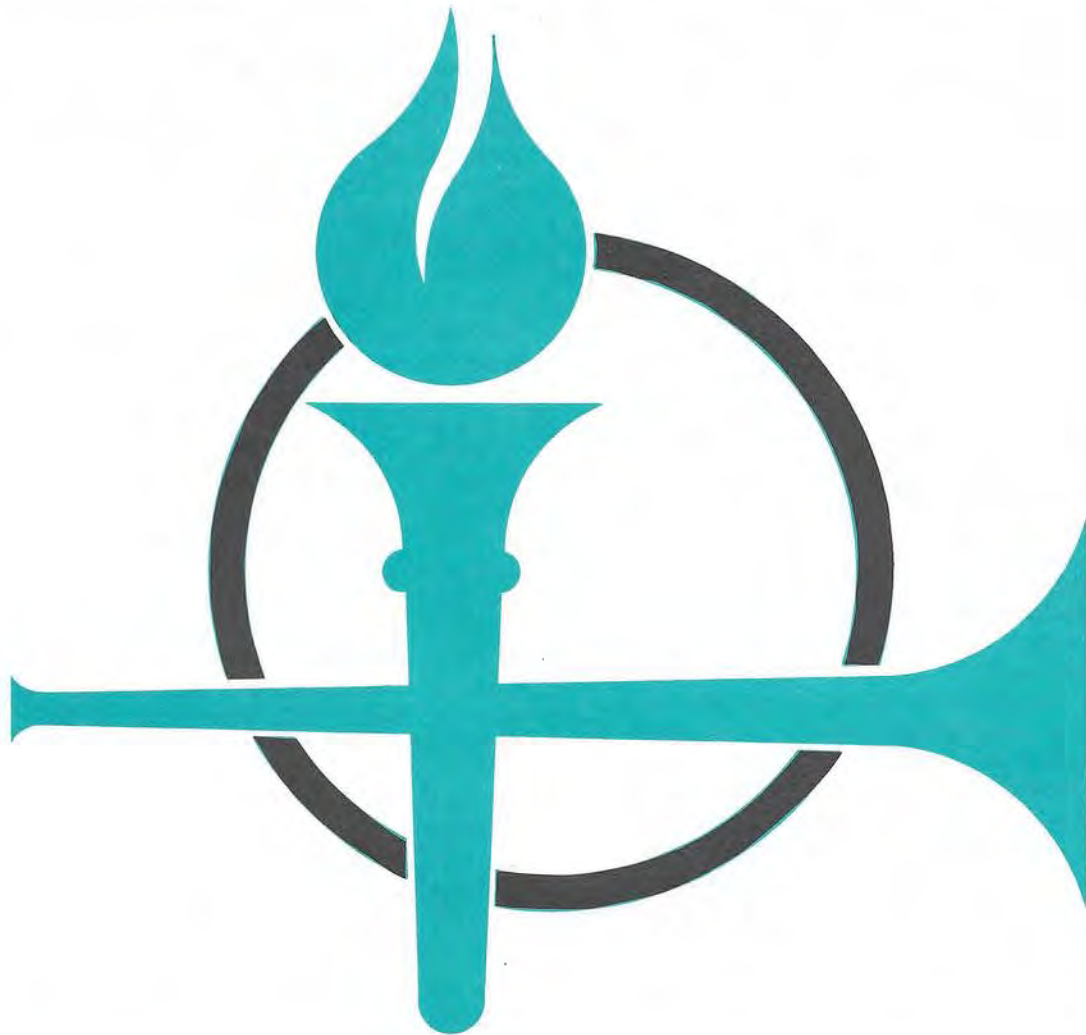


THE OUTLOOK

DEVOTED TO THE EXPOSITION AND DEFENSE OF THE REFORMED FAITH

MARCH 1980



**MORE FOR LESS
SHAPE OF REFORMED FAITH
A BIBLICAL ANTITHESIS**

"CHRIST IN SCHOOLS. MORE FOR LESS?"

David C. Hine

A Movement Toward Doctrinal Obscurity

Psalm 78:1-8 has long been a potent passage of Scripture for making and maintaining friends for Christian Day Schools. In forthright terms the Psalmist declares as the spokesman of God the tragic outcome of an education that denies God His rightful place: "a stubborn and rebellious generation, whose hearts (are) . . . not loyal to God." God, His Word, and the testimony of the things He has done cannot be forgotten without cost in human life, even the lives of our children!

In Evangelical circles of virtually every theological persuasion there can be heard today an increasingly common call to forsake doctrinal clarity and distinctiveness in the interests of unity, testimony, and numerical growth. This trend towards theological obscurity is especially evident in the field of Christian education, where more and more men, money, and material are being dedicated to less and less theologically and philosophically speaking. This was clearly brought home to me when I surveyed a number of Christian School Constitutions recently as part of my course-work at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary. Generally speaking, the rule is this: the more recent the Constitution, the more obscure its content theologically and philosophically. How tragic, for Scripture and Church history combine to form a united witness that the alertness of the people of God is measurable in terms of: 1.) doctrinal clarity; 2.) devotional commitment; and 3.) dutiful observance of the Commandments of God as a people redeemed by grace. And these three are related, for fuzzy doctrine leads to faltering devotion, and fuzzy doctrine and faltering devotion lead to a flagrant disregard for our duties to God and our neighbor. (Compare the alertness of the people of God in Malachi's day with that of First Church in Jerusalem following Pentecost (Acts 2:41-47) and be prepared for a shocking difference!) It is no accident that the Churches of the Reformation stressed the Apostles' Creed, the Lord's Prayer, and The Ten Commandments, for without each sound Christian teaching there can be no solid Christian discipleship. (II Timothy 3:16-17 & Matthew 28:18-20).

1. Need For Doctrinal Clarity

On the basis of what is commonly confessed and believed among the fellowship, the nature, associations, and development of the educational community most surely depends.

Let us first consider the nature of the Society. Christian doctrine is like a massive door: framed by the Bible; hinged on Christ; and latched by the Holy Spirit, with the Cross of Jesus the threshold over

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which all must pass who would have communion with God. What is said and implied in the doctrinal statement will encourage some to enter and others to remain outside. The temptation will no doubt present itself again and again to allow some to enter at the expense of an undebatable point of affirmation — be it the trustworthiness of the Bible, creation by God as opposed to evolution by process, redemption by the Cross as opposed to good works, or whatever. There must be some undebatables among Society members, and they must be numerous enough to make it a society of Christian Faith as opposed to a collection of the religiously opinionated.

Enough needs to be said in the doctrinal statement to ensure that the resulting Society and School forms a creative, yet homogeneous unit. Enough needs to be said doctrinally to ensure that a fully Biblical and therefore Reformed life-and-world view is what is subscribed to by those in authority and sought for all who are gathered for instruction. If we believe that Calvinism is "Christianity come into its own," to quote B.B. Warfield, how could we want less for our children than what God has graciously made known to us? One of the most obvious lacks of even those generally older Constitutions that are more particularly Reformed in their orientation is reference to our Future in Christ. Does not the ultimate goal of the Christian life reach beyond the here-and-now to the here-after? To be mindful of the Future is to be mindful today of the urgency of our educational tasks. To be mindful of the Christ who is coming is a constant reminder that it is Christ Himself — and not mere education — who is needed to make old things and all things new. The Second Coming of our Lord is a blessed truth that God can use to treat and cure the dread disease of Scholasticism!

2. Need For Devout Commitment

Second, what is believed together helps the Society to make solid progress in the community, and solid associations on regional, national, and international levels. There are Christian parents locally who need to obey God and educate their children in the Truth. There are principals and teachers to be trained, books and other forms of literature to be written, curriculum to be designed, and issues to be collectively addressed. All of this requires an atmosphere of trust that is predicted upon Truth. Where Truth is sacrificed in the interests of numerical strength, part of the message is lost and an identity crisis of major proportions must soon follow. There is a valuable lesson to be learned from the Oecumenical Movement here: Those who put numbers before God and His Word end up losing all!

3. Need For Obedience to God's Commandments

Third, change is inherent in life. Nothing living is truly static. God and His Truth are marching on. We

either keep in step with the Spirit, or we march to the beat of a different drummer and fall behind. Throughout the history of the Church there has been a significant progress in the development of the doctrine and the opportunity for Christian growth. Writes L. Berkhof in "THE HISTORY OF CHRISTIAN DOCTRINES":

The Church in its endeavours to apprehend the truth is simply seeking to think the thoughts of God after Him. It does this under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, which is the Spirit of truth and as such guarantees that it will ever increasingly see the truth as an internally connected organism. The History of Dogma . . . is the history of an organic growth and of the inner workings of the Church, and therefore presupposes a rather continuous development . . . (page 22.)

If progress is to be made, it is to be made from within the framework of belief — a belief whose roots reach back through the centuries. If even in some small way we can see further than those who have gone on before us, then it is only because God has been pleased to place us upon their shoulders! A deliberate refusal to remember the lessons God has taught the faithful in the past can only lead to an impoverishment that may well reach to children's children!

We do not need to pay more and get less in Christian education. Unity, testimony, numerical and spiritual growth are not the result of human engineering based upon the practical denial of God and the deliberate obscuring of His Word, but rather, they are the work of the Spirit who creates within the hearts of men faith in God and trust in His Word. How will our children remember us? Will they remember us as parents who proved the promises of God by waiting upon God in prayer, encouraged by the faithfulness of God in times past? Or, will they remember us for our willingness to obscure the Truth in order to do what *we* think best? If we truly put first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness, then we will not barter these priceless treasures away piecemeal or entire for the sake of organizational strength or improved facilities!

Esau is a classic example of one who gave away too much for too little and in the end lost all! Will we or our children be next in line to go and do likewise?

O my people, hear my teaching;
listen to the words of my mouth.

I will open my mouth in parables;
I will utter things hidden from of old —
things we have heard and known,
things our fathers have told us.

We will not hide them from their children;
we will tell the next generation
the praiseworthy deeds of the Lord,
his power, and the wonders he has done,
... so the next generation would know them,
even the children yet to be born,
and they in turn would tell their children.
Then they would put their trust in God and
would not forget his deeds but would keep
his commandments. Psalm 78:1-4, 6-7.

THE OUTLOOK

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

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THE DOCTRINE OF CHRIST

Christ — Our Satisfaction

Jerome M. Julien

As a Christian I confess that I "belong unto my faithful Savior Jesus Christ; who with His precious blood has fully satisfied for all my sins..." (*Heidelberg Catechism*, q. 1).

Satisfaction for sins — what a thought!

And especially when we know what sin really is! What is satisfaction? As the word is used here it means that Jesus Christ, through His atonement, provided the full payment for my sins so that I would be reconciled to God. Nothing more had to be done. He did it all.

What did Jesus do? He "met and answered all the demands of God's law and justice against the sinner" (C. Hodge, *Systematic Theology*, II:482). This satisfaction is seen, then, in: 1. His perfect obedience in keeping the demands of God's law (Romans 5:18, 19; Galatians 3:13; 4:4, 5); and 2. the shedding of His blood thus satisfying the justice of God (Romans 5:9, 10).

Demands of God's law — First, then, to understand how Christ is our Satisfaction we must see His work in relation to God's law.

The curse of the law is on all men because of sin (Galatians 3:10). "There is none that doeth good, no, not so much as one" (Romans 3:12; Psalm 14:1). Because of involvement in Adam's sin no man can do God's will — and he doesn't want to, either. Further, sin means guilt and the certainty of punishment because God demands nothing less than perfect obedience. This obedience to Him is seen in love, as we are told: love is the fulfillment of the law (Romans 13:10). Less than perfect obedience is rebellion against God, and this rebellion calls forth God's wrath.

Because God is just in demanding love and, therefore, obedience, and because sinful men are hopelessly unable to do this, God sent His Son. This Son was to be completely obedient; that is, His life had to be characterized by the positive doing of God's will. Without this obedience to God's law He would not be able to satisfy God's justice. He had to be perfectly righteous. "One who himself is a sinner cannot satisfy for others" (*Heidelberg Catechism*, q. 16; see Hebrews 7:26, 27). Satisfying God's justice meant that He had to bear God's wrath against sin, thus paying the penalty due to us because of our guilt.

Christ's obedience — The key to understanding what Jesus did is found in His obedience. John Calvin wrote:

Now someone asks, How has Christ abolished sin, banished the separation between us and God, and acquired righteousness to render God favorable and kindly toward us? To this we can in general reply that he has achieved this for us by the whole course of his obedience (*Institutes*, II, xvi, 5).

Obediently Christ fulfilled the law and obediently He satisfied God's justice (Psalm 40:7, 8; John 6:38; 4:34; 10:17, 18; Romans 5:19; Hebrews 5:8, 9). This obedience is often distinguished as *active* and *passive obedience*. However, both of these aspects are so intimately connected that you cannot have one without the other.

When we speak of Christ's **active obedience** we are speaking about Christ's obedience to God's law in order to please God and obtain eternal life (Matthew 5:17, 18; John 15:10; Hebrews 10:7-9). Obediently He fulfilled the righteousness of the law for us (Romans 8:3, 4). What we would not do, He did! Through Christ's active obedience we are free from the law as a condition for life and are now adopted sons and heirs (Galatians 4:4, 5; Ephesians 1:3-13; Romans 10:3, 4; 8:3, 4).

