, for God worketh in you both to will and to work according to his good pleasure" (Phil. 2:12b,13).

(c) We ought to bend every effort to glorify God. Through election and reprobation God is seen as he is: merciful and just. He must be adored, since he alone is worthy of adoration. "He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord." God has elected us, not because we are worthy, but to show his praises before men.

"Out of the Heart"

(Continued from page 3)

of hobby, as something with which we can toy around. The popularity of certain "devotional classics" might be an indication of a kind of piety which is "a lot of fun" for people with a certain bent of mind.

A second step toward a healthy piety would be the rededication of ourselves to the Lord and to those who with us are one in Him. "If there is therefore any exhortation in Christ, if any consolation of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any tender mercies and compassions, make full my joy, that ye be of the same mind, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind; doing nothing through faction or through vainglory, but in lowliness of mind each counting other better than himself; not looking each of you to his own things, but each of you also to the things of others." (Philippians 2:1-4)

Serve the Lord!

A third step might well be the restoration of none less than the Lord himself as the one whom we serve.

Church politics is always a bad game at which to play. Not infrequently rumblings are heard that our "common people" feel quite disgusted with the way in which church offices are gained, certain friends are "taken care of," and personal animosities are allowed to determine one's stand on

"True piety consists rather in a pure and true zeal which loves God altogether as Father, and reveres him truly as Lord, embraces his justice and dreads to offend him more than to die." (John Calvin in *Instruction in Faith 1537*)

church issues. The result of this is that personal vindication often seems more important than the welfare of the cause of God.

To be active in the affairs of the church is every member's duty. But when our own cause is the primary consideration; when our membership in ruling bodies and boards, our personal influence recognized or unrecognized becomes a serious matter for us, then we may well wonder if we are really trying as godly men to seek first the Kingdom of God, or if we are seeking first ourselves, using the Kingdom for personal self-expression.

True piety seeks the glory of God!

Only when we from the heart concentrate all our activity upon Him, will we avoid the evils of a merely external, outward piety. Only then will we be able to enjoy our Covenant God forever.

"What is Mental Illness?"

(Continued from page 15)

The Abnormal Ones

It was stated above that the clear-cut distinction between abnormal people and normal ones does hold in a limited sense in the field of mental disturbances. It can be gratefully stated that the class of abnormal people in the field of mental disturbance is really quite small.

In order to indicate this class of the abnormal ones we must make a distinction which is familiar to everyone having even an elementary knowledge of mental troubles. We must make a distinction between those who are *mentally ill* and those who are *mentally deficient*. In the second class, the class of the mentally deficient or defective, we deal with people who suffer from a lack of something, not from the sickness of that which they have. Such cases of mental deficiency are referred to by the word *amentia* (lack

of mentality). Cases of mental illness are in general covered by the term *dementia* (decline of mentality), a term not wholly satisfactory, because in many cases of mental illness there is actually no impairment of the mental function. We hope to show later on that the popular approach to mental illness that concerns itself too largely with the purely mental aspect of the personality is a faulty approach.

People afflicted with *amentia* have been classified as idiots, imbeciles, morons and moral defectives. The idiot has a mental age of zero to two years. No matter how many years he may actually spend on earth, his mind will never develop beyond the mental grasp and power of a two year old child. The idiot cannot take care of his personal needs and cannot guard himself against common physical dangers — such as the normal traffic hazards met in crossing a street.

The imbecile is described as having a mental age of three to seven years. He is not an idiot, yet he is incapable of managing himself or his affairs, and as a child he cannot be taught to do so.

The moron (called feeble-minded in Great Britain) is rated as having a mental age of seven to twelve years. He needs a measure of protection and control for his own sake and for the sake of society. He can perform certain simple tasks of a routine nature, but he is unable to derive benefit from the usual instruction in regular schools.

A moral defective is usually a moron with strong criminal tendencies. Many of these get their names on the lists of criminals. Many women of this type become prostitutes. A superintendent of a large institution for the feeble-minded once told the writer that not a few of his female charges had had careers as gangsters' "molls". (In the United States the term *feeble-minded* is commonly used to refer to all cases of *amentia* and does not have the specific meaning that it has in Great Britain.)

