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## BLUE BANNER FAITH AND LIFE

J. G. VOS, Editor and Manager

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**They that be wise shall shine as the brightness of  
the firmament; and they that turn many to righteous-  
ness, as the stars for ever and ever.**

**Daniel 12:3**

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# ***The Cameronian's Dream***

**By James Hyslop**

In a dream of the night I was wafted away  
To the moorland of mist where the martyrs lay;  
Where Cameron's sword and his Bible are seen,  
Engraved on the stone where the heather grows green.

'Twas a dream of those ages of darkness and blood,  
When the minister's home was the mountain and wood;  
When in Wellwood's dark moorlands the standard of Zion,  
All bloody and torn, 'mong the heather was lying.

It was morning; and summer's young sun, from the east,  
Lay in loving repose on the green mountain's breast.  
On Wardlaw and Cairn-Table the clear shining dew  
Glistened sheen 'mong the heath-bells and mountain flowers blue.

And far up in heaven in the white sunny cloud,  
The song of the lark was melodious and loud;  
And in Glenmuir's wild solitudes, lengthened and deep,  
Was the whistling of plovers and the bleating of sheep.

And Wellwood's sweet valley breathed music and gladness;  
The fresh meadow blooms hung in beauty and redness;  
Its daughters were happy to hail the returning,  
And drink the delights of green July's bright morning.

But ah! there were hearts cherished far other feelings,  
Illumed by the light of prophetic revealings,  
Who drank from this scenery of beauty but sorrow,  
For they knew that their blood would bedew it to-morrow.

'Twas the few faithful ones who, with Cameron, were lying  
Concealed 'mong the mist, where the heath-fowl was crying;  
For the horsemen of Earlshall around them were hovering,  
And their bridle-reins rang through the thin misty covering.

Their faces grew pale, and their swords were unsheathed,  
But the vengeance that darkened their brows was unbreathed;  
With eyes raised to Heaven, in meek resignation,  
They sang their last song to the God of Salvation.

The hills with the deep mournful music were ringing;  
The curlew and plover in concert were singing;  
But the melody died 'midst derision and laughter,  
As the hosts of ungodly rushed on to the slaughter.

Though in mist and in darkness and fire they were shrouded,  
Yet the souls of the righteous stood calm and unclouded;  
Their dark eyes flashed lightning, as, proud and unbending,  
They stood like the rock which the thunder is rending.

The muskets were flashing; the blue swords were gleaming;  
The helmets were cleft, and the red blood was streaming;  
The heavens grew dark, and the thunder was rolling.  
When in Wellwood's dark moorlands the mighty were falling.

(Continued on back cover)

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## *Salvation from the Pleasure of Sin*

By Arthur W. Pink

God saves us from the pleasure or love of sin before He delivers us from the penalty or punishment of sin. Necessarily so, for it would be neither an act of holiness nor of righteousness were He to grant a full pardon to one who was still a rebel against Him, loving that which He hates. And how does God save His people from the pleasure of sin? The answer is, By imparting to them a nature which hates evil and loves holiness. This takes place when they are born again, so that actual salvation begins with regeneration.

Saved from the pleasure or love of sin. What multitudes of people would strongly resent being told that they delighted in evil! They would indignantly ask if we supposed them to be moral perverts. No indeed: a person may be thoroughly chaste and yet delight in evil. It may be that some repudiate the charge that they have ever taken pleasure in sin, and would claim, on the contrary that from earliest recollection they have detested wickedness in all its forms. Nor would we dare to call into question their sincerity; instead we point out that it only affords another exemplification of the solemn fact that "the heart is deceitful above all things" (Jer. 17:9).

### **TO LOVE SIN IS FAR WORSE THAN TO COMMIT IT**

God's Word expressly speaks of "the pleasure of sin," and it immediately warns that those pleasures are but "for a season" (Heb. 11:25), for the aftermath is painful and not pleasant; yea, unless God intervenes in His sovereign grace, they entail eternal torment. So, too, the Word refers to those who are "lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God" (2 Tim. 3:4). It is indeed striking to observe how often this discordant note is struck in Scripture. It mentions those who "love vanity" (Psa. 4:2); "him that loveth violence" (Psa. 11:5); "thou lovest evil more than good" (Psa. 52:3); "he loved lies" (Psa. 119:17); "scorners delight in their scorning" (Prov. 1:22); "they which delight in their abominations" (Isa. 66:3); "their abominations were according as they loved" (Hos. 9:10); "who hated the good and loved the evil" (Micah 3:2); "if any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him" (1 John 2:15). To love sin is far worse than to commit it, for a man may be suddenly tripped up or commit it through frailty.

### **THE GREAT MIRACLE OF GRACE — SALVATION FROM THE LOVE OF SIN**

The fact is, that we are not only born into this world with an evil nature, but with hearts that are thoroughly in love with sin. Sin is our native element. We are wedded to our lusts, and of ourselves are no more able to alter the bent of our corrupt nature that the Ethiopian can change his skin or the leopard his spots. But what is impossible with man, is possible with God, and when He takes us in hand this is where He begins — by saving us from the pleasure or love of sin. This is the great miracle of grace, for the Almighty stoops down and picks up a loathesome leper from the dunghill and makes him a new creature in Christ, so that the things he once loved he now hates, and the things he once hated he now loves. God commences by saving us from ourselves. He does not save us from the penalty until He has delivered us from the love of sin.

And how is this miracle of grace accomplished, or rather, exactly what does it consist of? Negatively, not by eradicating the evil nature, nor even by refining it. Positively, by communicating a new nature, a holy nature, which loathes that which is evil, and delights in all that is truly good. To be more specific: First, God saves His people from the pleasure or love of sin by putting His holy awe in their hearts, for "the fear of the Lord is to hate evil" (Prov. 8:15), and again, "the fear of the Lord is to depart from evil" (Prov. 6:16). Second, God saves His people from the pleasure of sin by communicating to them a new and vital principle: "the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit" (Rom. 5:5), and where the love of God rules the heart, the love of sin is dethroned. Third, God saves His people from the love of sin by the Holy Spirit's drawing their affections unto things above, thereby taking them off the things which formerly enthralled them.

### **THE SINNER DENIES IT — THE SAINT DEPLORES IT**

If on the other hand the unbeliever hotly denies that he is in love with sin, many a believer is often hard put to it to persuade himself that he has been saved from the love thereof. With an understanding that has in part been enlightened by the Holy Spirit, he is better able to discern

things in their true colors. With a heart that has been made honest by grace, he refuses to call sweet bitter. With a conscience that has been sensitized by the new birth, he the more quickly feels the workings of sin and the hankering of his affections for that which is forbidden. Moreover, the flesh remains in him, unchanged, and as the raven constantly craves carrion, so this corrupt principle in which our mothers conceived us, lusts after and delights in that which is the opposite of holiness. It is these things which occasion and give rise to the disturbing questions that clamor for answer within the genuine believer.

The sincere Christian is often made to seriously doubt if he has been delivered from the love of sin. Such questions as these plainly agitate his mind: Why do I so readily yield to temptation? Why do some of the vanities and pleasures of the world still possess so much attraction for me? Why do I chafe so much against any restraints being placed upon my lusts? Why do I find the work of mortification so difficult and distasteful? Could such things as these be if I were a new creature in Christ? Could such horrible experiences as these happen if God had saved me from taking pleasure in sin? Well do we know that we are here giving expression to the very doubts which exercise the minds of many, and those who are strangers there-to are to be pitied. But what shall we say in reply? How is this distressing problem to be solved?

#### **HOW MAY ONE BE ASSURED THAT HE HAS BEEN SAVED FROM LOVE OF SIN?**

Let us point out first that the presence of that within us which still lusts after and takes delight in some evil things, is not incompatible with our having been saved from the love of sin, paradoxical as that may sound. It is part of the mystery of the Gospel that those who be saved are yet sinners in themselves. The point we are here dealing with is similar to and parallel with faith. The Divine principle of faith in the heart does not cast out unbelief. Faith and doubts exist side by side within a quickened soul, which is evident from those words, "Lord, I believe; help Thou mine unbelief" (Mark 9:24). In like manner the Christian may exclaim and pray, "Lord, I long after holiness, help Thou my lustings after sin." And why is this? Because of the existence of two separate natures, the one at complete variance with the other within the Christian. (For more help on this, see Mr. Pink's booklet, *The Sins Of The Saints*. 15 cents, from Bible Truth Depot, Swengel, Pa.)

How then is the presence of faith to be ascertained? Not by the ceasing of unbelief, but by discovering its own fruit and works. Fruit may grow amid thorns as flowers amid weeds, and yet it is fruit nevertheless. Faith exists amid many doubts and fears. Notwithstanding opposing forces from within as well as from without us, faith still reaches out after God. Notwithstanding innumerable discouragements and defeats, faith continues

to fight. Notwithstanding many refusals from God, it yet clings to Him and says, Except Thou bless me I will not let Thee go. Faith may be fearfully weak and fitful, often eclipsed by the clouds of unbelief, nevertheless the Devil himself cannot persuade its possessor to repudiate God's Word, despite His Son, or abandon all hope. The presence of faith, then, may be ascertained in that it causes its possessor to come before God as an empty-handed beggar beseeching Him for mercy and blessing.

Now, just as the presence of faith may be known amid all the workings of unbelief, so our salvation from the love of sin may be ascertained notwithstanding all the lustings of the flesh after that which is evil. But in what way? How is this initial aspect of salvation to be identified? We have already anticipated this question in an earlier paragraph, wherein we stated that God saved us from delighting in sin by imparting a nature that hates evil and loves holiness, which takes place at the new birth. Consequently, the real question to be settled is, How may the Christian positively determine whether that new and holy nature has been imparted in him? The answer is, By observing its activities, particularly the opposition it makes (under energizings of the Holy Spirit) unto indwelling sin. Not only does the flesh (the principle of sin) lust against the spirit, but the spirit (the principle of holiness) lusts and wars against the flesh.

#### **SIN BECOMES A BURDEN**

First, our salvation from the pleasure or love of sin may be recognized by sin's becoming a burden to us. This is truly a spiritual experience. Many souls are loaded down with worldly anxieties, who know nothing of what it means to be bowed down with a sense of guilt. But when God takes us in hand, the iniquities and transgressions of our past life are made to lie as an intolerable load upon the conscience. When we are given a sight of ourselves as we appear before the eyes of the thrice holy God, we will exclaim with the Psalmist, "For innumerable evils have compassed me about: mine iniquities have taken hold upon me, so that I am not able to look up; they are more than the hairs of mine head: therefore my heart faileth me" (Psa. 42:12). So far from sin being pleasant, it is now felt as a cruel incubus, a crushing weight, an unendurable load. The soul is "heavy laden" (Matt. 11:28) and bowed down. A sense of guilt oppresses and the conscience cannot bear the weight of it. Nor is this experience restricted to our first conviction: it continues with more or less acuteness throughout the Christian's life.

#### **SIN BECOMES BITTER**

Second, our salvation from the pleasure of sin may be recognized by sin's becoming bitter to us. True, there are millions of unregenerate who are

filled with remorse over the harvest reaped from their sowing of wild oats. Yet that is not hatred of sin, but dislike of its consequences — ruined health, squandered opportunities, financial straits, or social disgrace. No, what we have reference to is that anguish of heart which ever marks the one the Spirit takes in hand. When the veil of delusion is removed and we see sin in the light of God's countenance; when we are given a discovery of the depravity of our very nature, then we perceive that we are sunk in carnality and death. When sin is opened to us in all its secret workings, we are made to feel the vileness of our hypocrisy, self-righteousness, unbelief, impatience, and the utter filthiness of our hearts. And when the penitent soul views the sufferings of Christ, he can say with Job, "God maketh my heart soft" (23:16).

Ah, it is this experience which prepares the heart to go out after Christ: those that are whole need not a physician, but they that are quickened and convicted by the Spirit are anxious to be relieved by the great Physician. "The Lord killeth, and maketh alive; He bringeth down to the grave, and bringeth up. The Lord maketh poor, and maketh rich; He bringeth low, and lifteth up" (I Sam. 2:6). It is in this way that God slayeth our self-righteousness, maketh poor and bringeth low — by making sin to be an intolerable burden and as bitter as wormwood to us. There can be no saving faith till the soul is filled with evangelical repentance, and repentance is a godly sorrow for sin, a holy detestation of sin, a sincere purpose to forsake it. The Gospel calls upon men to repent of their sins, forsake their idols, and mortify their lusts, and thus it is utterly impossible for the Gospel to be a message of good tidings to those who are in love with sin and madly determined to perish rather than part with their idols.