Only by this active obedience would Christ's suffering be acceptable to God. Had He not been completely willing to conform to God's will, He would have fallen short of God's demands and He could not have atoned for others. Had He merely passively suffered, no sacrifice would have been made. The damned in hell suffer, too, but theirs is no atoning suffering because they do not willingly suffer. He had to suffer obediently, and therefore actively. Voluntarily He experienced suffering, death and hell. He would lay down His own life. The death on the cross was Christ's supreme act of obedience (John 10:17, 18).

On the last day of his life, Dr. J. Gresham Machen dictated a telegram to his colleague Professor John Murray: "I'm so thankful for the active obedience of Christ; no hope without it." He had been discussing this subject with Murray and it had been the subject of one of the very last addresses he gave. At the moment of death he gained comfort in Christ's active obedience. Because of it, he would be accepted as perfectly obedient and righteous. Professor Ned Stonehouse wrote: "An exultant note of triumph through the merit of his Saviour was thus sounded forth as he was about to enter the divine presence" (J. G. Machen, *God Transcendent*, 11).

When we speak of Christ's **passive obedience** we refer to His paying the penalty for sin by experiencing God's wrath in His sufferings and death (Isaiah 53:6; Romans 4:25; I John 2:2). By this He removed the debt of His people. These sufferings were laid on Him as our representative. To these, in His active obedience, Christ voluntarily subjected Himself (John 10:18). The death He died was thus a sacrificial death. This sacrificial death we call the atonement.

The atonement — Although the word "atonement" is a common one in the Christian's vocabulary, it appears only once in the *King James Version* of the New Testament: Romans 5:11. However, it does appear often in the Old Testament. In the

New Testament it is a translation of a Greek word meaning "reconciliation," and in the Old Testament it has the meaning of "propitiation" (Leviticus 1:4; 16:6; etc.).

As the word is used in the Old Testament it implies that God has been offended because of sin and that something has to be done to satisfy God in order that this sin would be forgiven and communion with God would be restored.

As the word is used in the New Testament the act itself — the death of Christ — by which the satisfaction, or atonement, is made becomes, itself, the atonement. Therefore, when we speak about the atonement, we mean "not the reconciliation between God and man, not the 'at-onement' between God and man, but specifically, the means by which that reconciliation is effected — namely, the death of Christ as something that was necessary in order that sinful men might be received into communion with God" (J. G. Machen, *God Transcendent*, 166).

We may, therefore, say that the teaching of Scripture is that Christ's death, or atonement, is the way by which God's justice is satisfied. What took place on Calvary was foreshadowed in the sacrifices of the Tabernacle and the Temple. Jesus Christ was the last sacrifice. With His death there was no further need for the Old Testament typical offerings. What they pointed toward had taken place. *Once for all*, it was done. The atonement had been completed. This is emphasized in the Epistle to the Hebrews (7:27; 9:12, 26, 28; 10:10) and elsewhere, too (Romans 6:10; I Peter 3:18; John 17:4; 19:30).

Reconciliation — And what did this atonement, this satisfaction, bring about? Reconciliation.

By dictionary definition, reconciliation is "the act of re-establishing friendship after estrangement." According to the word used for "reconciliation" in the New Testament, a payment of some kind is involved.

In II Corinthians 5:18, 19, we learn more: "But all things are of God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ, and gave unto us the ministry of reconciliation; to wit, that God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself, not reckoning unto them their trespasses, . . ." We learn here that reconciliation is one-sided. There is no hint here of mutual reconciliation between God and man. In His everlasting love God removed the cause of estrangement.

How are we to understand reconciliation, then, as it relates to Christ's work?

Reconciliation is: 1. a covenant idea. Strangers cannot be reconciled. Only those who have some kind of a relationship, though it be ruptured, can be reconciled: husband and wife, mother and daughter, two friends. God's reconciliation is the result of God's covenant love toward us.

Love is an element in reconciliation that we cannot overlook. It is clearly taught in Scripture (John 3:16; Romans 5:8; 8:32; Ephesians 2:4, 5; I John 4:9, 10). The goal of this great covenant love is that we might be conformed to His image (Romans 8:29).

Further, reconciliation comes about because: 2. the covenantal relationship was violated. The cause of this broken relationship lies wholly with us. We are guilty.

Therefore, reconciliation is: 3. the work of God. God must do the restoring work. He must remove the cause of the estrangement between Himself and His own. When we would not obey, God sent His Son to be obedient in all things on our behalf, and to suffer the agonies of death and hell voluntarily. Thus, by satisfaction for sins through the work of Jesus Christ, God reconciled "the world unto himself." By this He changed the situation between Himself and His own. And because He has graciously done this through the work of His Son we know our Covenant God's love and favor.

What mercy! What love! What grace! ●

The Reprobation Issue (1)

Rein Leestma

This address was given by Rev. Rein Leestma of the Christian Reformed Church of Lynwood, Ill. at the 1977 annual meeting of the Reformed Fellowship in the Twelfth Ave. Church in Jenison on September 29. Because the matter promises to be a major item on the agenda of the C.R. synod in June, we are printing it in this and a following issue.

The 1977 Synod of the Christian Reformed Church accepted as legally before it a gravamen against the Reformed doctrine of reprobation as taught notably in the Canons of Dort in I, articles 6 and 15. The Synod additionally decided that this

gravamen against the creed be published in the Acts of Synod, 1977, and declared that it is before the churches for consideration. A committee was named to receive reactions to this gravamen from individuals, consistories, and classes, to study the gravamen in the light of the Scripture, and to advise Synod of 1980 as to the cogency of the gravamen and how it should further be dealt with by Synod.

An Illegal Synod Division

This action on the part of Synod, 1977 raises many formal questions. It is patently in violation of the procedure required by Article 28 of the Church Order which stipulates that gravamina calling for revision of the confessions shall be submitted to the

consistory and classis for examination and judgment first. Only when a gravamen has been rejected by the consistory and classis and by appeal comes before Synod, only then are the signers of the Form of Subscription free to discuss it together with the whole church until finally adjudicated by Synod.

The circumventing of this required procedure now throws into the life of the church a debate about the validity of the creed on these points of doctrine which have never been presented to the church for preliminary consideration and judgment. If this kind of procedure is to be followed it will be possible for anyone to raise a gravamen on any point of doctrine in the creed and thereby open the matter for debate by the whole church. This would undoubtedly make of the creed one huge debating ground in which the creedal statements of the church are up for grabs and the confessional commitment of the church is seriously reduced if not indeed destroyed. It is devoutly to be wished that something good could come from this procedure, but I am rather inclined to think that once again we have given ourselves over to the "distressing of the consciences of the weak" and the "laboring to render suspected the society of the truly faithful." We ought not to be surprised if more and more in the church be moved to throw up their hands in despair because "nobody even among the churches' leaders seems to know anymore what we are to believe."

An Improper Gravamen

A formal consideration of the gravamen itself also raises the question as to its validity in the courts of the church. If a gravamen is to be worthy of consideration it must at least be specific. It must precisely specify what article and phrase of the creed is to be changed or removed. This gravamen does not so specify. Likewise the burden of proof is to be borne by the gravamen for its own contention. The burden of proof does not lie with the church to establish its creed but with the gravamen to disprove the creed. This gravamen does not offer the required proof.

Nevertheless the gravamen is now before us and we must try to give responsible reaction to it for the sake of the truth and the life of the church of Jesus Christ. I would attempt therefore some consideration of the gravamen itself.

The Issue Is Not Minor But Basic

There was some discussion given to the recommendation of Synod's committee which would remind the churches "that the matter hereby put before the churches is limited specifically to the issue raised . . . against the Reformed doctrine of reprobation as taught notably in the Canons of Dort I/6 and I/15." For whatever reason this recommendation was not adopted by Synod. If the reason for its rejection is to be found in the awareness that there is much more involved here than just some "little" point of doctrine call reprobation, then the rejection of this recommendation was quite justified. There is much more involved here than just the

doctrine of reprobation. This ought to be underscored because otherwise there may be some who, on the mistaken assumption that it covers only one or two minor points dismiss the whole discussion as being of little concern to them and of no real consequence in the life of the church. Nothing could be farther from the truth. What is involved in this gravamen is the whole matter of the decree of God, providence, election, indeed our understanding of the nature of God and His relationship to us and our world, the marvel of His dealings with the sons of men, the program of His redemption and the forming of a new humanity out of this fallen human race unto salvation in Jesus Christ.

The Criticized Statements

The gravamen specifies that the relevant parts of the articles of the creed are "That some receive the gift of faith from God and others do not receive it, proceeds from God's eternal decree." I/6 and, "What peculiarly tends to illustrate and recommend to us the eternal and unmerited grace of election is the express testimony of sacred Scripture that not all, but some only are elected, while others are passed by in the eternal decree; whom God out of His sovereign, most just, irreprehensible, and unchangeable good pleasure, has decreed to leave in the common misery into which they have wilfully plunged themselves, and not to bestow upon them saving faith and the grace of conversion." I/15 A moment of reflection upon these statements of the creed makes plain at once that much more is involved than just the "little" point of doctrine called reprobation.

Their Place in the Canons

That this is so becomes even plainer when consideration is given to the Canons as a whole and the particular context in which the "problem statements" are found. The Canon in the First Head of Doctrine begins with the declaration that "all men have sinned in Adam, lie under the curse, and are deserving of eternal death." Article One goes on to say: "God would have done no injustice by leaving them all to perish and delivering them over to condemnation on account of sin . . . For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God (Romans 3: 23) For the wages of sin is death (Romans 6: 23)."

Articles 2 and 3 immediately set forth the love of God which is manifested in this that "He sent his only begotten Son into the world, that whosoever believeth on him should not perish, but have eternal life (I John 4:9; John 3: 16)" "And that men may be brought to believe, God mercifully sends the messengers of these most joyful tidings to whom He will and at what time He pleases; by whose ministry men are called to repentance and faith in Christ crucified."

Articles 4 and 5 of the Canon set forth the fact that those who receive the gospel and embrace Jesus the Savior by a true and living faith are by Him delivered and that this faith in Jesus Christ and salvation thru Him is the free gift of God. Conversely these Articles declare that the wrath of God

abides upon those who believe not the gospel and that the cause or guilt of this unbelief as well as of all other sins is in no wise in God, but in man himself.

The question of Article 6 is now in focus. Why do some receive the gift of faith from God and others do not? Here are the positive and the negative of the matter, to use the words of the gravamen. The answer to this question is clearly given in the creed because it is clearly given in Scripture. This proceeds from the eternal decree of God "Who worketh all things after the counsel of his will (Ephesians 1:11)." This is not some presupposition formulated by theologians, but rather the precise declaration of God.

Is God Sovereign Or Is He Not?

The gravamen doesn't like the idea that this proceeds from the eternal decree of God, but this is precisely the point of the issue. Is God sovereign in all things or is He not? Does God direct and control all things or does He not? Does God determine history or does history determine God? Is there something or anything that happens which is outside the control and direction or appointment of God? The hardening of Pharaoh's heart, did that "just happen"? The coming of the Chaldeans to chastise, did that "just happen"? The evil that comes upon us in this world, does this "just happen"? Does anything finally — "just happen"? At root the issue before us is precisely this: Does God fore-ordain everything and what ever comes to pass, or does He not? Is there a decree of God in which He plans everything and what ever comes to pass or is there not. Or are there some things which He determines and some things that "just happen"?

An Inescapable Problem

Now the creed is perfectly aware of the fact that there is a mystery here. This is exactly the reason why the fathers made it very plain that this God "Who worketh all things after the counsel of His will" is yet in no way the cause of sin or the Author of sin, (the very thought of which is blasphemy). There is here a problem which we are not able to resolve, and we ought to be ready to acknowledge this. If we are only concerned with what may be called our academic conscience and about whether we will be accepted by the academic theological community around us, then we are in trouble at this point, but then I am sure that we are in trouble already long before we get to this point. The attempt to escape from this problem always results in some kind of reduction in the scope of God's decree or a re-definition of God and His place in our world. It is amazing what we will sometimes try to do in order to satisfy the demands of our own rationalism.

The creeds recognize the problem and Reformed theology has always been aware of it. God decrees everything and whatsoever comes to pass. With respect to sin and unbelief we have made use of the term "permissive decree." It may not be the best term possible but it is nevertheless used to clearly indicate that God who controls and directs all things is not the responsible Author or Cause of sin, evil, unbelief and wickedness.