Deficiency or Retardation?

An important question presents itself in certain instances of mental deficiency in children. A child may seem to be a case of mental deficiency when actually he is not. The slowing

down of the mental processes may be due to some very different cause. The child may have suffered some extremely serious and prolonged emotional hurt. He may have been caught in the cross-fire of prolonged strain and final break between his parents. Many instances of apparent mental deficiency (except those falling plainly in the idiot class) deserve careful examination to determine whether the case is a true instance of mental deficiency or of retardation due to serious emotional injury.

The mentally deficient person is not primarily our concern in these articles. That is not because work with them is unimportant. Pastoral psychiatry does not properly concern itself with such matters. We have referred to mental deficiency in partial detail in order that a clearer picture of the whole area of personality disorders may be gained.

Defining the "Normal", Healthy Personality

Our main concern, then, is with mental illness, not with mental deficiency. But how shall we define mental illness or mental health? What is the so-called "normal person"? The so-called "abnormal person"?

We might describe the mentally ill person as one who enters a hospital for the mentally ill and a mentally healthy person as one who does not enter such a hospital. However, such a "definition" would mean very little. It tells us nothing about the real character of mental illness or health. Also, the notion that mental illness is limited to those who become patients in hospitals for the mentally ill is plainly false. Many people outside such hospitals are living lives that are inwardly stormy and insecure. With improved and enlightened attitudes toward mental disturbances becoming more general it can be accurately reported that many people avoid the inconveniences of hospitalization because they have sought proper help at an early stage of the disturbance. And let us remember, the distinction between the mentally ill and the mentally healthy is very often not a matter of kind so much as a matter of degree.

Another method of describing the mentally ill person is the *social* one.

The following definition is taken from a small book entitled *Modern society and mental disease* by Landis and Page. In getting at the nature of mental illness these men speak of the "normal" person in the following terms. "The *normal individual* is one whose desires, emotions, and interests are compatible with the social standards and pressures of his group. There is an absence of any prolonged conflict between the normal individual and his environment. His social adjustments are not easily disrupted by changes either in himself or his environment. His behavior is considered logical and understandable by his associates". (p. 9).

What shall we think of a definition like this? Can we endorse it? How would the apostle Paul have fared if this definition of the "normal individual" had held sway in his day? He stuck resolutely and unswervingly to a message that was "a stumbling-block to the Jew and foolishness to the Greek". How would Luther have fared? How would any one fare who persistently challenges the standards and notions of the society in which he lives?

Must we not conclude that there is danger in such a definition? Indeed, no one should summarily dismiss the opinion of Landis and Page without giving it due and careful thought. We do live in the world and we have to find a *modus vivendi* in its social structure. But there is altogether too much in such a definition that might encourage an annoyed society to put the label of "insane" on a man who persisted in disrupting the accepted order of things. Such a "social" definition of the "normal individual" strikes too close to those courageous men who "turned the world upside down", and to that soldier of truth who was called a "babbler" by a society that did not understand the things of God. Society owes much to that host of "queer people" who have challenged its false standards and have rebuked its easy pretensions.

How then shall we define mental health and mental illness? We shall explore this interesting subject further next time.

(To be continued)

"Foundations"

(Continued from page 5)

memorandum — calling the reality of God into question — by UNESCO, with its blanket authority to revise education, according to the beliefs of the atheists and agnostics who head it — and by an unmistakable movement in the direction of enforced unification, with Federal Fund support, of all educational institutions. What chance of survival for private Christian education when the intellectual foundations are destroyed.

Spiritual Bankruptcy

And basic to all else, the spiritual foundations are destroyed. Modernism, with its world-wide councils and its almost exclusive control of government interest and support, is busy chipping away every tenet that is distinctive to historic Biblical Christianity. It is no wonder that the political dishonesty and opportunism that is blotted across our national record can go hand-in-hand with the claim that we are a Christian nation, if our Christianity is represented by Modernism that has sucked the life-blood out of religion and hasn't the decency to bury the corpse but insists on setting it up as though it were still a living sovereign in the lives of mankind.