Nor is this experience of sin's becoming bitter to us limited unto our first awakening — it continues in varying degrees, to the end of our earthly pilgrimage. The Christian suffers under temptations, is pained by Satan's fiery assaults, and

bleeds from the wounds inflicted by the evil he commits. It grieves him deeply that he makes such a wretched return unto God for His goodness, that he requites Christ so evilly for His dying love, that he responds so fitfully to the promptings of the Spirit. The wanderings of his mind when he desires to meditate upon the Word, the dullness of his heart when he seeks to pray, the coldness of his affections towards the Redeemer, cause him to groan daily; all of which goes to evidence that sin has been made bitter to him. He no longer welcomes those intruding thoughts which take his mind off God: rather does he sorrow over them. But, "Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted" (Matt. 5:4).

### SIN BECOMES A BONDAGE

Third, our salvation from the pleasure of sin may be recognized by the felt bondage which sin produces. As it is not until a Divine faith is planted in the heart that we become aware of our native and inveterate unbelief, so it is not until God saves us from the love of sin that we are conscious of the fetters it has placed around us. Then it is we discover that we are "without strength", unable to do anything pleasing to God, incapable of running the race set before us. A Divinely-drawn picture of the saved soul's felt bondage is to be found in Rom. 7: "For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh) dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me, but how to perform that which is good I find not. For the good that I would, I do not; but the evil which I would not, that I do . . . For I delight in the law of God after the inward man: but I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin" (vs. 18, 19, 22, 23). And what is the sequel? this, the agonizing cry "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death." If that be the sincere lamentation of your heart, then God has saved you from the pleasure of sin.

(Reprinted by permission from **Bible Truth Messenger**, Swengel, Pa.)

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## Sketches of the Covenanters

By J. C. McFeeters

### Chapter XXXV.

#### Declaration of Independance. — A. D. 1680.

The persecution of the Covenanters under King Charles II had now continued twenty years. These were years of slaughter, and the horrors were still deepening.

The battle of Bothwell Bridge was followed by a climax of suffering and sacrifice. The wrath of the king, vented through the dragoons, fell up-

on every district where the Covenanters were located and followed them into their hiding-places. They were required to take the oath of loyalty, or suffer the direful consequence. Some were haled to the judges to be sentenced, others were shot like game where they were found. Like a fire that breaks out in a city and mercilessly devours while the flames find fuel, so this fire seemed destined to spread and devour till the last

drop of Covenanted blood would sizzle on the coals.

The persecutors were in degree successful. Four hundred ministers, in 1662, had refused to receive orders from the king for the exercise of their ministry; they gave up home and all its comforts, rather than admit the king's claim of supremacy over the Church of Christ. These were now reduced to less than one hundred. Some were martyred, some were banished, some had died of old age and some of exposure; but many, if not more, had been constrained to accept the Indulgence and were gone back home. Their first love had been chilled by the wintry blasts. Their zeal for the Lord Jesus and His testimony abated as the hardships increased. Worn with suffering, emaciated with hunger, exposed to danger, grey with sorrows, and the darkness deepening with no relief in prospect, they weakened and accepted the terms of a false peace. But let them not be judged with harshness. Our Lord has said of such, "The spirit truly is ready, but the flesh is weak." The struggle lasted eight more years, during which time there were sixty ministers standing by their Covenant instead of four hundred, and even these sixty, almost to a man, counted it expedient to suspend their testimony and keep silence.

The real Covenanters however were not conquered. Death had slain thousands, and defection tens of thousands, yet the faithful had not lost heart. There was still a vigorous force of loyal men and women, earnest quiet people, who stood fearlessly by the Covenant and Testimony of Jesus Christ. They were called, "The remnant." With these the Holy Spirit was pleased to clothe Himself, for the good fight of faith which they continued with unabated ardor. They stepped into the firing line where the shock of war was heaviest, and became the aggressive part, demanding from the king their Covenanted rights. The Lord was ever with them; they heard Him saying, "Be of good cheer; I have overcome the world." Their zeal and energy were but the crested waves of Omnipotence, the Lord's own strength surging along the strand of time, and dashing against the rocks of wickedness and misrule — waves of Divine energy that must yet overflow every land, overcome the whole world, and cover the earth with glory, as the waters cover the sea.

These strong-spirited, unbending Covenanters believed that the time had now come for a forward movement, and they accepted the task as from the Lord. They were not merely unconquerable; they were determined to conquer. At the beginning of the persecution they were passive, meekly submitting to reproach, spoliation, imprisonment, and death, for Christ's sake. This continued till patience was exhausted.

Their second attitude was that of self-defence. Oppression maketh a wise man mad. The people

came armed to the Conventicles, and with swords and muskets met the troops that attacked the meetings. These acts of self-defence developed into two distinct efforts to raise an army for the redress of grievances. All this time the Covenanters recognized Charles II as their king.

The third attitude was that of revolution. They now had reached this point. They challenge the king's rights to reign. They resolve to take the crown from his head, and place it upon the brow of a man worthy of the honor, one who "feared God, and hated covetousness." What a daring task! what courage exhibited by these men! what unbounded confidence in the righteousness of their cause as they against all odds, all earthly advantages, and all human wisdom, proclaim the king's forfeiture of the throne, and face the consequences of that proclamation!

This was a forlorn battle. The distant outlook was hopeful and the final success was assured; but the present struggle must be sanguinary and the sacrifice of life dreadful. Every man that enlists in the army at this stage must expect to die on the field. This bold position of the Covenanters will surely be met by all the powers of darkness that can be massed against them. They now unfurl the Banner of Christ's Crown and Covenant on the very highest grounds; the persecution will therefore be waged, if possible, with tenfold greater fierceness. The king with all his engines of destruction will fight them most desperately; Satan with all his hosts will assail them ferociously. How can the noble band escape annihilation?

But who will lead the Covenanters in such a struggle? Who will command these "little flocks of kids," when the hosts of Syria fill all the country round about? Where are the ministers now, when the trumpet blast proclaims a revolutionary war against the king? While the dread notes echo from mountain to mountain, the most of them are in caves, hidden — like Obadiah's prophets. Three, only three, step forward. These lions of the Covenant are Cameron, Cargill, and Douglass. They grasp the old battlebanner, and carrying it to the new position call upon the Covenanted sons of freedom to rally under its floating folds. The "remnant" gave a noble response.

This self-sacrificing band was merely the advance guard of a great army that was now mustering in the providence of God for the restoration of civil and religious liberty. Little did they expect to win under existing conditions, but they could hold the hordes of darkness back, till the Lord Jesus would bring up His mighty forces for the decisive battle. They could throw themselves upon the enemy, and with the impact stay their progress. They laid down principles and began action that eight years later resulted in the Revolution under the Prince of Orange. Cameron, Cargill, and Douglass began the Revolution, and William, Prince of Orange, finished it.

The Covenanters engaged in this forward movement were henceforth called Cameronians. Richard Cameron was the leader. On the first anniversary of the battle of Bothwell Bridge, June 22, 1680, he with 21 mounted men rode into the quiet town of Sanquhar. They came in a martial spirit; each horse carried a Christian swordsman; they were armed for war. Reaching the heart of the town of Sanquhar, they dismounted and reverently offered prayer. They then read aloud a Declaration of War against King Charles. This they nailed to the post at the crossroads. What a heroic celebration of the first anniversary of their greatest defeat! The paper carried this declaration:

"We do disown Charles Stuart as having any right, title to, or interest in, the crown of Scotland for government.

"We, being under the Standard of our Lord Jesus Christ, do declare a war with such a tyrant and usurper, and all the men of his practices as enemies of our Lord Jesus Christ and His cause and Covenants."

The men then quietly rode away, while the people read the Declaration with mingled joy and terror. The lions roared on the hills of Sanquhar, and the king's throne trembled; within a few years the monarch and his dynasty had disappeared from the earth.

These Covenanters prepared also another declaration which was called the Queensferry Paper. It contained the following statement of the principles for which they contended:

"The avowal of the Scriptures as the only rule of faith and action;

"The promotion of the Kingdom of God by every possible and lawful method;

"Adherence to the Covenanted Reformation of the Presbyterian Church;

"The disowning of all authority which opposes the Word of God!"

With deathless bravery, they added the following:

"We bind and oblige ourselves to defend ourselves and one another, in the worship of God and in our natural, civil, and divine rights, till we shall overcome, or send them down under debate to posterity, that they may begin where we end."

The fathers have finished their work. They nobly sustained the cause in their day; they gave their blood freely for its success; but they were not permitted to see the ultimate victory. The Covenant principles for which they contended are the hope of the world. The Covenant holds forth the highest standard for the Church and the nation. This standard must be reached, or prophecy must fail. The struggle has descended

upon us in "debate." Will we be true to the task laid on us by the fathers, who unflinchingly carried the Banner of the Covenant amid fiercest battles? Will we be a strong link, or will we be a broken link, connecting the worthy past with the golden future? Which?

#### Points for the Class

1. How did the true Covenanters become diminished?
2. With what spirit did the "remnant" sustain their trials?
3. What successive attitudes toward the king did they assume?
4. When did they proclaim a revolutionary war against the king?
5. Who were their leaders?
6. Where was the declaration of war issued?
7. What was the nature of the Queensferry declaration?
8. Under what obligations were future generations placed?
9. What task here has fallen to us?

#### Chapter XXXVI.

##### Ayrsmoss. — A. D. 1680.

Ayrsmoss is a household word among Covenanters. Here is one of the numerous spots where temporary defeat has been transformed into permanent glory. A granite monument with suitable inscription marks the place and honors the fallen heroes. This is the field where Richard Cameron with a hardy group of Covenanters met the foe and fought the first fight of Scotland's Revolutionary war against King Charles II.

Ayrsmoss lies in the heart of a wide solitude. The eye takes in a wild, broken surface in all directions. Loneliness broods in the very air. The heart grows heavy and the eyes dreamy, while we sit on a tuft of rushes and gaze at the monument that bears the names of the worthy dead. Reverie readily rehabilitates the landscape, and, in vision, the field is covered again with the horrors of the engagements. The horsemen are dashing upon each other, the air is shattered with the discharge of guns, swords are flashing in the evening sunlight, men are falling, blood is flowing, the Covenanters are fleeing, and—Cameron lies on the field dead.

Richard Cameron had sounded the keynote of freedom that reverberated all over Scotland, and down into England, and over into Holland, and at length struck the ears of William, Prince of Orange. Cameron and his Covenanted associates, having disowned the authority of King

Charles, disputed by force of arms his right to reign. They had preferred three charges against him. These were: (1) Perjury; (2) Usurpation; (3) Tyranny.

The king had grossly violated the Covenant to which he had given his oath. The Covenant was the Scottish Constitution of government, and the wilful subversion of it was treason.

He had usurped authority over the Church, posing in the prerogatives of the Lord Jesus Christ and trampling on the people's rights in the Worship of God.

He had impoverished, imprisoned, exiled, and even slaughtered his subjects in great numbers, without other fault than their refusal to submit conscience to his tyrannic will.

Therefore, as perjurer, usurper and tyrant, he must face the arbitrament of war. The proclamation has been published; the dauntless sons of the Covenant have forced the issue. In the name of the Lord of Hosts they have unfurled the Banner for Christ's Crown and Covenant. It may often be torn with bullets and stained with blood, but it will never be folded till the cause of Christ and freedom prevail. These Covenanters have resolved "to continue the struggle till they overcome, or hand it down to posterity, that each generation may begin where the last ended." Such was the solemn bond that bound these Covenanters by their own voluntary action one to another, and all to God and freedom in the worship of God through Jesus Christ. It also joined all coming generations into an indivisible and invincible solidarity for the defence of liberty, the triumph of righteousness, and the glory of Christ in His Church.

The declaration of war had been proclaimed in Sanquhar. There Cameron with his band of twenty-one men appealed to the God of battles and grasped the sword. They stood a few moments gazing solemnly at their Declaration, now nailed to a post and speaking to the nation. Holding their horses by the bridle, they tarried long enough to sing a Psalm to the God of nations, then they mounted. Ere the tramp of their steeds had died away on the streets of Sanquhar, the news of the daring deed was spreading over the hills. The royal army, more than 10,000 strong, was quickly on the track of these daring revolutionists.