The Gravamen's Target Is The Gospel

The gravamen seeks to establish the idea that there is something in this world which does not proceed from the decree of God. If the initial and continuing unbelief and sin of ungodly men does not proceed from the decree of God, then, pray tell, what does it proceed from. If we believe that there is something over which God has no control and in respect to which He is a powerless or disinterested observer, then we have reduced our God so that He is far too small to be of any real comfort and consolation to us. If there is something over which God has no control, then we can never be sure that He has control over anything. If God does not work all things after the counsel of His will then we can no longer be sure that He in fact has any control over those sparrows on the housetops and those hairs on our head. If indeed such be the case then our God is too small and we live in a world in which there is finally no assurance and no comfort for us. We will then also have to change Article 13 of the Belgic Confession which declares that "nothing happens in this world without His appointment." We will have to change Lord's Day 10 of the Heidelberg which speaks of "The almighty and everywhere present power of God, whereby, as it were by His hand, He still upholds heaven, earth and all creatures, and so governs them that herbs and grass, rain and drought, fruitful and barren years, food and drink, health and sickness, riches and poverty, yea, all things, come not by chance but by His fatherly hand." This same Lord's Day declares that "all creatures are so in His hand that without His will they cannot so much as move."

Now we can't have it both ways. Either God controls all things or else He doesn't.

To prevent possible misunderstanding let it be emphasized again that after Article 13 of the Belgic Confession states that "nothing happens in this world without His appointment," it goes on at once to say that "nevertheless God neither is the Author of nor can be charged with the sins which are committed. For His power and goodness are so great and incomprehensible that He orders and executes His work in the most excellent and just manner, even then when devils and wicked men act unjustly." The Belgic concludes this article with an admonition which is appropriate to us as a denomination today when it says, "And as to what He does surpassing human understanding, we will not curiously inquire into farther than our capacity will admit of; but with the greatest humility and reverence adore the righteous judgments of God, which are hid from us, contenting ourselves that we are pupils of Christ, to learn only those things which He has revealed to us in His Word, without transgressing these limits."

If we fall prey to rationalism because in our modern theological world we refuse to bear the reproach which comes with humble obedience to the Word of God, then we will have no one to blame but ourselves when sooner or later we have nothing to say any more for the comforting and strengthening of God's people who must travel with us thru this

vale of tears. We had better not be too surprised when the good people of God don't listen to us any more because we have nothing relevant to say.

The "Freedom of God"

Parenthetically here it may be said that there is a concern on the part of some to preserve the "freedom of God," as if this freedom is indeed in any need of being preserved by us. It ought to be declared that only with a proper understanding of the decree of God can the whole of the freedom of God be acknowledged. God is free exactly to fore-ordain everything and whatsoever comes to pass and only in that action is God free. If we deny the all — en-

compassing scope of the decree of God and reduce its unconditional character by even a little bit, then we rob God of his freedom. If God can only react to the actions of men, then God is not free. God is only free when He rules and governs them according to His holy will, so that nothing happens in this world without His appointment. Many of these ill-conceived concerns about the freedom of God are I fear, conceived in Germany, transported to Amsterdam, brought to the United States for a fuller development and finally brought to the light of day among us. I am rather sure that the God of light laughs when he sees the product. ☉

(To be continued)

Reformed Women Speak

FAMILY PLANNING

Laurie Vanden Heuvel

Image-Bearers

When God made man He did not make him a robot, a mechanical man who could perform tasks automatically at the push of a button. Nor did God make a wax figure with the appearance of flesh but void of mental or physical power. When God decided to make man, He said, "Let us make man in our *image*, in our likeness, and let them *rule* — over fish . . . birds . . . livestock . . . *all* the earth . . . *all* the creatures." So it was that man was made in God's *image*.

In man's unfallen state, the image of God was refracted in many ways. *Physically*, man alone among the creatures possessed a will, emotions and the power of reason. *Spiritually* man was endowed with *true knowledge*, the ability to see reality *truly*, not "through a glass darkly" as the apostle Paul later describes man's impaired vision. Man was also endowed with *righteousness* — a right, unbroken relationship with God. He "walked and talked" with God. Man was also endowed with *holiness* — the ability to live a sinless life.

We all know the tragic story. Man disobeyed his Maker and although he retained a remnant of the image of God physically, he lost it spiritually. Although he retained the abilities to reason, to feel and to will, the perfection and direction of these functions was changed and man became a lover of self rather than a lover of God. Spiritually man was *dead*. He lost true knowledge, righteousness and holiness. He was doomed.

But, God in His unmeasurable love and grace came to doomed man. He took that dead prism called

man and promised that someday He would send a Savior who would not only rescue man from hell, but would also *infuse* that dead prism called man with *light*, Christ the Light of the world, so that once more that man could be what he was made to be — an image-bearer of God in all its variety of meanings and ways. The restoration of the *image of God* comes to all true believers and will culminate in perfection some day in heaven when we meet our Maker and Redeemer "face to face."

Meanwhile on the earth we have the privilege and duty to seek the restoration of that image of God in our own lives and the lives of our children.

"Image" is a word that has many different shades of meaning. An image can be a *carving*. The second commandment instructs us not to make a graven (carved) image as the object of worship. Carved images are usually cut from wood, stone or marble.

An "image" can also mean a *copy*. When we examine a painting that an artist has done of a certain person, we may well exclaim, "That's a perfect *image* of him."

"Image" can also mean a *reflection*. When you look in a mirror, you see your *image*. It is thrown back to you and is a *reflection* of the real you.

"Image" can also be a *thought*. Sometimes we say, "I can see her in my *mind's eye*. I have a *mental image* of her."

An "image" can also be an *impression*. Communities have an image. Some have an image of neatness, others an image of messiness. Right now, citizens are concerned about our nation's image abroad. Is it high (respect) or is it low (disrespect)? News analysts and future presidential hopefuls are suggesting that perhaps it is because of our "low image" that Iran has seized the hostages and Russia has invaded Afghanistan. Every human being is concerned about his or her now personal image — dress, personality, lifestyle and achievements.

God has an *image* too — you and me and our children. We are His advertisements to the world. Join us next month as we discover what He expects of us as image-bearers — His carving, His copy, His reflection, His thought, and His impression.

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LESSONS FROM GENESIS 1 TO 11

Henry Vander Kam

Lesson 15

Genesis 9:18-29

NOAH AND HIS SONS AFTER THE FLOOD

Noah, because of his faith, was the greatest man of his day. He was obedient to the divine commandment to build an ark. He condemned the ungodly men of his day by his obedience to God's commands. His is an honored place among the heroes of faith in Hebrews 11.

The world had been cleansed from the wickedness of men and a righteous man with his family were now the only inhabitants of the earth. But, though Noah was heroic in his faith during the years of crisis, this strength of faith is not unbroken in the comparatively peaceful time after the flood. The Scriptures never idolize the saints of God but show their weaknesses as well as their strengths. Each one's life loudly proclaims Paul's statement: "By grace are ye saved through faith . . . and not of yourselves."

The writer once more calls our attention to the fact that Noah and three sons came forth out of the ark and the names of the sons are repeated once more. Whether Noah had more children later is not mentioned. The three who are mentioned are the ones from whom the whole earth will be populated. Special mention is made of the fact that Ham is the father of Canaan to make the following verses understandable.

Noah's drunkenness — Now that the earth is dried the natural labors of man must be taken up again. Noah "began to be a husbandman" which simply means that he began to till the soil again so that there might be food to eat. Cain had already engaged in this type of work and, no doubt, this was the occupation of the majority in the early history of man. Not only does he till the soil for the production of food, he also planted a vineyard.

The process of making wine is already known to Noah and he drank of the wine. This *in itself* is not evil and we read no word of condemnation here. *But*, he drank to excess "and was drunken." Drunkenness is always condemned in the Scriptures and the following verses make it clear that this act of his has results which span generations and ages.

This man Noah who had stood so strong during all the many years the ark was being built; this man who had worshiped his God with sacrifices when he left the ark; this man who had received the glorious

promises of God after the flood; this man now, in the comparative safety of his own home, falls into grievous sin!

Contrast in reactions of Noah's sons — In his drunkenness Noah lies uncovered in his tent. The sense of shame has been removed by his drunken state. His son, Ham, comes into the tent and see the nakedness of his father and, according to the original, takes delight in seeing his father in that state and in telling it to his brothers. He gives evidence of an immoral attitude. There are those who believe that Ham engages in more sinful actions and refer to the words which are written in verse 24 that Noah "...knew what his youngest son had done unto him." However, the text makes mention of nothing further than that he had seen the nakedness of his father and had spoken of it to his brothers. This sin is serious enough.

The brothers Shem and Japheth reveal a far different attitude. They do not delight in the sin of their father, but cover him and make certain that they do not see his nakedness by walking backward into the tent with a garment on their shoulders and so cover his nakedness. No words are recorded that they condemned the attitude of Ham but their actions certainly condemn his. They have respect for their father even though he is drunk! Noah's actions do not merit the respect of others but he is still their father.

Curse on Canaan — When Noah "awoke" he realized what had happened. All kinds of fanciful explanations have been sought for this. Some even wonder whether this knowledge came by special revelation(!). Surely, the man is able to see that he is now covered in a way which was different from the way he had fallen into this "sleep." He may also have inquired concerning the actions of Ham. Ham is here called "his youngest son." This does not agree with the order in which his sons are always named. Remember, the Hebrew has neither a comparative nor superlative degree and these words may refer to him as the "small one" or as younger than Shem.

The words which are uttered by Noah when he realizes what has taken place are first of all called a curse. The latter words are words of blessing. They are spoken by the father of these sons but also by the head of the human race at this time. They are not to be understood as pronouncing vengeance on the one who has committed this sin against him but, rather, a prophetic word concerning the future. We must remember that a father and grandfather is speaking here who has no desire to pronounce curses on the members of his own family. However, the Spirit of God lays hold on him to speak the prophetic word for the times to come. This makes this passage so important for the understanding of later history. The following chapter reveals "the generations of the sons of Noah"; the key to the understanding of the history of these families is found in the words which Noah utters here. That history hasn't just "happened" but it developed according to the curse and blessing uttered by Noah. Noah speaks prophetically, i.e., the word of God, and the future history shows that His word always stands!

It seems strange that the curse is pronounced on Canaan, the son of Ham, even though it is his father who has committed the sin. Why is this? Some have thought that the same attitude was found in Canaan which was shown by his father Ham. Yet, the text doesn't make mention of this at all. In the following chapter we are told that Ham had at least four sons. One of these receives the curse. The whole family of Ham is not cursed — but only one fourth! By this very fact the curse which is pronounced is restricted. Not one third of the population of the world will lie under the curse, but a much smaller fraction.

The question as to the nature of this curse must also be considered. For many years there was an interpretation found in certain circles that it was essentially the curse of slavery pronounced on the black race. There is no proof for this kind of interpretation whatsoever. In fact, the following chapter makes it very clear that this is an impossible interpretation (10:15-19). The curse which is pronounced on Canaan is that he will be "a servant of servants" to his brothers. This is the Hebrew way of expressing the superlative. He will be completely enslaved to his brothers. It seems as though the word "brethren" must be taken in a very restricted sense, i.e., his own blood brothers, because his servanthood toward Shem and Japheth is described in a different way. Canaan became the father of those nations which inhabited Palestine and surrounding areas in later times. These peoples were conquered by the Israelites under Moses and Joshua. When the "iniquity of the Canaanites was full" the curse pronounced here had run its course.

Blessings on Shem and Japheth — Not only does Noah pronounce a curse on Canaan on this occasion, his prophetic view also includes the families of his other sons. Blessings are pronounced on Shem and Japheth.

The blessing on Shem and his generations is given in a strange way. In fact, the blessing is not pronounced on Shem directly but we read: "Blessed be Jehovah, the God of Shem." These words are intended, however, to show, in contrast to Ham, that Shem will be blessed. It is noteworthy that the name "Jehovah" is used in this connection. We must be careful not to read into this name all that it is shown to mean in later times, but we may also not deal with this text as though this name did not appear. It seems to reveal here that Shem will stand in a very close personal relationship with his God. He is and will be the God of Shem. All the blessings which he and his posterity will receive are to be found in their close association with their God. Canaan will be father to those who worship idols and oppose the people of God. Shem will be father to those who are God's people. The seed of the woman promised in Genesis 3:15 is beginning to be clarified and will be made clearer as history unfolds.

Canaan will be the servant of Shem. God will be served of those who oppose Him and His people. The various peoples of Canaan will not be able to stand when Israel, a people enslaved for hundreds of years and wanderers in the wilderness for eighty years, comes to take the land of Canaan!

Shem becomes the father of the Semitic people and Japheth of such people as the Medes and the Greeks etc. Only one of the two can become the father of those who will later form the people of God; but a blessing is also given to Japheth and it is a blessing which may not be minimized. First of all, God will enlarge Japheth so that he will greatly increase in number. The numerous offspring is always considered a great favor of God in Biblical times. He will dwell in the tents of Shem, which does not mean that he will take space away from Shem, but that, somehow he will thus share in the blessing of Shem! Later God's blessing will rest primarily on His people, Israel, but is it too much to say already at this early date that the descendants of Japheth, though not Israel, will share in the blessing promised to His people? This aspect, of course, is not fully realized until New Testament times. Noah's prophetic vision is broad and deep and glorious!

Canaan will also be servant to Japheth and his posterity. All the people beyond the borders of Israel will not be dealt with in the same way. Canaan will be in servitude to Japheth as well as Shem.

Noah's further life — The chapter closes with the information that Noah lived another three hundred and fifty years after the flood began. His life was one of the longest on record — 950 years! Some believe that he lived until the time of Abraham but this cannot be said with certainty. Noah was one of the greatest men who ever lived — but, he died. He experienced marvelous salvation and spoke of future glory, but didn't live to see it.