And too much of Fundamentalism, which arose in reaction against Modernism, is helping to keep the spiritual foundations destroyed. Too many sincere Christians have been content with giving their youth a mystical, emotional, unintelligent "experience" of salvation without teaching them how to make that religion fit the actualities of life. It is all very well to believe, if you wish, in a "rapture" that is coming by-and-by, but it isn't here yet. And multitudes of these young people, utterly unprepared for the subtleties of unbelieving philosophy, go to the university and find that their mere experientialism doesn't stand up. It has not been strengthened by sound study and research.

"No creed but Christ" will do very well if we are living in the first generation after Christ. But to say it now is dangerous. The spiritual foundations are not rebuilt by a movement

which freely discounts God's ordained institution, the Church Universal, the "Pillar and ground of the truth".

The Challenge of the Hour

Since the foundations are destroyed, let us begin honestly to take stock.

What have the righteous done?

What have they done about the moral foundations?

God said, in language that cannot be misunderstood: "Be ye holy, for I am holy!" and again, "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world, for if ye love the world, the love of the Father is not in you." Compromise means a loss of God's blessing upon us and our spiritual endeavors. Surely we must do more toward a positive solving of the worldliness problem, but we must not go back to greater worldliness! If we do, we share the blame for breaking down the moral foundations.

What are the righteous doing about the intellectual foundations? We answer quickly, "Look at Christian Education." But when we look at it, we are all too much inclined to look with the complacency born of regarding a truly great accomplishment. We fall prey to the temptation of making false comparisons with those who have less progress to report. Such comparison is always vicious. The Bible urges us to compare only with the standard of perfection. If we do, there will be no room for complacent self-satisfaction. Self-congratulation and self-examination cannot dwell under the same roof!

What are the righteous doing about the spiritual foundations? Bernard Iddings Bell, well-known Anglican Churchman, after a survey of religious opinions expressed by service men, came back with the startling statement that parents need not be so concerned that their children will lose their faith in the service, because, frankly, they haven't any faith to lose. "Most of the men look upon their churches at home as social clubs, smothered with respectability, enervated with timidity, headed by preachers who are far more concerned with pleasing the wealthy members in the pew than with blurring out the disconcerting will of God."

In what direction are orthodox churches moving — definitely away from that low level, or slowly but surely sinking toward it?

If it be true that the foundations are destroyed, what can the righteous do?

We shouldn't even ask that question. Because the answer is too obvious. *We* cannot do anything. But we are not asked to do what we can. We are told to do what we must, and God has promised the strength to do it if we will only do what we know we must.

We must give the answer to the anxious spiritual questions of the age of which we are a part.

To a power-minded age we must say, "All power is given unto (Him) in Heaven and upon earth. Go ye, therefore and teach all nations."

To an age of confusion, we must witness, "(He) is the way and the truth and the life. No man cometh unto the Father but by (Him)."

To an age of relativism and neutrality we must say, "By faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the Word of God so that things that are seen are not made of things which do appear." And, "Of Him, through Him, and unto Him are all things, to Him be the glory forever and ever."

Under God, Christian Education may well be the distinctive answer to the wailing cry of our age, "They have taken away my Lord and I know not where they have laid Him."

"The Christian Soldier"

(Continued from page 14)

law of God. He is in no way exempt from the commandment: "Love your neighbor as yourself". That law of love comes to expression in many different ways. Just a few examples have been cited here in connection with John's words to the soldiers of his day. One thing stands out clearly. There is no prohibition against soldiering. One does not have to flee from the world in Anabaptistic estrangement. God calls us to do our duty as citizens, to render to Caesar the things which are Caesar's. However, God does not temporarily release those on military

duty from the obligation of walking as children of the light. We must let our light so shine before men in the service that by our good works — contentment, honesty, chastity, kindliness, honor, etc. — they may glorify our Father which is in heaven. If we remember these things we shall also know that our labors are not in vain in the Lord, that this war has a purpose in our lives as individuals to witness as restored prophets, priests and kings. Let us as Christian fathers and mothers remind our boys in the service that they are children of the light, a holy priesthood unto God, to show forth the praises of Him who has called them from darkness into light. God forbid that any of the sons of the covenant should become conformed to this world while on military duty to such an extent that they accept the common sins of soldiers as the order of the day. May their covenant training and the Law of God which they have heard from babyhood help them to continue in those things which they have learned. May our gracious God give them the will to work out their salvation with fear and trembling, for our God is a consuming fire! Let us therefore bring forth works worthy or repentance!