Cameron quailed not at the consequences of that day's work. His soul was on fire for the honor of the Lord Jesus Christ. He had expressed a desire to die fighting against the avowed enemies of his Lord. He never doubted the final issue; victory was sure in the end, whatever might be the reverses at the beginning and the losses by the way. "LET CHRIST REIGN," he exclaimed with prophetic fire; "Let CHRIST REIGN, is a standard that shall yet overthrow all the thrones

of Europe;" and he spoke as if his flashing eyes saw the thrones reel, and his quick ears heard the crash of their fall.

One brief month lay between Sanquhar and Ayrsmoss. Cameron and his little company moved cautiously over the desolate places. They roamed across the dreary moorlands, slept amidst the flowering heather, and pillowed their weary heads on the moss. The cold ground was their mattress; the chilling mist was their covering; the arching sky was their rook; the silent stars were their sentinels; the Lord God Almighty was their keeper. Thus they awaited the day of battle. Cameron betimes enjoyed the hospitality of friends who risked their lives in receiving him under their roof.

July 22, 1680, was the eventful day. The little band had strolled into the heart of this waste moor. Here were threescore valiant men, of the valiant of Israel. "They all held swords, being expert in war; every man had his sword upon his thigh, because of fear in the night." The actual number was sixty-three; twenty-three men were mounted. They hung about Cameron, who never wearied in preaching Christ to their hungry souls. This day his voice was unusually solemn. He had an inward assurance that the sun, which was now flooding the landscape with glory and taking the chill of the night out of his veins, would glance its setting rays upon his blood and theirs, poured upon that field. It was now four o'clock; the men were resting on the little knolls that studded the moor; their horses were grazing by their side; all eyes were often scanning the horizon; any minute danger might loom up.

"They come!" cried one who saw a troop verging on the moor. In a moment the sixty-five were on their feet; the horses were mounted and every man drew his weapon. Captain Hackston, a veteran in the Covenanted cause, took command. Cameron offered a prayer; his recorded prayer was not a plea for safety nor for victory, but that God would "spare the green and take the ripe." They chose their ground, and waited the coming of Captain Bruce with 120 troopers. With grim determination they watched the dragoons cover the ground. Every man was ready, every nerve was steady. The Covenanters had the courage of conscience; they knew they were in the right; their hearts sustained them; their Covenant reinforced them; they were assured of ultimate success. They will certainly achieve all that is best for this time, and for this occasion. Even a crushing defeat will be a moral victory. The outcome will be according to the will of God, and a necessary event in the progress of Christ's kingdom.

These men were sent forward, to stand on the firing line, and show the spirit, the courage, and the faith of the soldiers of Christ; behind them the spiritual world was filled with the armies of God. His twenty-thousands chariots and thousands of angels, were coming up for the successive en-

gements, that will yet fill the world with righteousness and the heavens with praise.

Bruce and his troop were received with a deadly volley; many of their saddles were emptied. Hackston led his horsemen in a desperate charge; he almost split the enemy's force in two; but his men being few, the dragoons enveloped him. His horse bogged; he dismounted, and used his sword with fearful effect. At last he fell, bleeding from many wounds. The Covenanters were overwhelmed and driven from the field. Nine lay dead, among who was Richard Cameron. Twenty-six were killed on the other side, so steady the nerve and deliberate the aim of the Covenanters in the face of crushing odds. The war for freedom was now on; the first blood was shed and had consecrated Ayrsmoss. But the prize of liberty was of high value; other fields must yet be crimsoned with streams flowing from many a heart.

Our enjoyment of civil and religious liberty is so constant and ordinary that we scarcely wait a moment to think of the original cost. What pangs of sorrow, what years of hardships, what streams of blood our fathers paid for the inheritance of truth and freedom they have left their children. Let us be careful to appreciate the blood-brought blessings lest they flee away.

### Points for the Class

1. What monument has been erected at Ayrsmoss?
2. What previous proclamation occasioned this battle?
3. What charges did the Covenanters prefer against the king?
4. How long after the declaration till this fight occurred?
5. How did Cameron and his associates employ their time?
6. Who appeared in search of them?
7. How many men were on each side?
8. How account for God's people suffering defeat?
9. Who won the battle?
10. What was the cost of the liberty we enjoy?
11. How should we guard it for other generations?

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## *An Evening in Samaria*

By the Rev. John C. Rankin

The episode which now unfolds in the life of Christ may almost be described as idyllic in its beauty and power. It was what happened along the way as Jesus and his little band of followers traveled from their location by the lower Jordan in Judea through Samaria to go to Galilee. So far as we know there were seven in the group.

They came to a certain intersection of the roads where they halted their journey and prepared to camp for the night. It appeared to be a good camp site, for Jacob's well was there, and not far away was the little Samaritan town of Sychar.

Five of the men had gone into town to buy food. John had remained behind with Jesus. Together they seated themselves on a parapet of stone surrounding the well to rest and wait for the others to return. It had been a long, hard day, and no wonder they were weary, to say nothing of being hungry and thirsty. Water to quench their thirst was there, but for the time being at least they "had nothing to draw with and the well was deep." However, God in His good providence had a plan to rest and refresh them, to satisfy their hunger and to quench their thirst both of body and soul.

It was an entrancing view which stretched before them, a scene of beauty and prosperity. Ripened grain, rippling in the evening breezes, spread away in all directions to where the mountains stood. Half a mile away, in plain view in the clear evening air, were the walls and gates of the little town.

The next thing they knew, a solitary figure, very diminutive in the distance, emerged from the gate and traversed the intervening space. A woman of Samaria was coming to the well. It has been supposed that there may have been a special reason why this particular woman came alone at that hour. However that may have been, she arrived at the well, lowered her waterpot, let it sink and fill, and drew it up again.

The next thing she knew one of the two men spoke to her and said, "Give me to drink." We may well believe that she unhesitatingly complied, and so each had his fill of clear, cold, sparkling water fresh from the bottom of the old, historic well.

Now her lips framed the question which, the instant she heard the stranger's voice, had formed in her mind. "How is it that thou, being a Jew,

askest drink of me, which am a woman of Samaria? for the Jews have no dealings with the Samaritans." So began a conversation of priceless worth to everyone who prizes his own spiritual life of inward fellowship with God.

The Saviour begins at once to speak in terms of spiritual needs and things. He testifies concerning Himself and His power to satisfy the thirst of the soul. "It thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that saith to thee, Give me to drink; thou wouldest have asked of him, and he would have given thee living water." If she had known the true inwardness of the situation, the asking and the giving would have been the other way around. He would have been the water-giver and she the water-receiver. Indeed before the interview was over she had both asked and received Christ's precious gift of living, never-failing water for the soul.

There appears to have been an instinctive faith in Jesus in this woman from the outset, and rapid progress is made in her faith as the conversation proceeds. She believes enough to believe that He knows whereof He speaks, whether she understands what He says or not. Soon she has accepted Him as a prophet and, a little later, as the Christ.

Twice the subject is changed, once on His part and again on hers. The Spirit of God takes of the things of Christ and shows them unto her. By the means of the word of life from His own lips, and by the power of the Spirit working with the Word in her own heart, another convert is made; another soul is born into the kingdom of God. The Saviour uncovers the sinfulness of her past and testifies to the righteousness of the Jewish claims as over against the Samaritan. He tells of the changing situation concerning the worship of God and what kind of worship God requires.

Now the convert becomes a missionary. The disciples return with their provisions and observe the Master in conversation with the woman. Leaving her waterpot behind she scurries back to the town again to make the good news known.

The men of the city take her at her word and, as the sun descends behind the western hills, they come to Christ. The evening meal is spread and Jesus is urged to partake. But He has already had all the food which for the time being He really craves. He speaks; and, as He has already drawn an object lesson from the well, so now as the men of Sychar are approaching, He takes another from the harvest fields. As the immediate result of one conversion a whole harvest of precious souls is gathered in. Who can say, what words can express the wonder and glory of that evening in Samaria?

Many and precious indeed are the lessons it contains. The original question of the woman as

to why the man addressed her was answered in the conversation itself which had begun in this way. It was not so much that Jesus desired a drink of water as that He wanted to speak and testify and satisfy a thirsty soul with the water of life.

We see how He lived what He taught. "Seek first the kingdom of God" — put first things first. Live and move in all that you think and say and do above all in the realm of the Spirit. We listen to the Saviour's self-assertion in open expression of His Messiahship. We follow in detail on example of His "case work," His kind of personal evangelism. We mark again His mastery and use of the art of conversation, the readiness of His mind at all times with exactly the right word. We see the necessity of the expression and the reception of the truth of God to the end of personal salvation. And one thing especially is to be noted. It is Jesus in His relation to these of "the opposite sex."

Ere long, in his teaching, He would interpret one of the Ten Commandments to mean that "who-soever looketh upon a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart." We realize now how perfectly He exemplified this part of His teaching in his own heart and life. What a gentleman He was! What Christian man is there who would not desire to be like Him? The consequence was that He was ever at ease with womankind and they with Him. They knew and felt instinctively that here was a man whose thoughts were ever as they should be, and who could be trusted always and everywhere.

Jesus so loved that He came to be the sinner's friend, and not his enemy, and to seek and to save the lost. He loved each and all with whom He came in contact, with a love that was pure and good, and desired only the good of the objects of His love. Of course His supreme love was for God and His desire was the perfect vindication of His law and justice and the manifestation of His love.

In so far as evil thoughts and deeds of any kind were concerned, He was ever a total abstainer. Consequently women, too, were drawn to Him, of whom many were numbered among His followers and friends, and found pure delight and perfect joy in personal relation to Him. See Luke 8:1-3 and other references. There was Mary of Magdala, out of whom seven devils were cast. There was Martha and her sister Mary. There was the woman of the seventh of Luke — a sinner, yes, but saved by grace, who "stood at his feet behind him weeping, and began to wash his feet with tears and dry them with the hairs of her head, and kissed his feet and anointed them with the ointment" from her alabaster box. Emotional? yes. But, "to whom much is forgiven, the same loveth much." Later another demonstrated her love of the Lord in much the same way as she anointed

both His head and His feet, as He said, "for his burial." In the latter part of His public life a whole company of women, some of them from the court of Herod, followed His steps, attended His needs, and ministered to Him of their substance on His last journey to Jerusalem. Women watched at His crucifixion, and again at His burial, and were early at the empty tomb, and it was to them that He first appeared after His resurrection from the dead.

So ends another chapter in the "old, old story of Jesus and His love." He manifested the love of

God, but never to the detriment of the fullest recognition and expression of the law and the justice of God. He loved, but He never could obscure or suppress the issue. It was belief or disbelief, acceptance or rejection, together with the full and final outcome of the one and consequence of the other. It was refuge, rest and peace in Him, it was safety and security in His love — or it was endless exposure to God's wrath and curse in the exercise of His holiness and justice. "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him" (John 3:36).

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## *The Early Galilean Ministry*

By the Rev. John C. Rankin

The precious interlude which Jesus enjoyed enroute to Galilee proved to be but the prelude to His early ministry in that region. A suitable simile would be the sunrise on a summer day; another apt comparison, the arrival of the summer season. Summer came in more ways than one in Galilee that year. Light and life, warmth and gladness glowed in many hearts. Supreme happiness and purest joy abounded where the Saviour appeared.

Matthew portrays the event as follows: "Now when Jesus had heard that John was cast into prison, he departed into Galilee; and leaving Nazareth, he came and dwelt in Capernaum, which is upon the seacoast, in the borders of Zabulon and Nephthalim: that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Esaias the prophet, saying, The land of Zabulon, and the land of Nephthalim, by the way of the sea, beyond Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles; the people which sat in darkness saw great light; and to them which sat in the region and shadow of death light is sprung up. From that time Jesus began to preach, and to say, Repent: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand" (Matt. 4:12-17).

When Jesus and His devoted disciples left Samaria and entered Galilee they were back on old familiar ground again. Contrary to what may have been expected, He by-passed the old home town and traveled on to Cana where a second miracle was performed. From Cana He went to Capernaum, and from there to Nazareth and back again. For the remainder of the season he made his headquarters in Capernaum and was constantly on the move in and around that city by the sea.

It appears that about this time the little band disbanded and the Saviour pursued His ministry unattended and alone. Evidently the disciples were dismissed and returned to their own homes. Also this part of the public life was, comparatively speaking, unopposed. Futhermore it was apparent-

ly exclusively a preaching ministry. Miracles were not in evidence as He tarried by the Jordan, stayed on in Sychar and first proclaimed the good news in Capernaum and vicinity.