Questions for discussion:

1. Wine and its use is not condemned in Scripture (see Psalm 104:15). Is it, nevertheless, better to leave it alone? Drunkenness is condemned in Scripture. Is there a relationship between drunkenness and alcoholism?
2. Why was the sin of Ham so grievous?
3. Do the curses and/or blessing of parents always have an effect? Explain.
4. Why is Canaan cursed rather than Ham? Is this not a violation of the principle that a son shall not be punished for the sins of the father?
5. Has God favored certain nations outside of Israel — even in Old Testament times?



Lesson 16

Genesis 11:1-9

THE TOWER OF BABEL

The Bible does not intend to give us a complete history of the earliest times but gives us those items of history which are necessary to know in order to be able to understand His revelation given at later times. Thus, the history of creation, of the fall into sin, and of the great flood are recorded. Then in chapters five and ten the generations of Adam and of Noah are recorded so that later generations will be able to see the connection between the one age and the other. There is yet one more episode which must be recorded because it has meaning for all men in later times and because it has tremendous impor-

tance for His people. Only the Bible gives us the history of the confusion of tongues.

One language — We can well understand the words found in the first verse of this chapter that the whole world (of men) spoke the same language. This was true before the flood and nothing had happened to change this situation until this moment.

Men, no doubt, spoke the same language from the days of Adam until the time of the tower of Babel. The statement is made here so that we will be able to understand the things which are about to be revealed.

Land of Shinar — From the time the ark had rested on the mountains of Ararat the people had journeyed in an easterly direction. When the Hebrew speaks of going "east" it also includes our more specific directions of "southeast" or "northeast." But the place from which it is reckoned is Ararat. They find a sizeable plain in the land "Shinar," the later Babylon, and that is the place where they now make their home. This is a tremendously fertile land and is well able to produce the food which is necessary for the population of that day. We do not know how many years had elapsed since the flood, but it is safe to say that a considerable amount of time lies between the flood and the Tower of Babel.

Not only is this plain of Shinar a land which is well able to support its inhabitants but it also has other resources which the people had not found before. The clay found in this region is fit for the making of brick. This is a building material which enables them to do things which could never be done with the natural stones found in many other places. Besides, this region has a bituminous product which can be used as mortar to bind the bricks together. They have discovered the method of baking the clay so that a useable brick could be made. The writer describes their intention in a very lively way when we hear them say to each other: "Come let us make brick" . . . and . . . "Come let us build!"

Motivation for Babel — The enormous undertaking of building a city and a tower is motivated by the desire to make a name for themselves and to keep the people together. The city which they intend to build will have to be large if it is to accommodate all the people on the earth at that time. But, the purpose is worth the effort, in their estimation.

To show that they are not "thinking small" they intend to build a tower "whose top may reach unto heaven"! Such building will insure a name for themselves. The tower is to be so high that it will be visible to anyone who might otherwise lose himself as he wandered from the city. When they speak of the height of that tower as being so great that it may reach heaven they are simply speaking of enormous height so that its top seems to touch the heavens much as the tops of the mountains also seem to reach such heights. They do not want to be scattered because "in unity is strength." Being scattered and making a name for ourselves are mutually contradictory. Only by staying together in one large city will they be able to make this name for themselves.

Divine disapproval — We now read that "Jehovah came down to see the city and the tower." This is an anthropomorphism (a human way of speaking) because God is everywhere present. It emphasizes the fact that God takes note of the intentions of men and their deeds. The impression is left that men had already built a sizeable part of both the city and the tower before God intervenes. Man is determined to carry out his intentions. He has not sought God's approval before he began because he did not intend to glorify his God by his building but to make a name for himself!

The divine disapproval is immediately evident. They are one people and have one language. They have gone so far and from now on nothing will be withheld from them. But why is this so bad? The drastic measures to be taken, from which man has not recovered till the present day, must certainly have sufficient reason. The importance of this historic event can be seen only in the light of that which God had revealed before.

God has His own people on the earth — especially in the generations of Shem. He told Adam and Eve that He would set enmity between the seed of the woman and the seed of the serpent. This would be the only way by which the seed of the woman would be able to continue. But now — they are one people, the seed of Shem and the seed of Ham are almost indistinguishable! This will be the undoing of the seed of the woman. The "enmity" which He has set between believer and unbeliever must be recognized and maintained. The "oneness" of mankind causes men to seek to make a name for themselves; the enmity between believers and unbelievers makes room for the salvation of His people!

By their striving for unity and the attempt to keep them all together so that they will not be scattered over the earth, men are going directly contrary to the command God gave both to Adam and to Noah. Man was to be fruitful, to multiply, and to replenish the earth. Man was to bring the whole earth in subjection and he was to rule over the whole earth. This cannot be accomplished if men all stay together in one place.

When the words are added that nothing will be withheld from them which they may purpose to do, it becomes evident that, if they are successful in the building of this city and tower, they will go on to ever greater sin. If *their purpose* is realized, the *purposes of God* will be ignored. Man's sin had become so great before the days of the flood that God had wiped out the human race with the exception of Noah and his family. God had promised never to visit such devastation on man again. However, the direction man is taking here at Babel will bring about conditions as bad or worse than those before the flood. Man must be stopped *now* in his attempt to ruin himself.

God's method — The method which God chooses to thwart man's purpose is unexpected but most effective. He does not destroy that part of the building which they have erected. His method will not only accomplish the immediate purpose He has in mind but will have its effect as long as the world

stands. He confuses their speech! They have been one people bound together by a single language. God attacks them in the bond which bound them together. No longer are they able to understand each other. Now there is no possibility of remaining together and, far less, to finish the building which they have begun. "So Jehovah scattered them abroad from thence upon the face of all the earth."

So effective is the deed which God performed that this difference of language has plagued man ever since that time. Oh, there is the possibility of learning more than one language, but this does not bridge the chasm which He has made between the various peoples of the earth. The culture and civilization of each people has developed independently of others. Not only can the other's language not be understood, his thought-patterns are also not understandable. All the attempts which have been made through the centuries to get the peoples of the world together have met with utter failure. It is noteworthy that on Pentecost the disciples of the Lord "began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance." Only the gospel overcomes Babel.

God's purpose — They, of course, left off building the city. There is no longer the possibility of working together for a common purpose. God did not destroy the work in which they were engaged, but allows that to stand as a memorial to their folly! Today, guides still point out to visitors the ruins which are believed to be the partial building of Babel.

The name itself, says the sacred writer, is significant. The name Babel, in the Hebrew, means confusion. God has so completely confused the speech of

man that he is no longer able to live with those he doesn't understand. How this confusion took place is not stated. Some believe it affected the hearing while others believe it affected the speech organs. This is of no importance. God accomplished His purpose and effectively scattered men over the face of the earth as He had told them to do from the beginning.

So ends the early history of the world until Abraham will be chosen as the father of all those who believe. This history is indispensable for the understanding of all that follows in the Scriptures. If the historicity of these first eleven chapters of Genesis is denied we have no assurance concerning the truth of the rest of the Scriptures. But, it is history and we are indebted to the Bible alone to make known to us His mighty acts since the beginning of time!

Questions for discussion:

1. The confusion of tongues has brought many problems into the world. Has it solved more problems than it has created?
2. Would the church be able to stand if the rest of the world were united? Explain.
3. Should we favor the attempts (League of Nations, United Nations) to unite the peoples of the world?
4. Does this passage show that the preservation of God's people is the most important thing in the world's history?
5. Will the whole world ever be united? When? What will then happen to the people of God?
6. Why can there be a unity in the church but not in the world? Cf. also this writer's seventh lesson in the series: Signs of the Times. ●

Meditation

Jesus' Acquaintances at the Cross

John Blankespoor

But all those who knew Him, including the women who had followed Him from Galilee, stood at a distance, watching these things.

Luke 23:49

The day has almost come to a close. One of the greatest days of history. It began during the night in Gethsemane. So much has taken place since then. Gethsemane, the trials, mockings, crucifixion, Christ speaking the seven cross words, the earthquake and darkness. And just now He has died. This was the end of the "drama." So people thought.

We read of three things here. Of the centurion who perhaps shook his head when he praised God and said that surely this was a righteous man. Then we read about the multitudes, the masses. They

beat their breasts and left. It's all over with now. And then we read about those who knew Him. They stood at a distance watching all that was taking place.

Who were they? We do read of the women, who had traveled with Him, served Him and showed a deep love for the Master. But there are also others. No doubt they, too, loved Him, had heard Him and seen His works. Perhaps there were some who had been healed. At any rate, it must have been a small group, or even a sizeable group, standing afar, watching everything very intently.

They stood at a distance, we read. Not too close by, and yet not so far away that they couldn't see what was happening. Neither did they leave. They remained standing. And the idea is that they continued to stand.

Our first reaction is to say that this was nice, it was beautiful. They loved Him. They are described as people who knew Him. Knowing, true knowing always implies love. If one knows the Lord, truly, He knows Him in the fellowship of love, with mind and heart. True knowledge and friendship always go together. People whom we know best, in love, are people with whom we have much contact. They are our friends. And surely when special occasions arise and

our friends suffer, we show this love. And so these people are here. They are glued to the ground, as it were. They just have to see what is going on. They have been here a long time already.

But the strange thing is that they keep their distance. Only the apostle John and Mary, Jesus' mother, come near the cross. They are the exceptions. The rest are there but stand afar off. Do they really know Him and can they be classified as such? Likely here are some of the disciples who have been with Him during most of His ministry. What lessons they have learned, and how much they have seen, heard, and experienced as the very Son of God lived with them? Quite probably Martha and Mary are here. And how they loved Him! Surely they know Jesus, their friend and Master! At least they claim that they know Him. But why then stand at a distance? Is this the way we treat people whom we really know in love?

Why this kind of action? They could have done two things, either come close to the cross and show their real love for Him, or they could have left Him. But no, they stay there, but *at a distance*. Were they afraid of the Jews and soldiers? Other people were not. Why should they be?

The real answer for this bizarre action is that they were ashamed of Him. Had Jesus not predicted that they would all be offended in Him? And didn't John write later that even His own received Him not?

We must make a distinction here. They loved Him dearly, from the bottom of their hearts. He was their beloved Master. The women had also proven this again and again in going with Him on His journeys and serving Him. We would say, they served Him "hand and foot." That same love they showed after He died, intending to anoint His dead body with pounds of costly perfumes and ointments.

John says that perfect love drives out fear. If we really love someone we are not afraid to show it. But here it is different. That cross, O that cross. It just doesn't fit into the picture at all. In fact, that is exactly what does not fit in this big divine jigsaw puzzle. They want a Savior without the cross. The same problem we see in the case of the Emmaus travelers. How puzzled they are! That cross doesn't fit into the picture of His work and miracles and Messianic program. And that He went willingly! When He gave Himself in the garden, and Peter was told to put aside his sword, *then* they all forsook Him and fled. He will give Himself as an offering for many, going the way of the cross.

And so they stand here, no doubt talking, discussing, wondering, questioning the whole matter. It's all such a big riddle and problem. How they love Him. But they really don't know Him. They know and love Him as a person, but really don't know Him as the Messiah and Savior. They know Him as such a noble man, but not really as the Son of Man.

All this, too, spelled much suffering for Christ.

To be a stranger in the midst of strangers is to be expected, and nothing new. But to be a stranger in

the midst of your own people and in the midst of the inner circle of friends, that hurts. It must have hurt deeply. A stranger He was even to His own mother, who loved Him so much and had nursed Him and cared for Him with deep motherly love.

Down deep the disciples, too, must have felt that there was something different about Him. In His walk and conversation He was different. His speech was different, His actions and way of life were so different. He was known to them, and yet not known. How they had hoped that He would be the promised One, establishing an earthly kingdom. But how different He was. Why did He have to "antagonize" the leaders and elders of the church? Why didn't He try to please them, at least when He could. So they looked at it. At one time His family actually tried to take Him home, considering Him to be unfit, or a misfit in society. He was out of His mind, they thought. They better lock Him up at home. And now on the cross! And that willingly! Not once did He try to prevent this, knowing that He had the power to do this. He even claimed that at any time he could call in the help of 12 legions of angels. A legion was considered to be about 6,000. Think of what one angel did with 185,000 Assyrians in the days of Hezekiah. But here, no angels are asked to help Him. Instead, their loved one hangs on this accursed cross. Willingly. This they don't understand at all!

No, they really don't know Him. He is a stranger to His brethren and to all people. Why? Because no one understands the wisdom of God, the way of the cross. It is foolishness to the natural man, and even to His people at this time. What God has prepared for His people, with the cross and all of salvation, is something which no eye has seen, no ear has heard it, nor has it arisen in the heart of any man.

And so they stand there at a distance. They love Him, but really don't know Him or the meaning of the cross. But Christ as the Son of God continues to go this way alone, which is a dark and lonely way. Indeed, the man of sorrows!