“Christianity and the Family”

(Continued from page 23)

strued in mechanical terms. The call to personal repentance and faith was obscured, since anyone who did not willfully place the obstacle of stubborn unbelief in the way of grace was supposed to receive the actual gift.

The chief goal of the preaching of the gospel came to be the establishment of the kingdom of Christ among men in visible form. This was to be achieved by unconditional obedience to the Church to which were entrusted the sacraments. The development of doctrine and piety throughout the next thousand years obliterated to a large extent the place and calling of the individual. Indeed, there were protesting voices. The sectarians were very active in many sections of the western world, chiefly in southern

France where several religious crusades inaugurated by the bishops and popes almost annihilated them. Thus the development of the hierarchy and the growing tendency to glorify celibacy did much to throttle the original Christian conception of the family as the seed-bed of true faith.

During the Reformation many broke completely with the papal church. Of all the groups which advocated a return to the New Testament, none was more radical than the Anabaptists. Among them the emphasis fell almost exclusively on the individual's relation to God, conceived of in a subjective and activist way. Without the personal appropriation of divine grace by an act of faith, man was regarded as under the curse of sin and death. Baptism was not regarded as the sign and seal of divine grace but as the public confirmation and attestation to personal faith. Thus in the church there was room only for experiential believers. In such a framework justice could not be done to the scriptural demands for covenantal family life. In fact, among some of the Anabaptists there was a tendency to regard celibacy as belonging to a higher and more spiritual order than marriage. All this rooted in their lack of appreciation of the proper relation of nature and grace.

Among the Reformed there was developed a new position in which an attempt was made to do justice to the teaching of God's gracious covenant with his people. Of this covenant the sacraments were regarded as divine signs and seals. By virtue of this emphasis the Reformed churches more than any others were able to preach more clearly the demands of living out the gospel truths in all of life.

Christ: Transformer of Culture

This brings up the whole question of the relation in which the Christ of the gospels stands to the life of man in the world. It is recognized as one of the most pertinent problems which faces the Christian Church today. Throughout the history of the Church believers have engaged themselves in seeking a solution to this vexing issue. In a very recent book of his, *Christ*

and Culture, H. Richard Niebuhr gives a penetrating analysis of the divergent attempts at a solution. These he classifies under five heads. To the fifth class, which insists that Christ by his saving grace transforms our culture, belong also the Reformed or Calvinistic churches. Holding this view of the proper relation of nature and grace, the Reformed churches have developed the biblical doctrine of the Covenant of Grace in which the supposed tension between individual and social gospel is satisfactorily resolved. Only in this way can justice be done to the biblical insistence on a full-orbed family religion which the Lord blesses in such a way that his Church is maintained in the world, his kingdom is established in the hearts of men, and his people are prepared for everlasting glory.

Precisely what this construction of the biblical doctrine of God's gracious covenant with our families means for daily life will be discussed in the next article of this series.

Questions for Discussion

1. Is there any evidence that believers were more spiritual in the days of our grandparents than today?
2. In what ways may it have been easier to give children covenantal nurture two generations ago than today? In what ways may it have been more difficult?
3. How has modern secularism affected our nation? Our churches? Our families?
4. How would you define covenant-consciousness?
5. In what respects is a purely individualistic gospel unscriptural and insufficient? Do you think Fundamentalists are guilty of this? (cf. Carl F. H. Henry: *The Uneasy Conscience of Fundamentalism*, Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1947). Have we as American Calvinists been guilty of the same error?
6. In what sense is God's covenant with Abraham in force in the New Testament church? Prove from the New Testament.
7. Is baptism a sign and seal of God's grace or of man's faith? Prove from Scripture. Of what significance is your answer for the practice of infant baptism?
8. On what Scriptural grounds would you oppose the Baptist view of the Sacrament; their rejection of infant baptism; their denial of the validity of one covenant for the New Testament church?
9. How has the ascetic ideal in both Roman Catholic and Protestant churches undermined the Christian view of marriage?