The meaning of this early non-healing ministry is not far to seek. Jesus' first and chief concern was ever for the souls of men and not their bodies. His main effort was directed to the end of conversion and salvation. His supreme service was ever the liberation of souls in bondage in guilt and sin, and their translation from the power of darkness into the kingdom of heaven and of God. His work was done in the power of the Spirit working with the Word as it came directly from the lips of God's eternal and incarnate Son, the living Word. So the work in Galilee began as a purely preaching and teaching ministry. As for the content of His teaching at this time, attention will be given to this in a later article of this series.

After all, Jesus Himself was the great miracle. His presence among the people with His preaching was miracle enough for the time. His preaching itself was, from the standpoint of all that they had ever heard, a thing of perfect wonder and amazement.

Of course "they were astonished at his doctrine, for he taught them as one having authority and not as the scribes." It was different, of course, not only from that of the scribes, but also from that of the last of the prophets of God whose preaching they had heard.

What made it so utterly unique and different? What was the special mark of its distinction? It was simply that, whether in private or in public, His preaching was ever part and parcel of His presentation of Himself as the Christ. They were Jews who heard Him speak and He was their Messiah-King. No onder they received and felt the touch so divine. No wonder they were moved within and hung upon His every word.

So it is no wonder that this early Galilean ministry was, as has been said, "a glorious summer of quiet power." For His method was not to overawe and subdue with outward display of power, but to reach and to touch the heart, to win to faith and repentance unto life; to persuade to heart and life commitment and allegiance by a process of ever-growing revelation. Galilee, for all its darkness, was bright with holy light from His who was, has been and ever is the one true Light of the world. The one and only Light of life.

While Jesus' first appearance in and around Capernaum was well received, there was one encounter which was much less favorable. This was His first official visit to Nazareth. It was something which could not be avoided, or long delayed. He had testified in advance that He would not be accepted (John 4:44) and so we know that the event came to Him as no surprise. Luke tells the story of this first official appearance in His own home town (Luke 4:16-32).

It was on a Sabbath morning as they gathered for public worship in the synagogue that He came face to face with His old friends and neighbors whom He knew so well and who thought that they knew Him. His fame had preceded Him; and so, as the visiting preacher for the day, He was asked to conduct the service and to speak.

The sermon itself was only nine words long, short enough to satisfy the most fastidious taste in sermon brevity. He read a selection from Isaiah which is forty-eight words long in our translation. Then "he closed the book and gave it again unto the attendant and sat down." "The eyes of all that were in the synagogue were fastened on him. And he began to say unto them, This day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears." That was the sermon, and we may be sure that it was a sensation.

What it meant was that the promised Christ was there in all the fulness of His power and grace,

and that the mere announcement of this was sermon enough for one Sabbath. They listened intently and understood what it meant, but in so far as they were concerned it was absolutely unbelievable. "Is not this Joseph's son?" they asked. As Jesus proceeded to explain the situation they became extremely offended and enraged. The service ended in a wild stampede as they "rose up and thrust him out of the city and led him unto the brow of a hill whereon their city was built that they might cast him down headlong. But he passing through the midst of them went his way, and came down to Capernaum. . . . and taught them on the sabbath days."

What words can describe the sadness of that experience for Him at that time of His life? He was fully prepared, we may be sure, for non-acceptance anytime and anywhere. But to be so violently rejected, here and at this time, while at the same time He was being so enthusiastically received elsewhere! All we can say is that if there was no weeping and no heart burning at the end of that day it was not for lack of adequate occasion for it.

Nazareth was the first though not the last of the cities to turn against Him. Ere long Capernaum would do the same, and Jerusalem did so all along. Nevertheless there was still One who was with Him; "the Father had not left him alone," and He was comforted. His whole life, in a manner of speaking was a providential conditioning for man's rejection of Him, all of which He fully understood and accepted. For, always clearly present to His view was the eternal Weaver sitting at the loom of time, making all things work together for the realization of the eternal pattern and plan for the redemption of sinner-men.

Note: The foregoing two studies are part of a series by Mr. Rankin on the life of Christ. The series will be continued, D. V., in future issues of this magazine. Editor.

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## *The Narrow Door*

By J. G. Vos

"Strive to enter in by the narrow door: for many, I say unto you, shall seek to enter in, and shall not be able." Luke 13:24

### **Heaven can be Entered only through the Narrow Door.**

Jesus was asked "Are they few that are saved?" The first word of His answer is "Strive". The Greek verb is the one from which our word "Agonize" is derived. It means to strive with the utmost earnestness. Instead of speculation about

how many will enter heaven, we should be dead in earnest about entering ourselves.

This narrow door is the door of repentance and faith in Christ. It is not too narrow for a man to get in by, but it is too narrow for a man and his sins to get in by, too narrow for a man and his self-righteousness, his pride, his sinful lusts and habits, his selfish ambitions, to get in by. When a person enters by this door, all these must be left outside. It is the door of genuine heart repentance and real personal faith, that comes to Jesus with

a broken and contrite heart and takes Him as one's only Saviour from sin.

This door is too narrow for most people. They want to enter heaven, but they want to enter by a broader, more inclusive, more popular and more comfortable door. Many will seek to enter heaven and will not be able because they tried to enter some other way than by the narrow door of repentance and faith in Christ. Many people today avoid a church that preaches repentance, separation from sin, and faith in Christ alone for salvation. Why should they associate themselves with such a "narrow" church, when there are plenty of churches everywhere which are more tolerant and broadminded? There are plenty of churches that will let a man keep his sins unrebuked, and when he dies will hold a lovely funeral for him and declare that he has gone to heaven. But Christ teaches that only through the narrow door can we enter heaven. All who think they can enter some other way are only deceiving themselves. They shall not be able.

If you have not passed through the narrow door, you are not in God's Kingdom, and you are not saved. If you have not passed through the narrow door, you will not go to heaven when you die. If you do not pass through the narrow door, you will be lost eternally in hell.

#### **Someday it will be Too Late to Enter Through the Narrow Door**

In the next verse Jesus tells us that a day is coming when the door will be shut. The guests will have assembled; the door will be shut; no others will be admitted to the feast.

This is the day of grace, the day of salvation. Not tomorrow or next year, but now, is the time to come to Christ, to enter through the narrow door and receive eternal life. The door is open today, and all men are invited to enter. But remember, a day is coming when the door will be shut.

The door is shut when death overtakes us. And who knows when that will be? It is appointed unto men once to die, and after that comes judg-

ment. When death comes, the door of opportunity closes forever. There will be no more opportunity to accept Christ and receive salvation. There will be no more time to think it over and make up our mind. No more time to put it off a little while longer. As Augustine said long ago, "God has promised forgiveness to your repentance, but He has not promised tomorrow to your procrastination." It will be forever too late. Opportunities will all be in the past, a closed book, a record that bears witness against us.

There is also a time coming when the door will be shut for the whole world. When Christ shall come again at the last day and the trumpet shall sound and the dead shall rise, then the narrow door will be shut for the whole world. It will then be too late to decide to enter through the narrow door. That door will be forever shut.

#### **Many who Expected to Enter Heaven will find Themselves Excluded**

Jesus vividly pictures the scene. People will begin to clamor, "Lord open to us!" They call Jesus "Lord", but they never entered through the narrow door. They want to enjoy the bliss of heaven, but they never passed through the narrow door. And to all these self-deceived people Jesus' reply is, "I know you not whence ye are". This clearly means: "You are not members of my family; you are not citizens of my kingdom; you are not children of my heavenly Father; you are strangers, outsiders; you never entered by the narrow door. You do not belong in here and you cannot be admitted now."

But these people are insistent. They cannot believe that they are really excluded from heaven. They tell the Lord, "We did eat and drink in thy presence, and thou didst teach in our streets." They had been religious folk, who knew about Jesus and in a general way were associated with Him. But the Lord's reply is: "I tell you, I know you not whence ye are; depart from me, all ye workers of iniquity."

To us today, as to people of old, Jesus' word is, "Strive to enter in by the narrow door."

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## ***The Walls of Zion***

**By the Rev. W. R. McEwen**

By a true spiritual perception, the people of God down the ages have seen in many references to Zion in the psalms and the prophets a picture of the Christian Church, and have learned many practical lessons. Originally Zion designated one of the hills upon which Jerusalem was built and upon which David placed the ark of the covenant.

Later it applied to the whole city as the centre of covenant blessing through sacrifice. It is an easy transition to see in the Church such a centre of blessing through the atoning work of the Lord Jesus Christ which was foreshadowed so fully in the ritual of the temple — so closely associated with Zion. So we may take the injunction of the

Psalmist to "walk about Zion, and go round about her: Tell the towers thereof. Mark ye well her bulwarks," as a command to inspect the walls and battlements of the Church of God and see that they are in good repair. We are commissioned to be watchmen upon the walls of Zion. We must also do, what Lord Tweedsmuir said his father, a Presbyterian minister, occasionally did, namely, "man a gun upon the embattled ramparts." Only thus can the cause of God be defended from the attacks of the enemy.

But what are the walls we must maintain and defend today if the Church of God is to stand secure?

### Doctrine

Surely the first and most important is doctrine. It was after Peter's great confession at Caesarea Philippi to the Messiahship and deity of our Lord that Christ said, "Upon this rock I will build My Church." It was after a most definite doctrinal sermon at Pentecost, in which Peter clearly proclaimed the great fundamentals of the faith, that the Christian Church began to be built up. And wherever the apostles went they preached doctrine, and the Church was established. Paul reminded the Corinthians of the Gospel which he preached to them and which they received and by which they were saved—a Gospel which contained as its essential features the substitutionary death and physical resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ. And at Ephesus he did not shun to declare the whole counsel of God. He commenced his ministry in every place by preaching doctrine. And when he wrote to the churches he had founded he re-emphasised that doctrine. He exhorted the Christians to maintain the form of sound words and warned them against anything which is contrary to sound doctrine. He exhorted Timothy to charge certain men not to teach a different doctrine. He denounced those in Galatia who were teaching a different Gospel. He singled out for special honour those who laboured in the word and doctrine. The Church, he maintained, is "the pillar and ground of the Truth." Surely it is evident that doctrine is of primary importance.

The Scottish Reformers were right when they set down as the first note of the true Church, "the true preaching of the Word of God." The Anglican Reformers agreed with them when they defined "the visible Church of Christ" as a congregation of faithful men in the which the pure Word of God is preached, and the sacraments be duly ministered according to Christ's appointment." Notice that the preaching of the Word is given precedence over the administration of the sacraments. But even they, when rightly understood, are a preaching of the Word as well as a seal upon it.

### Devotion

But there is such a thing as "dead orthodoxy" — true doctrines held by the cold hand of a lifeless soul — "icily regular, splendidly null, dead perfection, no more." That need not be, and should not be. The great doctrines of God's Word are calculated to regenerate the soul and kindle the heart into flame of devotion. We are born again of incorruptible seed by the Word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever. Under the preaching of that Word at Pentecost three thousand souls "were pricked in their heart" and, repenting of their sins, were baptized in the name of Jesus Christ, and received the baptism of the Holy Ghost. These continued steadfastly, not only in the apostles' doctrine, but "in fellowship and in breaking of bread and in prayers." Paul, the great theologian of the New Testament, bursts forth into adoration as he contemplates some of the great doctrines he is expounding. While no one emphasised more the great objective facts of redemption, he rejoices to see himself embraced in God's gracious saving purposes. He not only declares, as a faithful saying, that "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners," but adds, in humble penitence, "of whom I am chief." Again, he not only says "Christ loved the Church, and gave Himself for it, but he puts it more personally when he confesses that the "Son of God . . . loved me and gave Himself for me." Then he is ever bowing his knees in prayer for his converts or for himself for grace to serve or to suffer.

So it should be with us all. The Church will not stand if doctrines do not produce a personal experience in the lives of the members. Principles must be maintained, but they can only be truly maintained when there is true piety and a real spirit of devotion.

### Discipline

The Scottish Reformers wisely placed among the notes of the true Church "ecclesiastical discipline uprightly ministered, as God's Word prescribed, whereby vice is repressed and virtue nourished." Self-discipline is essential if one is to have a properly developed, well regulated and really fruitful life. Just as fruit trees need pruning, so lives need discipline. So it is with the Church. It is a divine organism whose life needs to be regulated and restrained. In the Church we are members one of another, and out of love we ought to rebuke our neighbour, and "not suffer sin upon him." Then Christ is King and Head of the Church, and He has appointed office-bearers under Him to see that His will is carried out. He promised His presence where two or three are met in His name to exercise discipline upon an offending member of the Church (Matt. 18: 15-20). Paul also indicates how a sinful brother should be treated, and lays down the qualifications for office-bearers in the Church.