But thanks be to God. Even though they don't really know Him, God knows His own. Because of this eternal foreknowledge of love, He sent His Son to make the atonement on the cross. And with the Spirit of Pentecost we see the meaning of it all, the why and the wherefore of the cross. And we learn to know ourselves, as sinners. Then the cross fits perfectly into the picture. Then we also learn to know the place and meaning of the cross for us. And we learn to know that wonderful Savior, know Him from the heart, with the knowledge of love.

Then we don't remain standing at a distance. Instead, we come close to that cross. We bow before it every day. We cling to it. We sing, Jesus keep me near that cross. We know that the payment on that cross has infinite value. He paid for the sins of His people, once and for all.

Now I can sing:

O the love that drew salvation's plan
O the grace that brought it down to man
O the mighty gulf that God did span
At Calvary!

VERHEY CASE TO BE APPEALED

The Dutton Consistory, having shown that the expressed views of Dr. Allen Verhey "are in conflict with Scripture, our Confessions and Form of Subscription and the decisions of our synod" appealed to the 1979 Synod "to declare that this method of interpreting and using the Bible is not to be tolerated in the Christian Reformed Churches and to take whatever measures may be needed to prevent its being preached and taught by Dr. Verhey as a minister in our churches" (*Acts* 1979, pp. 740-745, Appeal #32).

The consistory, having considered the synod's decisions on the appeal is convinced that that appeal has been illegally, incompletely and inadequately dealt with and, considering that the matter is of sufficient importance to the welfare of our churches, appeals to the Synod of 1980 to rectify and complete the unfinished resolution of this matter (Art. 84, pp. 91-97).

Grounds:

1. Article 30 of the Church Order states that "Assemblies and church members may appeal to the assembly next in order if they believe that injustice has been done or that a decision conflicts with the Word of God or the *Church Order*." Since the matter was acknowledged as properly before the Synod of 1979, we believe that "the assembly next in order" to which appeal must be made to rectify deficiencies in the 1979 decisions is the Synod of 1980.

2. The first decision which the Synod took on the matter was irrelevant to our appeal and was taken in violation of the Synod's own rule:

2. A main motion is not acceptable under the following conditions:

c. If it is verbally or substantially the same as a motion already rejected by the Synod . . .

Rules for Synodical Procedure, p. 13, VII Rules of Order, B, 2, c.,

Notice that Recommendation D, 2 (p. 95 *Acts*) which carried was "substantially" and for the most part also "verbally" "the same as" D, 1, which had been "already rejected by the Synod."

3. The Synod in its Recommendation 3 (p. 96) acknowledged that Dr. Verhey's method as he applies it is objectionable, but limited its criticism to merely "some aspects" of his method. But Dr. Verhey's own defense of his views states clearly that what is at issue is not merely "some aspects of his method," or as, the committee said, some "detail which is questioned." He wrote (*Acts* 1979, p. 656)

Incidentally, I do not "except" the resurrection from this kind of investigation. Indeed, if this kind of investigation demonstrated that Jesus had not been raised, I would become a Jew. The gospels stake their case on history, after all. But such an investigation, while it cannot "prove" God took Jesus from the dead, clearly

demonstrates it is not historically unreasonable to accept such a claim.

Notice that in the application of this method even the resurrection is made historically debatable.

4. The 1979 Synod's treatment of the matter ignored the material which we cited from Dr. Verhey's thesis (pp. 742, 743) presumably because, as Dr. Verhey suggested, it was irrelevant. That material from the thesis clearly demonstrates that Dr. Verhey in applying his method contradicts Article VII of the Belgic Confession on THE SUFFICIENCY OF THE HOLY SCRIPTURE TO BE THE ONLY RULE OF FAITH, the "sola scriptura" teaching which he in the thesis repeatedly criticizes. His thesis also abundantly demonstrates that the application of Dr. Verhey's view to moral matters makes every application of the Bible to man's moral decisions subject to the veto of man's own experience.

5. The 1979 Synod later in its sessions reaffirmed decisions taken by previous synods regarding the inerrancy of the Bible. In so doing it stated again "that it is inconsonant with the creeds to declare that there is an area of Scripture in which it is allowable to posit the possibilities of actual historical inaccuracies (cf. Belgic Confession, "believing without any doubt all things contained therein")" (p. 127, V, C, 1, b).

It also again "warns against the use of any method of biblical interpretation which excludes or calls into question either the event character or revelational meaning of biblical history" (p. 128, d). Yet this same synod in the case we appealed to it took no effective action to maintain these decisions.

6. The Synod's treatment of our appeal fails to take the requested action, to prevent the objectionable method of interpreting and using the Bible from being preached and taught in our churches. Furthermore, the Synod's decision provided for no follow-up on its advice. In merely urging Dr. Verhey to reexamine his method under the guidance of the Neland Consistory and in consultation with Reformed theologians, and advising him to speak cautiously in presenting diverging interpretations and demonstrate their harmony with our creeds (pp. 96, 97, items 4 and 5) it was taking no effective action. In fact, its decision is being interpreted as tolerating his views. As the Press reported "Synod Allows Minister His Debatable Views" (Headline, G.R. Press June 21, 1979).

In view of the increasing prevalence of views such as these among us, we appeal to the Synod of 1980 "to declare that this method of interpreting and using the Bible is not to be tolerated in the Christian Reformed Churches and to take whatever measures may be needed to prevent its being preached and taught by Dr. Verhey as a minister in our churches." ●

SPOTLIGHTING THE ISSUES

Peter De Jong

Two kinds of controversies trouble Christian churches. There are differences of opinion over minor matters which must be adjusted and accommodated in a spirit of patience and forbearance. There are also controversies that concern the essence and character of the Christian faith which must be resolved by correction and discipline if the faith is to be preserved.

John Calvin in his *Institutes* (IV, I, 12) pointed out this distinction: "For not all the articles of true doctrine are of the same sort. Some are so necessary to know that they should be certain and unquestioned by all men as the proper principles of religion." "Among the churches there are other articles of doctrine disputed which still do not break the unity of faith." Although "we should agree on all points," "since all men are somewhat beclouded with ignorance, either we must leave no church remaining or we must condone delusion in those matters which can go unknown without harm to the sum of religion and without loss of salvation." Although he "would not support even the slightest errors," he was also convinced that "we must not thoughtlessly forsake the church because of any petty dissensions."

While in our present Reformed world many are suggesting that we dismiss the multiplying controversies as "petty dissensions," it becomes increasingly apparent that underlying many of them are differences of belief that threaten the character and essence of the Christian faith.

This state of affairs is not new, although its appearance among us may seem so. It has perhaps never been more clearly described than it was a half-century ago by J. Gresham Machen in his *Christianity and Liberalism*. Machen pointed out that within the churches two totally different kinds of religion were in conflict. He saw "the great redemptive religion . . . Christianity . . . battling against a totally diverse type of religious belief, which is only the more destructive of the Christian faith because it makes use of traditional terminology" (p. 2). In 1958

J.I. Packer, looking at inter-church relations, called attention to the same rift between different faiths. "Christian bodies of all sorts are constantly urged to come together, sink their differences and present a united front . . . It is taken for granted that the differences in question are small and trifling — unsightly little cracks on the surface of an otherwise solid wall. But this assumption is false. Not all the cracks are mere superficial disfigurements; some of them are the outward signs of lack of structural integration. The wall is cracked because it is not all built on the same foundation. The more one probes the differences between Roman and Protestant, Liberal and Evangelical, the deeper they prove to be; beneath the cracks on the surface lie fissures which run down to the very foundations, broadening as they go. Nothing is gained just by trying to cement up the cracks; that only encourages the collapse of the entire wall. Sham unity is not worth working for, and real unity, that fellowship of love in the truth which Christ prayed that His disciples might enjoy (Jn. 17:17-23), will come only as those sections of the wall which rest on unsound foundations are dismantled and rebuilt" (*Fundamentalism and the Word of God*, p. 45). Dr. Packer's observation clearly expresses what is also the growing conviction of the Reformed Fellowship's Board about the nature of the problems which currently trouble especially our Christian Reformed Churches. That Board has expressed the desire that we in a series of short articles try to serve the welfare of those churches by more sharply focusing attention on basic issues which trouble them. Let us try to do this by presenting side-by-side (1) the historic, Biblical, Reformed view and (2) the emerging, changing, broadening view held by an increasing number in our churches, regarding some basic matters. Even trying to set forth the issues in this way calls attention to a basic issue under dispute, the question whether there really is such a difference or "antithesis" as we are suggesting at all.

I The Nature of the Problem: The Biblical Antithesis

(1) THE BIBLICAL, REFORMED VIEW:

God directly and clearly reveals himself and shows that in opposition to Him the devil has initiated a revolt. As God continues His Self-revelation His truth is opposed to the devil's lie, His right is opposed to the devil's wrong. This "antithesis" is not a "foreign" intellectualistic import into the Christian faith from Greek sources, as has been alleged, but is the teaching of the Bible from Genesis to Revelation. The Bible teaches us to understand history as the battle-ground between the Lord and the devil. 1 John especially stresses this antithesis between light and darkness, truth and the lie, in both faith and life (1 John 1:5, 6; 2:21, "no lie is of the truth"; 3:8 "To this end

(2) THE BROADENING VIEW:

The notion of such a black or white distinction of true against false, right against wrong is antiquated and simplistic. It arises out of a mistaken, scholastic, intellectualistic, static notion of truth as something that can be fixed in words or propositions, which has today been discarded. In our time we understand truth as functional, dynamic, and relational (or "covenantal"), concerning action rather than words. Although God reveals Himself, that revelation is neither direct, clear nor complete; it is in process, and by no means limited to "Christians"; His truth is everywhere and we must learn from dialog with those of differing views, seeking as a "redemptive," "healing," "recon-

was the Son of God manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil," 4:1-6; 5:19-21, "... the whole world lieth in the evil one. And we know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding, that we know him that is true, and are in him that is true, even in his Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God and eternal life. My little children, guard yourselves from idols."

ciling" community to cooperate wherever possible with others to seek the good of all. ●

LET THE CHURCH BE CHURCH

I "believe" one church (1)

Peter De Jong

*In 1960 Prof. C. Veenhof of the Reformed Theological Seminary in Kampen, the Netherlands, wrote a book entitled *Om kerk te blijven*. It dealt largely with the ecclesiastical difficulties in the "Gereformeerde Kerken" in that country which led to division, disciplinary measures, and the disruption of that denomination.*

To that book he added an "epilogue" wherein he sets forth impressively the sound Reformed view of what it means to be truly church in these times; words of instruction and warning and comfort which all of us do well to heed. Here we present to our readers a somewhat free translation of the epilogue with the prayer that it may help us to find our way as confessional Reformed churches in Canada and the United States in the problems and perplexities which disturb our souls.

Peter Y. De Jong, translator

A Matter of Faith

When the *Heidelberg Catechism* introduces the subject of the church, it asks "What do you *believe* concerning the holy, catholic, Christian church?"

This question is decisive for all that follows.

Here the *Catechism* is not inquiring into "ideas" or "opinions" or "theories" which we may have formed and presented about the church; it asks about our *faith*. It asks what we have heard from God's Word about the church and on that basis as divine truth what we have accepted with all our heart. For it is only by faith that we can know and see the true church.

The fact that we *believe* the church includes much.

First of all, this implies that with our entire existence and throughout our entire life we are involved with and remain in the church. Faith with respect of the church differs radically from a purely intellectual knowledge about the church. This is of

very little value. Rather, faith with respect to the church consists of the sure knowledge that, despite all evidence to the contrary, Jesus Christ incorporates into His body all those whom the Father has given to Him and makes them to be His congregation, His church. It also includes the assurance that we are and always shall remain living members of the same. In addition it demands no less than that we live *in* and *for* and *with* the church; always ready therefore to struggle and suffer and, if need be, even to die for the church. Above all, it requires that we *serve* in the church with all that we are and possess.

Faith Opposed to Neutrality

In brief, faith concerning the church is the radical contradiction of choosing a "neutral" position which assumes the stance of an indifferent spectator. It takes sharp issue with all manipulating of what God says about the church. Such activity only leads us into the mists of error and makes us unfit for fulfilling our ecclesiastical calling; indeed, it causes us to mutilate and ruin the church.

Authority Opposed to Proofs

This fact that we *believe* the church signifies also that what we now learn from Scripture as divine truth about the church brings with it no single *proof*.

When God's Word speaks about Christ's church, it lifts itself high above every level on which we operate with proofs and counterproofs. The Bible, coming to us as Holy Writ, comes principally without a single proof or commendation. "Proofs" can only violate God's Word in its divine character. When God speaks, also about the church, He always begins with the majestic: "Thus saith the Lord!" And then for us no other attitude is appropriate than that of, "Speak, Lord, for Thy servant hears."

Clearly this holds true also about all God's speaking concerning the church.

Scripture Is The Test

The church undeniably has an "empirical" aspect. It is, to be sure, a human fellowship, a social reality. But what in the last analysis makes the church to be church we can learn only from Scripture. This is a

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matter of faith. Therefore it can never be "proved" by anyone or anything.

Another implication of recognizing the church by faith alone demands that we always call only that reality God's church which He designates as such.