INDEX TO VOLUME ONE

APOLOGETICS

Philosophy and Revelation.....	III, 32
Spier, J. M.	
Van Til, Cornelius	
Defending the Faith.....	I, 16
The Believer Meets the Unbeliever.....	II, 17
Needed — A Consistent Witness.....	III, 16
The Authority of Scripture.....	IV, 16
Van Til, Henry	
Calvinism Today.....	I, 19
Militant Christianity.....	II, 1
Testing the Teacher.....	III, 19
Vos, Johannes G.	
The Natural Goodness of Man.....	II, 5
God is Love.....	III, 14
The Value of Religion.....	IV, 12
Non-Miraculous Christianity.....	V, 17
Christianity Without Creed.....	VI, 11
Young, E. J.	
The Unerring Bible — A Lost Cause?.....	V, 1
Did God Create Out Of Nothing?.....	VI, 6

BIBLE

Dynamic for Life.....	V, 5
Atwell, Robert L.	
Greenway, Leonard	
Shelter and Security.....	I, 2
Unto Him that Loveth Us.....	II, 1; III, 3
The Fulness of Time.....	V, 9
Murray, John	
Love Your Enemies.....	II, 21
Van Houten, Frederick W.	
The Pause for Praise.....	IV, 8
Van Til, Henry	
Christian Communism or Christian Charity?.....	IV, 14
Vos, Johannes G.	
Practical Christianity.....	V, 32
Uitvlugt, J. W. F.	
Be Ye Separate.....	IV, 15
BOOK REVIEWS	
Berkhouwer, G. C.	
Conflict met Rome (by Alexander C. DeJong).....	II, 23
Blanshard, Paul	
American Freedom and Catholic Power (by Alexander C. De Jong).....	II, 23
Blanshard, Paul	
Communism, Democracy and Catholic Power (by Arnold Brink).....	V, 22
Free University Quarterly (by Arnold Brink).....	II, 27
Kuiper, B. K.	
The Church in History (by Sanford W. Reid).....	II, 25
Machen, J. Gresham	
What is Christianity? (by Frederick W. Van Houten).....	II, 26
Pink, Arthur W.	
The Sermon on the Mount (by Simon Viss).....	V, 23
Schilder, Klaas	
Christus en Cultuur (by John Vriend).....	I, 11
Zwemer, Samuel M.	
Sons of Adam (by Oswald T. Allis).....	II, 25

CHRISTIAN LIFE

A. C. De Jong, E. Heerema, J. H. Piersma	
What is Reformed Piety?.....	IV, 8
The First Rule of Godliness.....	V, 15
Out of the Heart.....	VI, 2
Murray, John	
God and the War.....	V, 10
Piersma, John H.	
Call to Rededication.....	II, 3
Van Til, Henry	
May We Shoot to Kill?.....	VI, 1
The Christian Soldier's Conduct in War.....	VI, 13
Vos, Johannes G.	
Practical Christianity.....	V, 32
Vriend, John	
The Triple Anointing.....	V, 19

CHURCH GOVERNMENT

De Jong, Peter Y., and Piersma, John H.	
Let the Church Decentralize!.....	II, 13
De Jong, Peter Y.	
Needed — Wide-awake Elders!.....	V, 3
Preaching and the Elders.....	VI, 8
Vriend, John	
The Case for Canada.....	VI, 19

CHURCH MUSIC

Bruinsma, Henry A.	
Calvin and Church Music.....	II, 2
Secularism in Church Music.....	V, 8

EDUCATION

Brink, Arnold	
When God Speaks.....	II, 10
Foundations.....	VI, 4
Stonehouse, Ned B.	
A Calvinistic University in America.....	III, 12; IV, 18
Van Bruggen, John A.	
Are We Ready for the Next Step.....	I, 20
Keepng Pace with Progress.....	III, 26