Church government may not be the most important of Biblical truths, yet for the well-being of the Church it must be exercised for the exclusion of unrighteous practices and unsound doctrines. Calvin rightly saw that sound doctrine could not be maintained without faithful discipline. No doubt the spiritual decline in the Church today is due to the relaxing of discipline. The moral and spiritual standards of the Church are lowered to the level of the world, and the Church's testimony fails to carry conviction with those who are without. While Church discipline may have been abused in the past, yet that does not excuse its neglect today.

#### Distribution

There is one other aspect of Christian activity which found expression in the early Church, but is largely delegated to other spheres today, namely, the care of the poor. Widows and orphans and others who were destitute were regarded as a charge upon the Christian community. Of course

this was not meant to relieve individuals of their family responsibilities, and he who did not provide for his own, and especially for those of his own house, was regarded as having denied the faith and being worse than an infidel. Today governments have largely assumed responsibility for the aged and infirm and destitute, though the meagre pittance distributed as pensions bears a disproportionate relationship to the salaries of politicians. But there is still room for the Church to exercise Christian charity through city missions and in support of hospitals. The mission field, especially, opens an avenue for such practical Christ-like service which commends the Gospel to heathen hearts.

The Church, then, like the city which John saw descend from heaven, lieth four-square. Let us seek to maintain its walls and battlements intact.

Note: The foregoing article is reprinted from *Evangelical Action* (Australia) — Editor.

## Religious Terms Defined

**GOSPEL.** The good news of salvation provided for sinners by the grace of God through the redemptive work of Jesus Christ the Mediator (1 Cor. 15:1-4).

**GRACE OF GOD.** The favor of God bestowed on human beings who deserve His wrath and curse on account of sin.

**SPECIAL GRACE OF GOD.** That grace of God which is bestowed on His elect only, and which brings about their eternal salvation.

**COMMON GRACE OF GOD.** That grace of God which is bestowed on all mankind alike, both the elect and the reprobate, bringing certain benefits during this life, but not bringing about eternal salvation.

**HARMONY OF THE GOSPELS.** A book which combines the four Gospels, Matthew, Mark, Luke and John into one continuous narrative, avoiding repetition, or which arranges the contents of the four Gospels in such a way that the reader can easily see what parts are peculiar to one Gospel and what parts are common to two, three or all four Gospels.

**HEAVEN.** (1) The sky (Gen. 1:1). (2) That place in the created universe where the presence and glory of God are especially revealed. (3) The eternal home of the redeemed (2 Cor. 5:1; Heb. 10:34).

**HELL.** The place of eternal punishment, originally prepared for the devil and his angels, where all human beings who are out of Christ

will for ever be isolated from the favorable presence of God and from all that is good (Matt. 25:41,46).

**HERESY.** (1) In the New Testament originally a party or sect (translated "sect" in Acts 5:17; 15:5); later, false doctrine stubbornly adhered to (2 Peter 2:1). (2) In church government today, heresy is false doctrine which is definitely contrary to the accepted creed or doctrinal standards of a church.

(Note: doctrine which is alleged to be contrary to the Bible, but not contrary to definite statements of the Church's creed, is called "error," whereas doctrine which is not only alleged to be contrary to the Bible, but is also contrary to definite statements of the Church's creed, is called "heresy.")

**HERETIC.** A person who adheres to a heresy.

**HERODIANS.** A Jewish party in the time of Christ, who supported the political power of the Herod family and favored the Romans, thus being opposed to the Pharisees (Matt. 22:16; Mark 3:6).

**HETERODOX.** Unsound or erroneous; the opposite of orthodox (used of either a doctrine or a person).

**HOLINESS.** The state of freedom from sin, with the heart in conformity to God; a holy state of the heart which is manifested in the life.

**HOLINESS OF GOD.** (1) God's supreme majesty and exaltation far above and beyond the

universe and all created beings. (2) God's infinite, absolute separation from all that is sinful.

**HOPE.** The Christian's sure expectation and eager anticipation of the supreme glory and blessedness which shall be his in the life of eternity, following the second coming of Christ and the resurrection.

**HUGUENOTS.** A name, originally given in contempt, for the Reformed or Calvinistic Protestants of France.

**HUMANITY OF CHRIST.** The human nature of Christ consisting of body and soul, which He took into union with His divine person and nature. "Christ, the Son of God, became man by taking to himself a true body and a reasonable soul, being conceived by the power of the Holy Ghost, in the womb of the Virgin Mary, and born of her, yet without sin" (S. C. 22).

**HUMILIATION OF CHRIST.** Christ's humiliation consisted in his being born, and that in a low condition, made under the law, undergoing the miseries of this life, the wrath of God, and the cursed death of the cross; in being buried, and continuing under the power of death for a time" (S. C. 27).

**HUSSITES.** A reforming party in the Church in Bohemia (Czechoslovakia) in the 15th century and later. Named after their leader John Huss who was burnt at the stake for his faith in the year 1415.

**IDOLATRY.** (1) In the narrower sense, the religious worship of idols, that is, images or pictures. (2) In the wider sense, all religious worship other than that offered to the true God.

**ILLUMINATION.** The progressive work of the Holy Spirit in the mind of a Christian, whereby

he is enabled to see and understand the truth revealed in the Scriptures (Eph. 1:18). ( Illumination is the intellectual counterpart of sanctification. By sanctification a Christian is made to love and practice holiness; by illumination he is made to know and understand the truth.)

**IMPLICIT FAITH.** That faith by which a person accepts on the authority of another some doctrine or system which he has not himself considered, or of which he is personally ignorant. (Cf. Westminster Confession of Faith, XX. 2. When a person says that he accepts the Westminster Confession and Catechisms, yet admits that he has never read those documents (or perhaps never even seen them), he is guilty of the sin of accepting them with an implicit faith, that is, "sight unseen," by a blind faith).

**INABILITY.** The condition of the unsaved sinner, by reason of which he is unable, not merely to save himself from sin, but even to desire salvation. (Note: Inability is not inconsistent with free agency. The unsaved sinner is free to turn to God, but not able to turn to God, just as a bird with a broken wing is free to fly, but not able to fly).

**INCARNATION.** The act by which God the Son took to himself a human nature (body and soul) and thus became man, to accomplish the work of redemption (John 1:14).

**INDEPENDENCE OF GOD.** The truth that God is in no sense whatever dependent upon, limited by, or in need of anything or anyone in, the created universe, but is absolutely self-sufficient and self-existent. (It is wrong to use the verbs "cannot" and "needs" when God is the subject. Mark 10:27; Acts 17:25).

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## *Ashamed of the Tents of Shem?*

By J. G. Vos

(**Note:** The editor has been requested to republish certain articles, originally published several years ago, dealing with the Christian's use of the Psalms and especially with some of the objections to the Psalms which are common today. In compliance with this request, the present article, which was originally published in 1952 under the title "Wrong Tendencies in the Use of the Psalms," is reproduced here. An article on the so-called Imprecatory Psalms will be presented, D. V., in the next issue. The editor has also been requested to publish a review of C. S. Lewis' new book on the Psalms. This also will appear, D. V., in the next issue.

The wrong tendencies in the use of the Psalms, to which the present article calls attention, are, if anything, even more pronounced today than when the article was first published. Some who still sing the Psalms nevertheless try to avoid the distinctive features of the Psalms, and to deal with the Psalms in such a way that their differences from hymns of merely human composition are minimized. This wrong attitude toward the Psalms, if not checked by an intelligent appreciation of their real character and value, will ultimately lead (as it already has led in several denominations) to the abandonment of the Psalter as the book of praise. It is hoped that the

present article may be used of the Holy Spirit to help some who dislike the Psalms, or who use them merely because of custom or tradition, to love the Psalms and to see them as part and parcel of the Biblical system of religion. — Editor).

“God shall enlarge Japheth, and he shall dwell in the tents of Shem” — Gen. 9:27.

The German scholar Delitzsch remarked that we are all Japhethites dwelling in the tents of Shem. The prophecy uttered by Noah was that God would enlarge Japheth, and Japheth would dwell in the tents of Shem. In the Hebrew idiom, to dwell in the tents of someone means to be the inheritor of that person's wealth and estate.

Noah's prophecy concerns the broad lines of the future development of the various branches of the human race. God would enlarge Japheth. Japheth was the ancestor of the Indo-European peoples, to which we ourselves belong. It is a fact of history that for the last 2500 years the Indo-European peoples have been dominant in world affairs, not only in material and scientific progress, but also in political control of the major part of the civilized world. This dominance is today challenged by other peoples of the world, but it has not yet been completely overthrown. However, it is not this aspect of Noah's prophecy which particularly concerns us in the present article. We are now concerned especially with the prediction that Japheth should dwell in the tents of Shem.

It is particularly in the matter of religion that the Christian people of Europe and America dwell in the tents of Shem. Our religion is an inheritance from the descendents of Shem. It has come down to us, in the providence of God, from Semitic sources.

Some people do not like this idea. In Nazi Germany before World War II there was a violent revolt against it. The so-called “German Christians” attempted to purge Christianity and the Church from Jewish influences and traditions. Some Germans went even farther than this, and brazenly returned to the idolatrous nature-worship of their pagan ancestors — the old German gods of storm and forest and mountain. But the old gods did not help them, and pagan Nazi Germany went down to dismal defeat.

It is still true that Christians of Europe and America dwell in the tents of Shem. Our religious heritage has come to us from the children of Israel, the children of Shem. Our very Christ was a Jew. Our Bible was written almost entirely by Israelites. Our religious thought-forms, vocabulary, sacraments, worship, church-government, all have come to us, humanly speaking, from Israel.

It is important to realize that this is not an accident; it is the intended purpose of God. God intended that the true, saving religion of Christian-

ity should be given to the world through a Semitic, Israelitish channel. He purposed that Japheth should dwell in the tents of Shem. Our religion is not indigenous in our race. We Christians of the Indo-European race have a religion which came from a different source. We can never go back to the old gods of our ancestors. We have known the truth; the true light has dawned upon us. It is the light from God, but it has come to us through the channel of Israel.

Since this has been the plan and purpose of God, we should not despise it nor should we rebel against it. We might prefer that the Saviour of the world had been a Greek or a Roman, of the same race as ourselves. But God did not purpose it so. The proverb says that beggars cannot be choosers, and our position before God is that of beggars. We are thankful to have Christ as our Saviour, and since it pleased the sovereign God to bring His Son into the world through the seed of Abraham, we can only thank and praise Him for it.

What does all this imply? It certainly implies, at any rate, that we should not seek to escape or evade those features of our religion which bear the label of Shem. We should not object to what bears the stamp of Israelitish origin. To do so is to rebel against the wisdom and goodness of God. God chose that the sons of Japheth, in the matter of religion, should dwell in the tents of Shem. We should respond: “Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in thy sight”.

There are many today who are tired of singing the Bible Psalms in the worship of God. This has various reasons, no doubt. Some are tired of singing the Psalms because they are not willing to bear the cross of being different from the big, popular churches. The other churches sing popular hymns, and the Psalms seem to be not only different, but peculiar and old-fashioned.

Some object to the Psalms because they do not like the theology of the Psalms, with its emphasis on the righteousness and justice of God, and His destruction of His enemies.

Some object to the Psalms because they do not like the Jewish flavor and coloring of the Psalms — the names of people and places, the references to the history of the children of Israel, the Hebrew flavor of the language.

These objections to the Psalms all have one thing in common. No matter what the objection, it arises from a lack of real sympathy with and appreciation of the religion of the Bible. Those who object to the Psalms do not want to dwell in the tents of Shem. They do not like the form and pattern and structure of the religion which God has given to the world; they prefer something new and different, made by themselves. So they “heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears” and “turn away their ears from the truth . . . unto fables” 2 Tim. 4:3,4).

We shall now consider some common wrong tendencies in the use of the Psalms.

### I. Avoidance of the Proper Names in the Psalms.

Zion occurs 38 times in the Psalter; Israel 62 times; Ephraim 5 times; Melchizedek once. There are numerous others: Oreb and Zeeb, Zeba and Zalmunna, Jacob, Lebanon, Kadesh, Jordan, Hermon, Mizar, Tyre, Shechem, Succoth, Gilead, Moab, Edom, Egypt, Ethiopia, Tarshish, Sheba, Seba, and so forth.