In this world we find associations of many kinds which adorn themselves with the title "church." But if we are at all serious about faith concerning the church, then we will continually engage in removing from our thinking anything which is unbiblical. We will test all organizations which present themselves as church by the norm, the pattern which Scripture itself presents. With respect to the church we will call everything sin which the Bible qualifies as such; for example, all false unity and every false division. We will refuse to give the name church to all that which the Lord Christ does not make to be church, which therefore is not church, and which also may never be adorned with the name church.

In this connection we call attention to one more factor.

Faith Against Sin

Because true knowledge of the church is *faith-knowledge*, it remains a stumblingblock and foolishness to the "natural man," to the "flesh." Man always rejects what God also says about His church. This happens first of all in our own heart and life. But we are under orders to resist every "natural" thought and ambition concerning the church which may spring up within us.

Frequently so much sin is found in our attitudes, our lives, our activities in the church. Sometimes it seems that the evil of the human heart breaks loose most forcefully and repulsively when the church is at stake. Here so much pride, selfishness, hard-heartedness, laxity, unfaithfulness, maneuvering, intrigue, and deception sees the light of day.

But at the same time faith with respect to the church will involve us in a struggle against all attacks from without. Especially in these days so many nice, inspiring, pious ideas and plans concerning the church are being advocated which at bottom are "carnal." These can only harm the church and must be repudiated.

What has been said can now be summarized: True, belief-ful knowledge of the church can be fulfilled (and so made fruitful) only in the ongoing battle against all sinful powers which threaten the church both from within and from without.

(To be continued)

This material of Prof. Veenhof will appear in some seven or eight instalments. To assist in group discussion the following questions are suggested.

1. What do the following texts have to say about the nature, calling and condition of Christ's church? John 15:1, 2; I Cor. 1:2; Eph. 4:4-6; I Tim. 3:15b; I Pet. 2:9, 10.
2. Which are some of our "carnal" thoughts by which we judge whether a church is truly church?
3. How does the church to which you belong demonstrate its life-union and -communion with Christ according to the Scriptures?
4. In what sense is the church one of *mysteries* of faith? Does this mean that now we can no longer really distinguish between "true" and "false" church?
5. Can you mention some examples of a false "unity" and also of a false "division" of churches in our day?

Text for the Women's Movement?

Norman De Jong

You are all sons of God through Faith in Christ Jesus, for all of you who were baptized into Christ have been clothed with Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all *one* in Christ Jesus. (Gal. 3:26-28; NIV, italics added).

A Text Becomes a Slogan

The above passage, and especially the last two verses, has been heralded by many as the "basis" for

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the new women's movement within the Christian Reformed Church. Over the past few years the familiar slogan "Gal. 3:27-28" has appeared in numerous ads, announcements, Newsletters of the Committee for Women, and in sundry articles. I say "slogan" deliberately because all too often the text itself has not been quoted. Sometimes the select phrase "neither...male nor female" has been quoted and used as a sledge hammer to drive forward the movement, implying, too, that the creational distinctions between the sexes is no longer operative.

The Text's Interest

The text in question, however, seems to be a rather inappropriate and poorly chosen foundation on which to build a movement. A passage that is supposed to lay the groundwork for the election of

women to the offices of deacon and elder should say something about church polity and office. This one is totally silent on that matter. No matter how one twists and turns the text, it simply does not address the issue.

Paul's third chapter in his letter to the Galatians is a lengthy treatise about salvation by faith, based largely on Old Testament quotations expressing the same theme. At the conclusion he reminds his readers of another theme so prominent in his epistles and so crucial to living in the heavily Greek culture in which his primary readers lived. That theme is the *oneness* or *unity* of the church. Knowing full well how Greek philosophers had mistakenly limited "one" to its numerical meaning, Paul here is using the word to refer to *unity*.

Related Passages

If we are to understand Gal. 3:28 correctly, we must see it in relation to such other Pauline passages as Romans 12:3-8, I Corinthians 12:1-31, and Ephesians 4:1-16. These are beautiful passages, powerfully and clearly illustrating how the church must function. In each case Paul uses the analogy of the human body, describing how the many parts all have different functions and yet perform as one harmonious whole. If we were to paraphrase the passage in I Cor. 12:14 & ff., forgetting the analogy, and inserting terms from the church about which Paul was really writing, it would sound something like this:

If the usher should say, 'Because I am not the choir director, I do not belong to the church,' he would not for that reason cease to be part of the church. And if the secretary should say, 'Because I am not the clerk of consistory, I do not belong to the church,' she would not for that reason cease to be part of the church. If the whole church were clerks, where would the deacons be?

The consistory cannot say to the hospital visitors, 'We don't need you,' or the minister to the children, 'We don't need you.' God has united the members of the church and has given greater honor to the persons that lacked it (those that bear the burden of decision-making, perhaps?) so that there should be no division in the church.

Later in that same passage Paul asks, rhetorically, whether all members are to be apostles, teachers, healers, or prophets. The answer, set in the context of his detailed analogy from the human body, is obvious. Although Paul did not specifically mention elders or deacons in these addresses, the answer would again be obvious if we should ask, Are all deacons? Are all elders?

In order to see how elders and deacons fit into that corporate entity which He calls His Body, we need to turn to some of Paul's other letters, notably I Timothy 3 and Titus 1. Scripture, the Reformers have long said, must be interpreted by Scripture. Understanding Timothy and Titus in the light of Romans 12, I Cor. 12, and Ephesians 4, then, is both

appropriate and necessary if we are to avoid conformity with this present society.

Biblical Qualifications for Elders

In I Tim. 3 Paul lays down a number of very specific criteria for those who would be an overseer, or bishop, or elder. Persons performing that function must be "the husband of but one wife" (v. 2); "he must manage his own family well and see that his children obey him with proper respect" (v. 4); "he must not be a recent convert" (v. 6), and "he must also have a good reputation with outsiders" (v. 7). The list of qualifications goes on, with the explicit implications that the office is to be reserved not only for adult males, but more particularly for adult males who are husbands, fathers, respected, and mature in the faith. For emphasis, it would seem, God inspired Paul to repeat the same limitations in the first chapter of the epistle to Titus, adding there a number of reasons (vs. 10-16) why these criteria were so important.

But these are not the only passages where references are made to "elders" and their role in the church. In Acts 15:23 & 25, Acts 20:30, I Tim. 5:1 & 22, Rev. 4:4, and in Rev. 7:13-14 there are other statements about the elders, all of them using male nouns and pronouns. This usage, of course, was no accident or reflection of situational ethics, for the office had originated well back in the Old Testament and had been reserved then, too, for male adults.

Biblical Qualifications for Deacons

In contrast with the office of elder, that of the deacon has been more problematic within the Reformed churches in the late 1970's. Since the office of deacon was a New Testament institution, and since Scripture has not spoken as frequently to that role, it is understandable that most of the debate should center there. The answer to our quest, nevertheless, should be equally clear. In I Timothy 3:8-13 the Apostle Paul, still writing under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, also spells out with unmistakable clarity the criteria for that office. Not surprisingly, the qualifications are very similar to those enunciated for elders. The deacons must be "men worthy of respect" (v. 8); he "must manage his children and his household well" (v. 12). Furthermore, "their wives are to be women worthy of respect, not malicious talkers but temperate and trustworthy in everything" (v. 11).

Did Paul conjure up these qualifications from the recesses of a chauvinistic mind or borrow them from Jewish tradition? Anyone who knows how frequently and how comprehensively Paul sparred with the Jews after his conversion would know that such were not his sources. Paul did not need such unreliable guides, for he had the precedent of the early Christian church as his guide. Because of the growing complexity and increasing needs of the early Christian church after Pentecost, the Apostles gathered all the disciples together and instructed them to "choose seven *men* from among you who are known to be full of the Spirit and wisdom" (Acts 6:3).

Blessed by prayer and the laying on of hands (v. 6), these men became the model for the later church to follow. Paul's instructions to Timothy, then, were not only divinely inspired, but also in full harmony with the early Christian church's practice.

Follow Christ, Not Current Culture

Just in case there are those who would still want to charge Paul with chauvinism and cultural conditioning, the argument is not done. Where did the Apostles and the church in Acts get their guidelines? Is it possible that they were functioning on less than firm footing? Were they merely perpetuating a practice borrowed from their culture? Hardly. Unequivocally, No, for their Lord and Master had clearly demonstrated the same practice in choosing the Twelve Apostles. After a whole night of prayer and communication with His Father in Heaven, Jesus called all his disciples and chose twelve men from among them, specifying them for particular functions and special duties (Luke 6:12-16). With such a divine example to follow, dare we accuse the Apostle Paul of error in judgment?

Dare we say that the early Christian church was misguided and lacking the enlightenment that is ours today? The answer for us should be clear if we wish to be called followers of Christ.

Is Galatians 3 out of synch with I Timothy 3 or with Acts 6 or with Luke 6? Are there contradictions in Scripture? There aren't if we will only let the Spirit show us the beautiful harmony that comes through the Word. Looking at Scripture in the light of other passages gives us, not the discordant notes of the current liberation movement, but the glorious unity of the body, with each part and each person fitly joined together so that we can say with new meaning and fervor: "We are all *one* in the Spirit."

Does that mean that we no longer have difficulties in interpretation as we read the Bible? No, there are still those troubling passages about wearing veils and having the head covered. Instead of thrashing out those problems in the next Synod, however, maybe we should call for a joint conference with the Mennonites and others who still adhere to those Scriptural injunctions. A discussion with them might prove mutually enlightening, as I recently discovered. ●

ABOUT DOCTRINE

The Shape of Reformed Faith

James A. De Jong

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Herman Bavinck has a twenty or thirty page essay in the first volume of his dogmatics. Cluttered with Latin titles and obscure names, it is a survey of the major figures in the history of Reformed doctrine. Bavinck contended at the time that he wrote that the literature on this subject was very small. If it was small in the German and Dutch languages of his day, it is minuscule in the English of ours. In the last generation no one anywhere, to my knowledge, has published a comprehensive, new survey of this subject.

A year ago Baker Book House republished Heinrich Heppes' *Reformed Dogmatics*, with is over a hundred years old and was translated and printed in English in 1950. Heppes' work is really a synopsis of classical Reformed dogmatic positions; it is not an historical survey of the field. But we are thankful for small favors, even though Ernst Bizer's fine introduction to his German revision of Heppes would have greatly enhanced the Baker edition if it had been translated and included. Heppes' work at least exposes us to some of the names and issues in the field. Hopefully this is the beginning of more to come.

In our own ecclesiastical tradition, which has always emphasized preaching and teaching as opposed to the sacramentalism of Rome or the liturgical focus of the Anglicans, there is at present a good deal of ignorance even in ministerial ranks regarding the history of the doctrine that shaped and continues to be reflected in our confessions, sermons and discussions of theological issues. Reformed doctrine courses are being dropped from Christian high school course offerings, probably on the premise that a focus on biblical theology rather than on a "canned" orthodoxy is healthier. In my own seminary training there was no survey course available that dealt with the evolution or development of Reformed dogmatics. This lack of interest in or this lack of willingness to deal with our systematic or doctrinal heritage is something of a conundrum in a church that still pays lip service to "orthodoxy."

Lack of interest or understanding regarding a tradition's doctrinal development can have two results. Neither is desirable. First, one can maintain orthodoxy by defending as equivalent to Scripture itself the doctrinal formulation of one or another theologian within that tradition. Such a posture is tenable only where there is an intense lack of understanding of how and where doctrinal statements get formulated. Philosophical assumptions indigenous to any given era and even the spirit of the age have a bearing on how Christian truth gets stated in systematic form. But second, one can write-off the unique and characteristic emphases of the Reformed tradition and promote a vague, commonbrand Christianity. What needs emphasis more than ever, I feel, is that there is a commonly shared theological uniqueness among Calvin, the so-called Reformed scholastics and contemporary Reformed thinkers

that sets the tradition off from others. In our era we don't have much more than a vague feel for what that uniqueness is.

What is needed today is a critical appreciation of what it means to be a systematic Reformed thinker or to be a reflective Reformed Christian. This can be attained by studying that tradition's thought in the context of the times in which it was and continues to be articulated, modified, rejected, recaptured and expanded. Both Bavinck and Heppé help in this regard. Ironically, what sometimes helps most are the monographs, laden with the models and theories of contemporary academia, which historians rather than theologians are producing. What is needed is a rejuvenation of interest in and love for the Reformed faith as variously formulated throughout the years since the Reformation. Seeing how others have done it, we may be better able to do it ourselves.

REFORMED DOGMATICS SET OUT AND ILLUSTRATED FROM THE SOURCES, by Heinrich Heppé. Foreward by Karl Barth. Revised and edited by Ernst Bizer. Translated by G.T. Thomson. Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1978 (First English edition 1950, George Allen & Unwin, Ltd., Great Britain) Pp. 721, \$9.95 paper. Reviewed by Dr. Fred H. Klooster, Calvin Theological Seminary.

Some years ago a young theologian from Westminster Theological Seminary discovered a copy of the British edition of Heppé on the shelves of the Calvin Seminary Bookstore. With delight and a sense of guilt he purchased the last copy available. The British edition has been out of print for about a decade. Baker Book House has performed an excellent service in making this unique work available again to another generation of students.