PSYCHIATRY

Heerema, Edward	
Pastoral Psychiatry.....	I, 6
Spiritual Counselling or Hocus-Pocus.....	II, 3
Absolute Truth and the Hearts of Men.....	IV, 8
What is Mental Illness?.....	VI, 15

SCIENCE

De Vries, John	
Science and the Bible.....	I, 4
One Among Billions.....	II, 7
When?.....	III, 6
The Stars Tell Time.....	IV, 4
The Atom Calendar.....	V, 6

THEOLOGY

De Jong, Alexander C.	
The Covenant is the Answer.....	I, 8
De Jong, Peter Y.	
The Covenant Idea in the Reformed Churches.....	I, 13
What Do We Mean by God's Covenant?.....	III, 8
Christianity for the Family.....	VI, 21
Hendriksen, William	
Herman Bavincok on Reprobation.....	II, 20
Piersma, John H.	
Here I Stand! (Studies in the Belgic Confession).....	I, 22; II, 29; III, 22; IV, 22; V, 26; VI, 24
Vos, Johannes G.	
Religious Terms Defined.....	I, 31

MISCELLANEOUS

From the Letterbox.....	
IV, 21; V, 25	
Please, A Frank Talk With You.....	VI, 1
Why?.....	I, 1

"Christianity Without Creed"

(Continued from page 12)

Now any type of religion which denies, evades or minimizes this essentially doctrinal structure of Christianity is a *subversion of the Christian religion*. The doctrinal structure of Christianity is not the whole of Christianity, yet it is the primary feature of Christianity, and its importance cannot possibly be over-emphasized. Where this doctrinal structure is denied, Christianity cannot exist; where it is neglected or minimized, Christianity cannot exist in a healthy and vigorous form.

Abysmal Ignorance

It is notorious that doctrine is woefully neglected today. There is a truly abysmal ignorance even of elementary doctrinal truth in contemporary American Protestantism. A student in one of America's oldest theological seminaries — an institution founded on a Calvinistic creed—was being examined for licensure to preach the gospel. One of the first questions he was asked was "What was the Covenant of Works?" To this he replied: "That is easy. It means Adam had to work to earn a living" (!) This incident was told to the writer of the present article by the minister who asked the question. He was rightly shocked as such a display of doctrinal ignorance. Yet this was not a unique case; it could be paralleled time and again in pulpit and in pew, in the world of twentieth-century American Protestantism. It is common to read statements about the doctrines of total depravity, predestination, the verbal inspiration of the Bible, and so forth, which betray not merely disbelief of these doctrines,

but downright ignorance of what the doctrines are.

Doctrine the Main Course

The crying need of contemporary American Protestantism is for more doctrine. A little doctrine here and there, now and then, will not meet the need. The churches must get back to the preaching and teaching of doctrine as their main and continuous business. What is required is not a shorter or longer period of renewed emphasis on doctrine, but a *permanent* emphasis. Doctrine must be studied, taught, preached, and applied for all time to come. A temporary or sporadic inculcation of doctrine will accomplish little; it must be continuous and permanent. Doctrine is not a side-dish but the main course of the church's meal; the church's must get back to it and make it the main thing from now until the end of the world. Where doctrine is neglected, Christianity eventually languishes. Without doctrine there can be no real evangelism, no true Christian education, no genuine home and foreign missionary work, no authentic application of Christianity to the social, political and economic spheres. Our religion is either doctrinal to the core, or it is not really Christianity.

"Take heed unto thyself, and unto the doctrine" (1 Tim. 4:16). "Hold fast the form of sound words" (2 Tim. 1:13). "Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season, reprove, rebuke, exhort, with all long-suffering and doctrine. For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; and they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables" (2 Tim. 4:2-4). "For a bishop must be blameless as the steward of God... holding fast the faithful word as he hath been taught, that he may be able by sound doctrine both to exhort and to convince the gainsayers" (Tit. 1:7-9). "But speak thou the things which become sound doctrine" (Tit. 2:1). "In all things showing thyself a pattern of good works: in doctrine showing uncorruptness, gravity, sincerity, sound speech, that cannot be condemned" (Tit. 2:7, 8).