The objection is raised that these ancient persons and places have no connection with us today. They are just a lot of dusty history from two or three thousand years ago. Why should we sing about Zeba and Zalmunna? It sounds as if we were to sing about Hokus and Pokus, or Dasher and Prancer, Donder and Blitzen. So runs the objection. But wait. After all, do Zeba and Zalmunna have nothing to do with us today? If we are attached to the Biblical religion we will realize that they have a lot to do with us today. Our religion did not drop to us out of the sky directly from God. He gave it to us through history, and that the history of Israel. The history of Israel was a history of redemption by the almighty power of God; it was a history of overcoming powerful enemies by the almighty power of God. The enemies were real; they were contemporary manifestations of Satan's kingdom. They were terribly real. But they were crushed by the wonder-working power of almighty God, the covenant God, Jehovah, the God of Israel. This was the importance of Zeba and Zalmunna.

Our religion today, if it is Biblical Christianity, is a religion of overcoming powerful enemies by the supernatural, almighty power of God. We should always think, when we read or sing about Zeba and Zalmunna, of how salvation is not by our might, nor by our power, but by the almighty power, the supernatural grace, of God.

Evil is not abstract, but concrete; it is identified with particular persons. To destroy the evil, the persons must be dealt with by God's mighty power and righteous judgment. Isaac Watts said he would make David talk like a Christian. He denatured the Psalms, and he sophisticated them. Watts quite failed to appreciate the real beauty and glory of the Psalter. Since Watts' time, some Psalm-singing denominations have shied away from the proper names in the Psalter, and have tried to screen many of them out of it. Zion is changed to "the church", and Jerusalem likewise; many of the others are omitted or smoothed over in some way. This yields us a denatured Psalter. No wonder the next step is to give up the Psalms in worship. They have already given up the real vigor and beauty and power of the Psalms by omitting the proper names.

Zion and Jerusalem are the tents of Shem, and it is God's plan for us to dwell in them. Shall we object to that? Those who try to eliminate the proper names of the Psalter show a lack of vital consciousness of the organic connection of the Gospel with the Old Testament. They fail to realize that the real meaning of these proper names, as Zion, is intimately connected with the Biblical doctrine of salvation by free grace. These proper names, and the Psalms with them in, are to be used in the worship of God to the end of the world. They are God's record, God's monument, to the great work of redemption wrought out in history of old. These proper names are not the shame and weakness of the Psalms; they are the honor and the glory of the Psalms.

### II. Avoidance of the "Imprecatory" Psalms

Of the 150 Psalms in the Psalter, some six are commonly classified as "imprecatory" Psalms — the 55th, 59th, 69th, 79th, 109th and 137th. Many other Psalms contain "imprecatory" elements, namely, divinely inspired prayers for the destruction of certain wicked men, enemies of God.

The Psalter is constantly being reproached because of the "imprecatory" Psalms. It is said that these Psalms breathe a savage spirit, that they are alien to the "spirit of Jesus", that they are not suited to Christian devotion, and so forth.

These objections spring partly from a misunderstanding of the Psalms themselves. The objectors often regard them as mere human compositions. They see in them simply David's private wrath against his personal enemies. But such is not the character of these Psalms. They are divinely inspired and they are directed against implacable enemies of God and of God's kingdom. They are so cited in the New Testament (Psalm 69:25 and 109:8 quoted in Acts 1:20). Nor are the "imprecatory" Psalms really contrary to the "spirit of Jesus" or the "spirit" of the New Testament. All that is found in them can be matched by statements of the New Testament, and none is more terrible than the words of Jesus Christ against those permanently identified with Satan's kingdom.

The objections also arise partly from a false idealism in religion, which regards Christianity as merely a matter of ideals. Christianity is not merely a matter of ideals; it is not even merely salvation; Christianity is **divine redemption from an objective realm of evil** — from the land of Egypt, from the house of bondage, from Satan's kingdom.

Christianity involves divine judgment on sin and sinners as truly as it involves divine redemption for God's people. The false notion that God is nothing but love is responsible for much of the opposition to these Psalms. The present writer recalls hearing a young woman, a member of a

Psalm-singing church, say of Psalm 137: "I just HATE that Psalm!" The most charitable explanation of this attitude toward a part of God's holy Word is that this young woman really understood neither Psalm 137, nor the real character of Biblical religion as divine redemption from an objective realm of evil. She had no doubt been fed on a false religious idealism which thought of God as nothing but love, and left His justice entirely out of the picture.

Such is a very one-sided view of God. "Behold the goodness and severity of God" (Rom. 11:22) — not only the goodness of God, but also the severity of God. The Psalms give the whole picture, not just one side. They portray not only God's love and salvation, but His justice and retribution meted out to wicked men. Christ's kingdom is not advanced without Satan's kingdom being destroyed.

### III. Emphasis on the Subjective Element Only

There is observable a constant tendency to use only those portions of the Psalms which deal with subjective salvation — a Christian's religious experience — such as the consciousness of God's love, of forgiveness, of God's care. The tendency is to regard these experiences of the Christian life as divorced from the foundation on which God has built them, namely, historical redemption from an objective realm of evil. Take, for example, Psalm 118, that incomparable song of gracious, supernatural redemption, a song which will stir the very heart and soul of any Christian who loves the Biblical religion. This 118th Psalm formed the climax of the great Hallel which our Saviour and His disciples sang after the institution of the Lord's Supper, before they left the upper room to go to the Garden of Gethsemane.

Here is the Christian's subjective experience of salvation, the wonder of salvation by divine grace:

O praise the Lord for he is good;  
His grace is ever sure.  
Now let the tribes of Isr'el say,  
His mercy doth endure.  
In my distress I sought the Lord,  
Jehovah answered me;  
He set me in a spacious place,  
A place of liberty.  
The mighty Lord is on my side,  
I will not be afraid;  
For anything that man can do  
I shall not be dismayed.  
Salvation's joyful song is heard  
Where'er the righteous dwell;  
The right hand of the mighty Lord  
In valor doth excel.  
I shall not die, but live and tell  
Jehovah's power to save;  
The Lord hath sorely chastened me,  
But spared me from the grave,

But this exultation in personal salvation is based on the objective foundation of historical divine redemption from evil. The same Psalm which exults in subjective salvation also glories in the foundation of objective, historical redemption:

That stone is made head corner stone  
Which builders did despise;  
This is the doing of the Lord,  
And wondrous in our eyes.

The Lord is God, and he to us  
Hath made the light arise;  
O bind ye to the altar's horns  
With cords the sacrifice.

There you have it. Salvation's joyful song is heard, true; but only because there was One who was despised and rejected of men, who yet was made the head stone of the corner by God, and bound as a sacrifice to the horns of the altar. Every time we sing those solemn, sacred words we should think of how our blessed Lord was nailed to the cross of Calvary for our redemption.

Back of our personal experience of God's love, God's forgiveness, God's care, God's answer to prayer; back of our joy, our peace of mind, our hope — back of all these lies a historical work of redemption, without which our Christian experience today could not exist. This historical work of redemption is wrought out by the almighty power of God in human history, from Genesis to Revelation, from creation to consummation, but especially in the life, death, resurrection and ascension of our Lord Jesus Christ. This is the solid granite rock on which our personal experience of salvation rests. Such is the structure of real, Biblical Christianity. It is solid, hard and strong as granite, the true rock of ages, the foundation of God's almighty work of historical redemption from evil.

In the Bible the present subjective experience of the Christian is joined organically with the historical work of redemption. What God has joined together let no man put asunder. To sever these two is basically wrong, and the tendency to do so, which is observable on every hand even in Psalm-singing churches, is an indication of how far we are being influenced, unconsciously, by modern religious liberal idealism.

The trend of modern hymnbooks is largely toward the over-emphasis of the subjective experience at the expense of the objective foundation. Even those churches which do not use the hymns, often show the same tendency by people's manner of picking and choosing among the Psalms. A Psalm will be announced for singing, and two or three stanzas dealing with the objective foundation will be omitted, while the remaining stanzas, dealing with subjective experience, will be sung. Thus in our folly we are like a man who enjoys

eating apples but despises apple trees and regards them of little or no value. Admittedly we cannot eat the roots, bark and branches of the apple tree; but are they therefore to be neglected and treated as of no importance? Shall we put asunder what God has joined together? Do we not thereby reveal a deadly weakness, a serious failure to grasp the real character and structure of Biblical religion?

Those very features of the Psalms which are objectionable to the modern spirit are the real strength and glory of the Psalter. They are essential to its truly Biblical character and emphasis.

Those who love one aspect of the Psalms only, while finding other aspects alien to their religious life, or even unpleasant and objectionable, are already involved in a process which, if not reversed, will in the course of time lead to the complete rejection of the Psalter as the manual

of praise. But that is not all. This same process, if not checked, will in the course of time lead to a complete departure from the Biblical religion of redemption from an objective realm of evil, to an alien type of religion, a type of religion which is divorced from historical facts and which is merely subjective and idealistic. It will lead to the type of religion which, instead of saying "I believe in the Lord Jesus Christ," says instead, "I believe in goodness, truth and beauty." And in that subjective idealism there is no salvation.

The Psalms are balanced, they are free from all one-sided emphases. They have stood the test of time. Let us hold on to them, love them, glory in them, sing them heartily, and never, never apologize for them or be ashamed of them. They are our heritage, a part of the tents of Shem that God has planned and prepared for us to dwell in to His glory and our own good.

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## *Some Noteworthy Quotations*

IN WHOMSOEVER the death of Christ is not the death of sin, he shall die in his sins.

— John Owen

CHRIST AND HIS CHURCH when they are at the lowest are nearest rising; His enemies at the highest are nearing a downfall.

— Richard Sibbes

WHILE THE LAW brings works, faith presents man before God as naked, that he may be clothed with the righteousness of Christ.

— John Calvin

THE ENEMY'S FIRST stratagem is to wrest his sword from Christ's soldier.

— John Calvin

THERE IS DIVINE mystery about revivals. God's sovereignty is in them.

— Alexander Whyte

AN INFALLIBLE SCRIPTURE means an absolutely sovereign God who rules all His creation and determines the course of all things.

— R. J. Rushdoony (From *Torch and Trumpet*)

IT IS A HAPPY presage to the distressed Church of deliverance approaching, and is, as it were the dawning of its day, when the people of God are stirred up to cry mightily to Him for it.

— Matthew Henry

YOU MAY AS SOON find a living man with-

out breath as a living saint without prayer.

— Matthew Henry

GOD DOES NOT DELAY to hear our prayers, because He has no mind to give; but that, by enlarging our desires, He may give us the more largely.

— Anselm of Canterbury

AS CHRIST is the treasury of all knowledge, so the Scriptures are of Christ. These treasures lie scattered in all the veins of the prophets and apostles; dig for them as for silver, take pains and travail to understand them.

— Thomas Goodwin

THE THOUGHT OF THE KINGDOM of God implies the subjection of the entire range of human life in all its forms and spheres to the ends of religion. The kingdom reminds us of the **absolute-ness, the pervasiveness, the unrestricted dominion**, which of right belong to all true religion. It proclaims that religion, and religion alone, can act as the **supreme unifying, centralizing factor** in the life of man, as that which binds all together and perfects all by leading it to its final goal in the service of God.

—Geerhardus Vos

UNDER WHATEVER SAFEGUARDS, indeed, it may be attempted, and with whatever caution it may be prosecuted, the effort to modify the teaching of Scripture as to its own inspiration by an appeal to the observed characteristics of Scripture, is an attempt not to obtain a clearer

knowledge of what the Scriptures teach, but to **correct** that teaching. And to **correct** the teaching of Scripture is to proclaim Scripture untrustworthy as a witness to doctrine. The procedure in question is precisely similar to saying that the Bible's doctrine of creation is to be derived not alone from the teachings of the Bible as to creation, but from the facts obtained through a scientific study of creation; . . . that the Bible's doctrine of justification is to be obtained by retaining the term as commended by the common sense of the Christian world and understanding by it just what we find justification to be in actual life. . . . Who does not see that underlying this whole method of procedure — in its best and in its worst estate alike —

there is apparent an unwillingness to commit ourselves without reserve to the **teaching** of the Bible, either because that teaching is distrusted or already disbelieved; and that it is a grave logical error to suppose that the teaching of the Bible as to inspiration can be corrected in this way any other-wise than by showing it to be not in accordance with the facts? The proposed method, therefore, does not conduct us to a somewhat modified doctrine of inspiration, but to a disproof of inspiration; by correcting the doctrine delivered by the Biblical writers, it discredits these writers as teachers of doctrine.