During a seminar in Basel I vividly recall Karl Barth's admonition to an American theologian who did not appear to know the classic Reformed theological distinctions. In a reprimanding tone Barth urged: "Young man, you must study Heppé!" In his foreword to this book Barth provides a more extensive rationale for the study of Heppé. It was Heppé and a parallel volume by the Lutheran, H. Schmid, that helped Barth make his personal transition from liberalism to a new theology. During the spring of 1924 as he was struggling to prepare his first lectures on dogmatics at Göttingen Barth stumbled upon these volumes of Heppé and Schmid. Heppé, Barth states, "has done me the service, which he can and will do for others, of bringing me to understand the special direction in which dogmatic science has proceeded in the early Reformed Church" (p. vii).

Heppé had his 57 varieties before Heinz did. In 1861 Heppé published in German, excerpts from fifty-seven Reformed theologians, from the 16th to the 18th centuries. He arranged these quotations according to the main headings of systematic theology then current, and laced them together with short

comments of his own. In 1934 Ernst Bizer revised and edited the work for republication. This edition G.T. Thomson translated into English for the 1950 British publication and Baker has now reprinted it.

Heppé's fifty-seven theologians have the Reformed commitment in common. Yet there was considerable change that occurred from the time of Calvin and Bullinger, Ursinus and Olevianus to the times of Maresius, Voetius and Cocceius and that of Francis Turretine and H. Heppé. The theology of the Reformers of the 16th century did undergo some changes in the Protestant Scholasticism of the 17th and 18th centuries. But there was continuity as well as discontinuity. Today the discontinuity is often emphasized without sufficient awareness of the continuity.

Since the writers whom Heppé excerpts wrote in Latin and most of these works were never translated into English, firsthand acquaintance with many of these works has been closed to generations of English-speaking theologians. Heppé's *Reformed Dogmatics* has long helped to at least open a few windows to this period of Reformed orthodoxy. Until more of this material appears in English translation, Heppé will continue to be of great service. Yet a work that contains quotations taken out of context and arranged under headings different from those of the original writers, must be used with care. Any one who knows something of Calvin's *Institutes* and then consults Heppé will quickly learn of the care with which Heppé's volume must be used.

The publication of Heppé for the first time in the United States and its wide use could help to stimulate solid theologizing in the country. The theological fads of the last two decades show up awfully thin compared to the solid theology of this volume. Heppé is a useful tool, even if its contents are of unequal power. The price is modest for so substantial a volume. A subsequent edition would be improved if it included brief biographies of the fifty-seven theologians and a fuller index which included every reference to each of these theologians. Then one could also more easily read many excerpts from one author and gain something of the continuity of that writer's thought.

THE DEVELOPMENT OF DOCTRINE IN THE CHURCH, by Peter Toon. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1979, 142 pp. \$4.95 paper. Reviewed by Peter De Jong.

Peter Toon takes up an important and fascinating subject about which far too little has been written and which increasingly demands our attention. He deals with the relation of the Bible to the churches' doctrines and the question of how one can test whether a doctrine is acceptable or not (p. xii). Important writers on the development of doctrine are introduced with brief and generally clear summaries of what they believed and wrote about the subject. The discussion begins with John Henry Newman, the Anglican who was converted to become a lead-

ing Roman Catholic. In connection with his change he wrote an *Essay on the Development of Christian Doctrine* (1845) which showed his divergence from both the common Roman Catholic notion of the unchangeableness of doctrine and the Protestant charge that Roman Catholic beliefs were corruptions of doctrine (p. 13). Among the critics of Newman were the famous Scotch Presbyterian, William Cunningham, who held that although there is an objective development of doctrine within the Bible, "it does not extend beyond the apostles, with whom revelation ceased." There is also a subjective development in the churches' and Christians' understanding of that doctrine, as well as corruption of that doctrine in various ways. Robert Rainy, a student of Cunningham, wrote *The Delivery and Development of Christian Doctrine*, the far too little known, only evangelical, full-length, positive treatment of this subject written in the 19th Century. Regarding doctrine in a more "dynamic" and subjective way, he saw it as "the creation of the believing mind," "the human response to the divine message" and therefore open to improvement (pp. 42, 43). James Orr, in 1901 published his *Progress of Dogma*, seeking to defend doctrine against those who sought to down-grade it. He explained the development of doctrine along the lines of his view of theistic evolution, maintaining that the logical order of the relation between doctrines was reflected in the historical order in which they were developed and clarified. Despite its interest and usefulness, I found Toon's book disappointing. Like a number of our own theologians, although he apparently considers himself to be an evangelical he shows no sympathy for an inerrant Bible: "Very few modern theologians hold to a view of verbal inspiration and most see the books of the Bible as essentially human products which act as human witnesses to revelation. They point to revelation, they record human understanding of revelation, but they are not divinely-guaranteed accounts of revelation" (p. 76).

Toon judges the last confession in the 1976 United Presbyterian *Book of Confessions* as "perhaps the best example" of putting "into a credal form" "this modern approach to Scripture, dominated by 'the historical method' ". Because of the modern views of development "we today cannot adopt" the Reformers' understanding of the relation of Church dogma/doctrine to Scripture "without major qualifications" (p. 78). "Aware that all Church and denominational doctrine is historically and culturally conditioned, most modern scholars reject all views of development which portray it as merely a continuous, cumulative growth in understanding revelation" (p. 81). "Thus, with the general agreement that historical situationalism has to be taken seriously, it has followed that there is a reluctance in the major denominations to use creeds or confessions of the past as tests of orthodoxy or heresy for today" (p. 84). Although Toon, personally, says "I concur with the belief of a majority of Christians that God guided the early Church in the making of the foundational dogmas of the Trinity and the person of Christ" so that "they can never be denied" (p. 121), he holds that "there will be no formation of dogma which possesses the quality of Nicene dogma, until it is created by a truly ecumenical council" (p. 122). He expresses general agreement with Hans Kung, who . . . argues for the indefectibility instead of the traditional Roman Catholic idea of the infallibility of the Church in her holding of truth" (p. 123). The book is a useful introduction to the literature on the subject, but in view of its own faulty views of the Bible's claims about itself a misleading guide to us today in our pressing problems about Biblical and credal "interpretation" and the proper relationship of Bible to creed. The Reformers and their successors whose views Toon criticizes, whatever their limitations, because of their high and faithful view of Scripture are much better guides in these matters. We need more and better studies and writings on this subject. ●



PIERRE AND HIS FRIENDS by W. G. Vandehulst. Paideia Press, St. Catharines, Ontario, Canada. \$3.95. Translated from the Dutch by Johannes De Viet. Reviewed by Mrs. Leonard Greenway, Grand Rapids, Michigan.

Pierre was a happy boy living with his father, mother, and grandfather in Flanders.

It was a sad day when his father bid his family good-bye and went to war never to return.

One night the enemy dropped a bomb on the home in which they were living. Pierre's mother was killed and Pierre was seriously injured losing both of his legs.

His grandfather moved to Ravensburg with Pierre and took good care of him.

Pierre, who was confined to his bed, looked out of the window and saw four boys coming down the canal, which ran behind his home. These boys happy in their play noticed this sickly looking boy behind the green curtain.

A close friendship developed between Pierre and the boys. During a holiday celebration the boys made a surprise visit to Pierre.

Several days later, as the boys came down the canal and looked up at the window, Pierre was not there. He had gone to

be with Jesus, whom he loved and longed to see.

Davey, one of the boys, after searching for some time finds the grandfather. The grandfather takes him to his home and gives him a gift and a gift for each of the other boys, which Pierre had asked him to do.

The grandfather, after the death of Pierre and his visit with Davey, returns to his home in Flanders.

This is an inspiring story, well written, and both young and older ones will read it with spiritual profit.

COMMENTARY ON REVELATION, by Henry Barclay Swete. Kregel Publications, Grand Rapids. 1978. Introduction 220 pp. Commentary 338 pp. \$12.95. Reviewed by Rev. Henry Vanden Heuvel, Bethel CRC, Sioux Center, Iowa.

Kregel Publications offers another of its series of reprints, this one by the author of a great many books, Professor H.B. Swete. It is a scholarly work based on the Greek

text of the book of Revelation. Because the author concentrates on every word in the text, he tends to miss the forest for the trees. This is seen in a failure to present an overall interpretation of the meaning of the book of Revelation. Dr. Swete in a lengthy introduction traces the history of the interpretation of Revelation, and then concludes that his approach will be taking the best of all the previous commentaries. This may be all right for one who will preach on just one verse in Revelation, but it leaves one without much of a foundation in an overall treatment of the book.

However, Swete's treatment of the individual text is helpful for the student of Greek and Latin. The prolific quotations in Greek, Latin, and other original languages of his sources make the book of limited use. For the careful scholar it is, however, a good addition to the library of books on Revelation.

TRUTH ON FIRE: The Message of Galatians, by Clark H. Pincock, Baker Book House, Grand Rapids, Michigan. 1972. 94 pp. \$1.95. Reviewed by Rev. Henry Vanden Heuvel, Bethel CRC, Sioux Center, Iowa.

This is a beautiful little paperback. It is a commentary on the Epistle to the Galatians written by Professor Pincock who teaches at Trinity Evangelical Seminary in Deerfield, Illinois. The book's main helpfulness is its relevancy to the modern scene. The author constantly applies the message of the epistle to our current situation. And he achieves this application admirably. For a brief but thorough treatment of the message of the book of Galatians for preaching or society lesson, this book is very helpful. It is recommended.

JESUS CHRIST TODAY, by Neil R. Lightfoot, Baker Book House, Grand Rapids, Mich. 1976. 274 pp. \$8.95. Reviewed by Rev. Henry Vanden Heuvel, Bethel CRC, Sioux Center, Iowa.

This is a commentary on the book of Hebrews. The author explains the title *Jesus Christ Today* in his introduction. "*Jesus Christ Today* is chosen as a title for Hebrews because Jesus Christ is its main subject and because "today" emphasizes particularly what the epistle emphasizes — Jesus is now enthroned with the Father and as High Priest He intercedes for His own. "Yesterday" He lived on earth as man, died and rose again; "today" He lives in God's presence and "holds his priesthood permanently, because he continues forever." "Today" as a descriptive title for Hebrews asserts that this masterful, first-century exhortation is also a contemporary exhortation."

The author of this commentary is Professor of Bible and Biblical Languages at Abilene Christian University, Abilene, Texas. He offers a very readable commentary on Hebrews, making it useful to the average reader with no knowledge of the original languages, but giving additional notes for the benefit of the more advanced reader. Lightfoot's position is clearly evangelical, showing a high regard for the inspiration and infallibility of Scripture. The commentary is recommended.

THE NEWBERRY REFERENCE BIBLE, Kregel Publications, Grand Rapids, Mich., xxiii and 1064 pp., 1977; wide margin \$59.95, regular \$49.95 and \$39.95. Reviewed by Rev. Henry J. Boekhoven, Th.M., Pastor of the First Christian Reformed Church of Kalamazoo, Mich.

In the late 19th Century Thomas Newberry developed a simple, easily mastered, system of symbols which opened up the original languages of Scripture to those unfamiliar with Hebrew and Greek. Very consistently he has applied to the King James text small signs which indicate a verb's tense, a noun's article, a pronoun's use, etcetera. In addition, numerous marginal and foot notes make this Reference Bible an outstanding tool, aiding the sincere student in gaining good understanding of Scripture.

The Bible, reprinted by Kregel, contains helpful introductions to both Old and New Testaments, 127 pages of Aids to Bible Study, and 14 maps. It features an overview of some Jewish, Greek and Roman coins with their values converted into the British Pound, as well as tables of measures and weights converted into current designations.

The interpretations of Jehovah being a Hebrew combination of was-in-past, is-present, and is-to-come, is ingenious, but incorrect. The earlier sacred name of God, Jahweh, was withdrawn in the 6th Cent. B.C. for fear it would be profaned. The vowels of Adonai, Lord, were then added to the consonants of Jahweh, and the artificial name Jehovah came thus into being.

This Reference Bible is a store-house of data. It should find a place in every pastor's study and private libraries of all serious Bible students. The wide margin Reference Bible supplies ample space for a life long collection of personal notes by its owner. The Bible is bound in leather. The letter types used are all very readable. Highly recommended.

THE REFORMATION OF JOURNALISM: A CHRISTIAN APPROACH TO MASS COMMUNICATION by Jon R. Kennedy. 1972, 130 pages. Published by The Craig Press. Reviewed by Rev. Jack Gray, South Holland, Illinois.

Jon R. Kennedy has written an interesting book on Abraham Kuyper's use of the media. In clear, lucid style he explains the success of Kuyper in terms of his ability to write and publish effectively.

Kennedy's premise is that the real power of Kuyper lay in his pen. His writings captivated the people, built his spiritual and political base, and are the way he is still influential today. Certainly the endurance of Kuyper's written "Stone Lectures" verify that concept of the power of the press.

Though Kennedy's primary concern is journalism, his background material on Kuyper and his relationship with Dooyeweerd and Groen van Prinsterer is as lucid as any I have seen. In a few pages he sketches the events that shaped their lives and the complexities of their thoughts and actions. Certainly one of the bonuses of the book is that it gives a good introduction

to their way of thinking and helps one understand their motivation.

Another bonus of the book is Kennedy's excellent distinction between Fundamentalism and the Reformed faith. I especially appreciated his contrast between two contemporaries — William Jennings Bryan in this country and Abraham Kuyper in the Netherlands. He points out well how Bryan's Fundamentalism never gave him the vision Kuyper received from his Calvinism, and how Kuyper's concept of Christ as Lord in all of life made him influential in so many areas. That comparison makes one really appreciate the Reformed faith, a faith we must keep in the fundamentalistic atmosphere of our contemporary culture.

The weakness of the book is its age. It was printed in 1972 and Kennedy repeatedly talks about the challenges of the seventies, and now we are on the threshold of the eighties. Visions he saw then have either collapsed or come true. In the aftermath of Vietnam and Watergate, the media's role in the rise and fall of Jimmy Carter, have made many people question the moorings and motives of journalism. The thoroughly Christian perspective that Kennedy promotes could be made much more convincing if put in the context of the eighties.

In order to truly speak to the eighties, or to any decade, Kennedy has to do some more thinking about the vast differences between the Netherlands and the United States and Canada. He recognizes that many of the things Kuyper did are not possible here, but he does not clearly explain how the principles can be applied to our cultural setting. His focus blurs because he cannot make the jump across the Atlantic.

And that may be the hidden strength of the book. When we see how Kuyper used the media in a Christian way, we are all challenged to be Christianly creative in bringing that concept into practice on our continent. Kennedy tells us where to begin; now we need to move forward.

MY FAVORITE STORY BOOK by W.G. Vanderhulst. Translated from the Dutch by Marian Schoolland, Paideia Press, \$10.95. St. Catharines, Ontario, Canada. Reviewed by Mrs. Leonard Greenway, Grand Rapids, Michigan.

The book contains thirty-two exciting adventures, animal tales and Bible Stories to be read to children in the four to eight age bracket.

Each story is illustrated with lovely pictures, some of them humorous, all of them aimed at the child's level.

The Bible Stories are true to Holy Writ.

THERE'S NO BUSINESS LIKE GOD'S BUSINESS, Chuck Murphy, Abingdon Press, 201 Eighth Ave. S., Nashville, Tenn. 37202. 1974, pp. 128, price \$2.95. Reviewed by Rev. L.W. Van Dellen.

Interested in evangelism and growth in the Spirit for your church? Read this book which makes Christianity an exciting business. Basic facts of the Bible remind one of the presentation in "Evangelism Explosion" by D. J. Kennedy.

The main theme introduced and repeated in various ways is the free gift of God's grace. The "works idea" is the subject of constant attack. We find the outline of the Heidelberg Catechism: sin, salvation and service or man's predicament, God's solution and the abundant life of service as underlying truths of the book.

With humor, simplicity and sincerity, the author cuts to the heart of false ideas about salvation in Jesus Christ. He speaks against the idea of a "heavenly scoreboard" or the pharisees' teaching of heaven as a reward, instead of thankful response in love to God who had already proved His love for them.

Chuck Murphy was a successful nightclub entertainer, TV personality and recording artist when he felt called to serve God in a richer, fuller way. He completed college and seminary, having begun at the age of 35. His book grew out of the numerous teaching missions, held in churches throughout the country. His theology is Reformed, although he is a rector in an Episcopalian Church. The author's purpose of freeing the reader from the prison of self to glorious new possibilities in God's business, will inspire all who read it.

THE GROWING LOCAL CHURCH, Donald J. MacNair, Baker Book House, Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1975, 200 pp. Price \$7.95. Reviewed by Rev. Elco H. Oostendorp.

This book is a sequel to the same author's *The Birth, Care, and Feeding of a Local Church*. There are frequent references to that book in this one, and no doubt one would get the most benefit out of either by using both. The author is a minister in the Reformed Presbyterian Church, Evangelical Synod, and these books are the fruit of many years of experience as Executive Director of that denomination's National Presbyterian Missions.

In my opinion this is a good book for three reasons: it is Biblical, it is Reformed and it is practical.

Rev. MacNair begins by positing acceptance of the Bible as God's inspired and inerrant Word, and as such the rule of faith and practice in the church. In developing his ideas he makes much use of Scripture and insists upon basing programs on the teachings of Scripture. His first concern is not with techniques that may have proved successful, but with asking what the Bible teaches as to the will of God for his church. His definition of the church and its offices is derived from Scripture and there is considerable quotation of texts to substantiate his positions.

Although he allows for other theories and practices in church government and tries to make his book useful to other than Presbyterian programs, the author comes out strong for the rule of the elders as the scriptural pattern for the local church. His discussion of the function of the pastor or minister as a teaching-elder, of the elders as the ruling body of the church, and of the deacons as primarily agents of mercy rather than trustees and managers of finances is very good. He says many things that need repeating in these days when the

functioning of the offices is often endangered by the use of "experts" and "specialists". In this respect this book is very well suited for use in Christian Reformed Churches also since many of the things that the author says have been taught in such books as the Church Order Commentaries of Van Dellen and Monsma.

The book is not a theoretical discussion of church growth, but born out of personal experience and therefore contains suggestions that are workable and practical. There is much material that can serve as a pattern for local congregations in planning and implementing their church programs. Throughout all the discussion of practical plans and programs runs the emphasis that the real secret of growth is dedication and hard work. There is a very strong spiritual emphasis on prayer and devotion. But it is also pointed out that the best of intentions will not be successful if practical considerations are neglected and there is no planning. In his chapters on goals and guidelines the author does not lose himself in all kinds of "how to" details, but goes down to the basics in terms of what the Bible teaches a church should be and how it should carry out its program.

A very helpful and necessary emphasis of the book is that on the importance of the local church and the organized church as being Christ's instrument to do His work both of evangelism and spiritual growth of Christians. In these days of so many extra-ecclesiastical programs which tend to take over the work of the church at both the local and denominational levels, this book carries a message that needs to be heard and applied.

The Growing Local Church would be an excellent textbook to be used by consistory members in equipping themselves for their work as ministers, elders and deacons and then reorganizing the program of the congregation for more effective work as the body of Christ.

PASTORAL LEADERSHIP, Jay E. Adams, Baker Book House, Grand Rapids, Mich. 199 pp. \$3.75. Reviewed by Rev. Garrett H. Stoutmeyer, CRC minister emeritus.

Pastoral Leadership is the third volume of the author's series, *Shepherding God's Flock*. The first two volumes in the series are *The Pastoral Life* and *Pastoral Counseling*. The reader cannot help but be gratefully impressed with the author's avowed Scriptural approach to the subject of Church administration or Church management. He makes a strong case for Spirit-directed planning, organization and management in the local church as the necessary and principal means of achieving God's purposes.

The format of the book is that of an instruction manual which would primarily assist seminary students, young ministers and elders, and "experienced" ministers who have failed to organize their managerial responsibilities. Exercises appear at the end of each chapter which the student and/or reader is expected to do. A sizeable Appendix is also added on "Evangelism and the Pastor", which in the nature of the subject matter is another "how to do" manual.

The book is easy to read and contains numerous practical suggestions on setting up the church program, etc. Most of the suggestions are not new; some have been tried, tested and have proven acceptable; others, will have to be very carefully weighed and evaluated. Recommended reading, however, for seminary students and interns, pastors and elders!

THE SHAKING OF ADVENTISM by Geoffrey J. Paxton. 1977 — Reprinted 1978. 132 pages, paperback. \$3.95. Published by Baker Book House, Grand Rapids, Mich., 49506. Reviewed by Rev. Fred M. Huizenga, Emeritus CRC minister, Grand Rapids, Michigan

Paxton, the author of this book, is an ordained Anglican. He was educated for the ministry at Moore Theological College, Sydney, Australia, and the University of Queensland in Brisbane, Australia. Presently he is the director of the Theological Education Program of Australia. Paxton maintains that a "terrific tussle" is going on in Adventist circles over the doctrine of justification by faith and the nature and way of salvation.

Paxton divides his subject into three major parts as follows: Part I: Adventism and the Reformation; Part II: Adventism before 1950; Part III: Adventism after 1950.

The Conclusion of the book bears the same title as the book itself: *The Shaking of Adventism*. Thus, in the final ten pages or so one finds the heart of the book.

Paxton has nothing to say about the roots and origins of Adventism. He is silent about the Millerites and their unfortunate and false attempt to predict the coming of Christ in 1843. Paxton focuses attention on the ferment in present-day Adventism. In his final chapter the author states: "Contemporary Adventism, especially in the 1970's is in conflict over the nature of the gospel according to Paul and the Reformers. Two contrasting elements (Protestant and Roman Catholic) have always been present in the Adventist articulation of the gospel. But in the period they have emerged as two full-grown, distinct theologies.

Paxton states, "In the years of my investigation into Adventism, I have encountered a zeal for the doctrine of justification by faith barely matched anywhere else. Many of the rank and file Adventists I have met are completely "sold" on the gospel of free justification in Christ". Yet there seems to be no unanimity regarding the true nature of the gospel and of justification through free grace in Christ.

Paxton states, "When I interpret Mrs. White (i.e. Ellen G. White) at her best, I hear her calling the Adventist community back to the Bible as the final norm in all matters of controversy. "The Bible is to be presented as the Word of the infinite God, as the end of all controversy and the foundation of all faith. Man is fallible, but God's Word is infallible. Instead of wrangling with one another, let men exalt the Lord. Let us meet all opposition as did our Master, saying "It is written." Let us lift up the Banner on which is inscribed, The Bible, our rule of faith and discipline."

OUR QUESTION BOX

“Appointed To Disobedience?”

Harlan Vanden Einde

From a mid-west reader comes this brief question: “Does I Peter 2:8 belong to the hidden things of God?”

I toyed with the idea of simply answering this question in the affirmative, for then I wouldn't have to say any more about it. But on second thought, I decided to “read something into” the question, since I suspect that's what the author of the question intended that I should do.

I have a feeling that this question has been asked in view of the current discussion taking place on the subject of reprobation. For this is one of the texts frequently pointed to in connection with that doctrine. The text reads: “. . . for they stumble at the word, being disobedient: whereunto also they were appointed.” The phrase “whereunto also they were appointed” is the focus of attention in this text, for it points back to their “stumbling at the word, being disobedient.” The reference is to the Jews, and the fact that they rejected the “chief corner stone,” on whom to believe is not to “be put to shame” (vs. 6). But many of them disbelieved, for they stumbled at the word, being disobedient, whereunto they also were appointed! Who appointed them to this stumbling? The subject is not named, and so it has been interpreted by some to mean that they appointed themselves to this stumbling.

But it seems to me that that is an invalid assumption. We accept the Bible's teaching that it is God who elects, who chooses His people to salvation. The elect do not “choose” themselves, but they are appointed or destined to believe by God. Vs. 9 begins with “But ye are an elect race, a royal priesthood . . .”, etc. The subject is not named, but is it not clear that the subject is God, that He chose them to be “an elect race, a royal priesthood”, etc.? Why, then, in that same context, should we interpret the implied subject with regard to the appointment to disobedience, to be someone other than God? Calvin, in his commentary on I Peter, writes that “they had been appointed to unbelief, as Pharaoh is said to have been put into the position of resisting God (Ex. 9:16), and all unbelievers are destined for the same purpose.” And it is also his interpretation that the “whereunto” of vs. 8 points back to the immediately preceding phrase rather

than to their appointment to believe, because of the word “also” — “whereunto also they were appointed.” Indeed, the Jews were appointed (by God) to believe, for the promise of salvation was for them; but they were appointed to unbelief as well, according to the “also” of verse 8.

If this interpretation is correct, and I believe it is, then the argument that the Bible only teaches an election of a nation (Israel) and not individuals, also falls. For God in His Sovereign mercy appointed the nation of Israel to be His people, but not all of them individually believed; for He appointed some of them to stumble, being disobedient. The reason for that is known only to God, and lies in an area beyond which we should seek to enter. In that sense, this truth does indeed belong to the hidden things of God.

I was reading parts of Calvin's *Institutes Of The Christian Religion* in conjunction with your question, and I would recommend that, if you have access to a copy, you also read the sections in which he refers to the subject of election and reprobation. I was particularly struck by his opening paragraphs of Chapter 23, Book 3, from which I quote in closing: “Now when human understanding hears these things, its insolence is so irrepressible that it breaks forth into random and immoderate tumult as if at the blast of a battle trumpet.

“Indeed many, as if they wished to avert a reproach from God, accept election in such terms as to deny that anyone is condemned. But they do this very ignorantly and childishly, since election itself could not stand except as set over against reprobation. God is said to set apart those whom he adopts into salvation; it will be highly absurd to say that others acquire by chance or obtain by their own effort what election alone confers on a few. Therefore, those whom God passes over, he condemns; and this he does for no other reason than that he wills to exclude them from the inheritance which he predestines for his own children. And men's insolence is unbearable if it refuses to be bridled by God's Word, which treats of his incomprehensible plan that the angels themselves adore.” *Institutes Of The Christian Religion*, Ed. J. T. McNeill, Vol. II, Book III, Chp. XXIII, P. 947. ●