— Benjamin B. Warfield

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## *Studies in the Covenant of Grace*

### Introductory Note

This series of Bible lessons was published in *Blue Banner Faith and Life* in 1949 and 1950 under the title: **The Covenant of Grace: Its Meaning and Its Implications for the Church, the Family and the Christian**. Since the supply of the issues in which the series appeared has long been exhausted, it has not been possible to provide copies to those wanting them. Recently the editor was requested by the pastor of a Reformed Presbyterian congregation to republish the entire series. A young adults' Bible study group in the congregation, after considering various possibilities, had decided to take up a study of the Covenant of Grace, and wished to use these lessons as a help in their study of the Bible on this subject. In response to this request, the series is being reprinted with some editing and changes which, it is hoped, will be found to be improvements. The series will run, D. V., through the first three issues of the year 1959.

In class or group use, it is suggested that the leader propound each question but withhold the printed answer until the members of the group have had an opportunity to discuss the question. Then the printed answer may be read and compared with the answer or answers that have already been given, and discussed in the light of the relevant Scripture references.

The Scripture references should always be looked up, and an effort should be made to show how each particular reference is related to the subject under discussion. There is little or no value in merely reading a large number of verses, unless the leader or members of the group try to show the relation of each Scripture verse or reference to some element of the doctrine set forth in the lesson.

It is suggested that a group of adult church members study these lessons during the Young

People's Hour on Sabbath evenings. Such a group could be led by the minister part of the time, and at other times by the elders or by other members taking turns. The leader should always study the material in advance of the group meeting, and each member of the group should have a copy of the magazine containing the lessons.

The aim of these studies is to aid Christian people in gaining an adequate understanding of one of the most important and central doctrines of the Bible and of our Reformed Faith — the doctrine of the Covenant of Grace — a doctrine which has been somewhat neglected by the present generation of church members, and which must be known and honored if there is to be a real revival of Biblical Christianity among us.

Besides the Bible itself and the lessons in *Blue Banner Faith and Life*, the following are recommended as helps toward on understanding of the doctrine of the Covenant of Grace:

**The Constitution of the Reformed Presbyterian Church of North America**, obtainable from Mr. Chester R. Fox, Treasurer, Empire Bldg. Pittsburgh 22, Pa. This volume contains the Westminster Standards complete, together with the Reformed Presbyterian Testimony and other standards of our Faith.

**Bible Truths for Young Christians: A Series of Lessons in Preparation for Communicant Church Membership**, by J. G. Vos. Obtainable at 25 cents per copy from Mr. Fox (address given above). This booklet contains concise definitions of many terms.

**The Covenant Idea in Scripture**, by F. D. Frazer. Ministers may possess a mimeographed copy of this 55-page study as it was issued in 1937. It was also published in installments in *Blue*

Banner Faith and Life (April, 1953 through September, 1955).

**The Covenant of Grace**, by John Murray. Published in England by The Tyndale Press, 39 Bedford Square, London. W. C. 1, England. Available in U.S.A. from The Inter-Varsity Press, 1519

North Astor, Chicago 10, Ill.; in Canada from Inter-Varsity Christian Fellowship, 30 St. Mary Street, Toronto 5, Ontario. This is a 32-page booklet first issued in 1954. It was reviewed in Blue Banner Faith and Life, July-September, 1954, pages 157-8. Price in Britain and Ireland, 1s. 6d.

## LESSON 1

### The Idea of a Covenant Between God and Man

"The distance between God and the creature is so great, that although reasonable creatures do owe obedience unto Him as their Creator, yet they never have any fruition of Him as their blessedness and reward, but by some voluntary condescension on God's part, which He hath been pleased to express by way of covenant." — The Westminster Confession of Faith, VII. 1.

#### Scripture References:

Isa. 40:13-17. The immeasurable distance between Creator and creature.

Job 9:32, 33. 1 Sam. 2:25. The distance between God and man is so great that man could never fully glorify and enjoy God unless God took the initiative and bridged the chasm between Himself and man.

Psalm 113:5, 6; 100:2, 3. Job 22:2, 3; 35:7, 8. Luke 17:10. Acts 17:24, 25. It is an act of voluntary condescension on God's part to establish a religious relationship (covenant) between Himself and man.

#### Questions:

##### 1. What does the Bible mean by a covenant of God with man?

According to the teaching of the Bible, a covenant of God made with man is an arrangement for a certain purpose, made by God and imposed on man, involving certain promises on God's part and certain obligations on man's part. By such a covenant, a religious relationship between God and man is constituted or restored.

##### 2. What common error exists concerning the nature of God's covenants with man?

It is very commonly, but wrongly, stated that God's covenants with man are of the nature of compacts, agreements or bargains mutually entered into by God and man. There is indeed an element of truth in this idea, for man (through his representatives, Adam and Christ) is a party to the covenants, and must agree to the terms laid down by God. But the idea that a covenant is a compact or agreement tends to lead people to think of God and man as more or less equal parties who mutually NEGOTIATED AND ES-

TABLISHED the covenant relationship. Such is a serious error. In every covenant of God with man, the initiative is always taken by God; it is God who lays down all the requirements; man's part is simply to accept what God provides and obey what God requires. Note, for example, God's words to Noah: "And I, behold, I establish my covenant with you, and with your seed after you, . . ." (Gen. 9:9), and to Abraham: "And I will make my covenant between me and thee. . ." (Gen. 17:2); again, "And I will establish my covenant between me and thee and thy seed after thee in generations, for an everlasting covenant, to be a God unto thee and to thy seed after thee" (Gen. 17:7). God constituted the covenant relationship; Abraham's part was to believe and obey. The covenant was not negotiated between God and man, it was made by God and sovereignly imposed on man.

##### 3. Why must the covenant relationship be constituted by God rather than by man?

Because of the essential difference between Creator and creature. God and man are not on a plane of equality with each other. God is never dependent on man for anything, but man is always and at every point wholly dependent on God for everything. God is infinite; man is finite. God is eternal; man is subject to time. God is sovereign; man is subject to God's authority and power. (In this lesson we are not considering human sinfulness, which by Adam's fall added a new factor to the distance between God and man; we are now considering only the idea of a covenant between God and man; that is, we are considering the situation that existed even before mankind fell into sin). Because of God's infinite greatness and man's total subordination to and dependence on God, the covenant relationship could only be constituted by God, not by man nor by God and man mutually negotiating it. If man is to be in a religious relationship to God, that relationship must be established by God; man could never lift himself up to the plane of religious communion with God.

##### 4. Why was a covenant relationship to God necessary for man?

As created, mankind existed in a NATURAL relationship to God, that is, the relationship of

creature to Creator. Being a rational creature, man owed obedience to God as his Creator. On the basis of that Creator-creature relationship, mankind might have had some experience of rendering service to God and receiving blessing from God. But it would have been far short of the destiny God intended for man in creating him. Man was created in the image of God, for the purpose of glorifying and enjoying God in RELIGIOUS relationship. Therefore, as the Confession of Faith rightly states, mankind "could never have any FRUITION of Him as their blessedness and reward, but by some voluntary condescension on God's part, which he hath been pleased to express by way of covenant" VII.1). "Fruit-ior" means bearing fruit. It is the purpose of a fruit tree to bear fruit. Mankind was created to bear the fruit of glorifying and enjoying God. God purposed to make Himself man's blessedness and reward. Therefore the distance between Creator and creature must be bridged in some way, so that a truly religious relationship and communion could exist between God and man. Only God could bridge the gap between Himself and man. God did it in order that man could really bear the fruit God had created him to bear — so that man could really possess God as his blessedness and reward. "From me is thy fruit found" (Hos. 14:8).

#### 5. What is meant by a "voluntary condescension on God's part"?

This means an act done by God's own free choice, not because of any necessity of His nature, nor because of pressure from any outside source. For God to be Holy is not an act of voluntary condescension on God's part; holiness is an aspect of God's essential nature; God could not will or choose to be otherwise than holy. But to bridge the chasm between Himself and mankind was not a part of God's essential nature. There was no necessity or obligation resting on God to take such a step. He could do it, or not do it, and still He would be God. Consequently, when God bridged the chasm, by making a covenant with man, it was an act of voluntary con-

descension on God's part. It was VOLUNTARY because it was not necessary for God to do it; it was CONDESCENSION because it involved God stooping to the level of His creatures.

#### 6. Was it contrary to democracy for God to make and impose a covenant on man?

The very idea of a covenant of God with man requires that the covenant be made by God, not by man. The covenant must originate with God; all its terms and conditions must be laid down by God; none of them can be made or decided by man. Such a covenant is not proposed by man to God, but imposed by God on man. God does not consult man as to the terms and conditions. Some people today call this "undemocratic", but by doing so they betray the fact that they think of God and man as virtually on a plane of equality. We should always remember that the Kingdom of God is not a democracy but a monarchy, and an absolute monarchy at that; God's rule over His creatures does not depend on "the consent of the governed". When people object to this idea, it is because they have failed to grasp the Bible view of God as sovereign. Such people cannot enjoy the benefits of a covenant relation with God, for they exclude themselves from this by their irreligious attitude toward God — an attitude of unbelief, disobedience and rebellion against God's sovereignty. The first requirement for a covenant relationship with God is an unquestioning faith in God and everything God has said, with a willing obedience to all of God's requirements, and acceptance of whatever terms and conditions God in His divine wisdom sees fit to lay down. Any notion of "democracy" between God and man is essentially impious and irreligious. It was Satan's suggestion that man could become "as gods" (Gen. 3:5; ARV "as God") that led Eve to her first act of rebellion against the divine authority. Ever since that early day, man has rebelled against submitting to the sovereignty of God, and has cherished the ambition of being "as God". This was never more obvious than in the humanism of our own day.

## LESSON 2

### The Covenant of Works: I. In Eden

"The first covenant made with man was a covenant of works, wherein life was promised to Adam, and in him to his posterity, upon condition of perfect and personal obedience." — The Westminster Confession of Faith, VII.2.

"God created man male and female; and having purposed that this first pair, Adam and Eve, should have a numerous offspring, he appointed Adam the public head and representative of all mankind, and entered into a covenant with him in behalf of himself and all posterity: In this covenant God promised to the whole human fam-

ily eternal life and happiness (with the preservation of men in their natural holiness) upon condition of Adam's perfect obedience in his state of probation, and threatened eternal misery (implying the total depravity of their nature) in case of disobedience; pointing out to Adam, at the same time, the tree of knowledge of good and evil, as the special sign of his probationary state, and prohibiting him to eat of its fruit." — The Reformed Presbyterian Testimony, V.2.

"Our first parents, being left to the freedom of their own will, fell from the estate wherein

they were created, by sinning against God." — The Shorter Catechism, 13.

"The covenant being made with Adam, not only for himself, but for his posterity; all mankind, descending from him by ordinary generation, sinned in him, and fell with him in his first transgression." — The Shorter Catechism, 16.

#### Scripture References:

Gen. 2:15-17. God's provision for testing Adam's obedience.

Gen. 2:9. The tree of life; the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

Gen. 3:1-19. The outcome of the Covenant of Works.

Rom. 5:12-19. The effect of Adam's first sin on the human race.

#### Questions:

##### 1. What was the first covenant that God made with man?

The first covenant that God made with man was the covenant made with Adam in the Garden of Eden, which is commonly called "the Covenant of Works", and sometimes referred to as "the Covenant of Life", as in the Shorter Catechism, Q. 12.

##### 2. What was the objective of the Covenant of Works?

The ultimate objective was eternal life, that is, the highest glorifying and enjoying of God by man. Specifically, God constituted Adam as the representative or "federal head" of the human race, and ordained the Covenant of Works as a probation of the human race through Adam, its official representative. Mankind was created in a state of real, but untested, righteousness and holiness. There was no evil in man's nature at the time of his creation by God, but he did not then exist in the highest state possible for him, because it was still possible for him to commit sin and fall from his original righteousness and holiness. Therefore man must go through a period of probation, that is, his obedience to God must pass through a test. If Adam, humanity's representative, had passed this test successfully, he would have then been confirmed in his holiness. It would have become impossible for him to sin. Then he and all his posterity would have received eternal life (the highest glorifying and enjoyment of God).

##### 3. Who were the parties to the Covenant of Works?

The parties to the Covenant of Works were God, and Adam as the head of the human race and official representative of his posterity. If we wish to say that the parties to the Covenant of Works were God and man, or God and every

human being, this is correct provided we bear in mind that this covenant was not made DIRECTLY with every human being, but only through Adam as the official representative of the race.

##### 4. What was the content of the Covenant of Works?

The condition of the Covenant of Works was perfect obedience to the will of God. The test provided to prove man's perfect obedience to God's will was God's command not to eat of the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. This was a sheer, arbitrary test of obedience to the will of God — the only reason for abstaining from the fruit of that particular tree was that God had said "Thou shalt not eat of it". The penalty provided for breaking the Covenant of Works was death, and this means not merely the death of the body, but death in the widest sense, including eternal death or "the second death". There was also a reward provided for obedience to God in the Covenant of Works, the right to eat the fruit of the tree of life, symbolizing eternal life (Gen 3:22; Rev. 22:2).

God revealed Himself to Adam and Eve by certain symbolic objects as well as by spoken words. Four principles were involved in the Covenant of Works, and each was pictured or symbolized to Adam and Eve. (1) The principle of probation, or divine testing of man, was symbolized by the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. (2) The principle of temptation, or Satanic seduction of man, was symbolized by the serpent which was Satan's mouthpiece in tempting Eve. (3) The principle of life was symbolized by the tree of life. (4) The principle of death was symbolized by the curse upon nature and the final return of the human body to dust.

Thus man was provided with a sufficient revelation of God's will so that he was left wholly without excuse. God's will was as clear as daylight: "Of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it". Mankind stood at the dividing of the roads. Before him the path divided into two branches — the way of obedience to the will of God, leading to eternal life; and the way of rebellion against the will of God, leading to eternal death. An immediate decision had to be made between obedience and rebellion. What would the issue be? If mankind obeyed the will of God, he would thereby, as a race, earn eternal life once for all. But we know the sad result of this probation of man. The human race had a fair test, and failed through misuse of man's free will.

##### 5. Is the theory of the Garden of Eden to be understood as a record of history, or as a myth?

Although both Modernism and "Neo-orthodoxy" consider the story of man's probation in the Garden of Eden as an early myth invented by someone to explain the existence of evil in the world, there can be no doubt that the Bible treats

this account as sober, actual history. Jesus Christ regarded Adam and Eve as historical persons (Matt. 19:8), and the apostle Paul in Romans 5:12-20 makes his whole argument contingent upon the historical character of Adam. If the account in Genesis 2 and 3 is mythological rather than historical, then we can no longer believe in the infallibility of the Bible, nor in the authority of Jesus Christ.

Really there is no reason for hesitating to regard Genesis 2 and 3 as historical. If we believe that mankind was specially created by God, not produced by evolution from the brutes, we will find nothing incredible in the Genesis account of the Garden of Eden. Evolutionists stumble over the idea of the creation of a single original pair of human beings; it is the idea of a historical Adam and Eve that they find it hard to swallow. The existence of a particular, historical Adam is essential to the Christian Faith (Rom. 5:12-20), and this is one reason why we cannot accept the theory of evolution.

#### **6. What was the outcome of the Covenant of Works?**

### **LESSON 3**

#### **The Covenant of Works: II. In Relation to Mankind Today**

“The Covenant being made with Adam, not only for himself, but his posterity; all mankind, descending from him by ordinary generation, sinned in him, and fell with him in his first transgression.” — The Shorter Catechism, 16.

“The fall brought mankind into an estate of sin and misery.” — The Shorter Catechism, 17.

“The sinfulness of that estate whereinto man fell, consists in the guilt of Adam’s first sin, the want of original righteousness, and the corruption of his whole nature, which is commonly called original sin; together with all actual transgressions which proceed from it.” — The Shorter Catechism, 18.

“All mankind, by their fall, lost communion with God, are under his wrath and curse, and so made liable to all miseries in this life, to death itself, and to the pains of hell for ever.” — The Shorter Catechism, 19.

“The covenant of grace was made with Christ as the second Adam, and in him with all the elect as his seed.” — The Larger Catechism, 31.

#### **Scripture References:**

Rom. 5:12, 19. By Adam’s disobedience, all his posterity became sinners.

1 Cor. 15:21,22. Death came upon the human race by Adam’s sin.

Rom. 5:18. The guilt of Adam’s first sin is

Satan appeared in the Garden of Eden in the form of the serpent, and seduced first Eve, and through her, Adam, to disobedience against God. The penalty of the broken covenant, death, came into effect. Because they had forfeited the right to eat the fruit of the tree of life, Adam and Eve were expelled from the Garden of Eden. The ground was cursed because of man’s sin (Gen. 3:17-19), and man condemned to laborious toil until his body should return to dust.

Besides these penalties, there were also subjective consequences of the fall in the human consciousness. Instead of enjoying communion with God, Adam and Eve immediately realized that there had come to be a barrier between themselves and God, and they were filled with a sense of sin and shame; they became afraid of God, and attempted to hide from God’s presence (Gen. 3:7,8). In the following generations, there was a very rapid development of sin, reaching murder in the immediate children of Adam and Eve, and by the time of Noah reaching a state in which “the earth also was corrupt before God; and the earth was filled with violence” (Gen. 6:11).

imputed to all whom he represented in his probation.

Eph. 2:1-3. Since Adam’s fall, mankind have been dead in trespasses and sins and children of wrath.

Rom. 3:10-18. The moral and spiritual state of fallen man is totally corrupt and depraved.

John 3:36. The wrath of God abides on all who are not in Christ.

Rom. 5:14. Adam prefigured Christ.

1 Cor. 15:45. Christ is the second Adam, who succeeds where the first Adam failed.

#### **Questions:**

##### **1. Was it fair for God to hold the whole human race guilty because of Adam’s sin?**

Adam was not only our first ancestor, but also, by divine appointment, the official representative of the human race in the Covenant of Works. A great deal depended on Adam’s conduct in the Covenant of Works. In fact the whole future happiness or misery of the entire human race was dependent on the representative act of the first man. Some people dislike the idea of Adam being the representative of the human race, and accuse God of being “unfair” in making this arrangement. But we should realize that God is SOVEREIGN and not responsible to His creatures, and therefore no creature may accuse the Creator of unfairness. Also the Bible pre-

sents a parallel between Adam and Christ. As Adam was our representative in the Covenant of Works, so Christ is our representative in the Covenant of Grace (Rom. 5:12-21). Those who object to Adam being their representative in the one covenant have no right to claim Christ as their representative in the other covenant, for these two representative relationships are parallel and stand or fall together. Whether we like it or not, the Bible expressly teaches that Adam's act made us sinners (Rom. 5:19), rendered us liable to the condemning judgment of God (Rom. 5:18), and rendered us liable to death (Rom. 5:12,15).

## 2. What is the natural state of fallen man?

The natural state of fallen man, that is, the state people are born in today, is a state of sin and misery. "Mankind are all now, by nature, the children of wrath, conceived in sin, brought forth in iniquity, sunk in total depravity, become mortal in their bodies, subject to disease and pain, incapable of doing anything spiritually good, in a state of enmity against God, and condemned to endless misery in the world to come." (Reformed Presbyterian Testimony, V.4). By reason of Adam's first transgression, people are born into the world (a) guilty before God and objects of His righteous wrath; (b) corrupt in their "heart" or moral and spiritual nature; (c) spiritually helpless and unable to lift themselves out of their fallen condition; (d) miserable and faced with endless suffering and unhappiness in this life and the life to come. This is not a bright picture, but it is a true one, for every element of it can be substantiated from the Bible. From this condition of "original sin" in which people are born, proceed all the actual transgressions which they commit in the course of their lives.

## 3. Is the Covenant of Works still in effect today?

When Adam broke the Covenant of Works by disobeying God, that was the end of all prospect of earning eternal life by obedience to God. Those who attain eternal life today do so by another covenant, the Covenant of Grace, which was made with Christ, the Second Adam. But the Covenant of Works is still in effect for all people who are not under the Covenant of Grace. All who are out of Christ are still under the curse and penalty of the broken Covenant of Works. All those who are not in Christ are still "in Adam". The penalty of eternal death hangs over every human being who has not received life in Christ. If we have not been saved from the curse by the works of Christ as our Redeemer, then we are still under the curse of the broken Covenant of Works. Dare we try to face it standing on our own feet, on the basis of our own life and works? Rather, let us place our faith in Christ, the Second Adam.

## 4. Why is Christ called "the Second Adam"?

Christ is called "the Second Adam" because like the first Adam, He is a "federal head" or representative of human beings in a covenant with God. There is a true parallel between Adam and Christ, which is drawn in Romans 5 and other places in the Bible. Christianity can be summarized in (a) What we get from Adam, and (b) What we get from Christ. From Adam, we get the imputation of the breach of the Covenant of Works, together with the penalty and consequences of that breach. From Christ, under the Covenant of Grace, we get the imputation of His righteousness and its reward and consequences; that is, Christ, as the Second Adam, fulfills the Covenant of Works, and BY GRACE the benefits of this fulfillment are bestowed on the elect of God.

## 5. How did Christ, as the Second Adam, fulfill the Covenant of Works?

God requires perfect, absolute obedience to His will. Adam, as the representative of the human race, failed to render perfect obedience to the will of God. But God's requirements could not be changed. God still required perfect obedience to His will as the condition of human beings enjoying His favor. So God provided Christ, the Second Adam, as the representative of all the elect of God. Christ succeeded where the first Adam had failed. He lived a life of absolute, flawless obedience to the will of God.

Our Saviour was assaulted by powerful Satanic temptations, yet He never yielded. Throughout His earthly life, he never deviated a hair's breadth from absolute moral perfection. He not only shed His precious blood to atone for the sins of God's elect; He also lived a life of perfect righteousness and obedience which could be imputed to the elect as if it were their own personal achievement. Thus Christ, as the Second Adam, fulfilled the condition of the Covenant of Works on behalf of His people.

Therefore it is correct to say that when Adam sinned, the Covenant of Works was not really abolished, but it was taken up into and made a part of the new covenant, the Covenant of Grace and there fulfilled by the new representative, the Second Adam, Jesus Christ. We should always realize that the Covenant of Grace is NOT a provision of eternal life on lower terms than those of the Covenant of Works. The terms never changed; they remained the same — perfect obedience to the will of God. But there was a substitution of the person who, in a representative capacity, complied with the terms. We still get eternal life by perfect obedience to the will of God; only now (under the Covenant of Grace) it is not obedience rendered by the first Adam nor by ourselves personally, but by the Second Adam, the Lord Jesus Christ.

## LESSON 4

### The Eternal Basis of the Covenant of Grace

"It pleased God, in His eternal purpose, to choose and ordain the Lord Jesus, His only begotten Son, to be the Mediator between God and man; the Prophet, Priest, and King, the Head and Saviour of His Church, the Heir of all things and Judge of the world; unto whom He did from all eternity give a people, to be His seed, and to be by Him in time redeemed, called, justified, sanctified, and glorified." — The Westminster Confession of Faith, VIII.1.

"God having, out of His mere good pleasure, from all eternity, elected some to everlasting life, did enter into a covenant of grace, to deliver them out of the estate of sin and misery, and to bring them into an estate of salvation by a Redeemer." — The Shorter Catechism, 20.

"The Covenant of Grace is an agreement between God, in the person of the Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ as the public head of elect sinners, in which God engages to bestow eternal life and glory upon all the elect on condition that Christ shall fulfill all righteousness as their representative." — The Reformed Presbyterian Testimony, IX.1.

#### Scripture References:

John 17:1-10, 24. The eternal covenant between the Father and the Son for the redemption of the elect.

Eph. 1:4. Rev. 13:8; 17:8. Rom. 8:29; 9:11. God's eternal decree of election.

Zech. 6:12,13. Isa. 53:10-12. The condition of the Covenant of Grace fully performed by Jesus Christ.

#### Questions:

**1. What is the meaning of the word "grace" in the term "Covenant of Grace"?**

It means God's special kindness and love — eternal life and the Kingdom of God — given as a free gift to sinful people who deserve to be punished for their sins to all eternity in hell.

**2. When was the Covenant of Grace made?**

It was made in eternity, before the creation of the world, but it was not revealed to mankind until after Adam had broken the Covenant of Works. Back in eternity God the Father entered into the Covenant of Grace with His only begotten Son, Jesus Christ, the Second Adam, as the representative of all the people whom God had elected to eternal life. John 17:2. This Covenant of Grace was made in the counsels of eternity, but was put into operation in human history after Adam's fall. Thus the Covenant of

Grace has two phases — an eternal phase and a historical phase. The plan was laid in eternity but the execution of the plan was carried out in time.

**3. What name is given to the eternal phase of the Covenant of Grace?**

It is called the "Covenant of Redemption", because in it God the Son covenanted and undertook to purchase and procure the redemption of the elect.

Note: Our Standards teach that there are not, "besides the Covenant of works, two distinct Covenants — one, a Covenant of Redemption made with Christ; and the other, a Covenant of Grace made with us, **DISTINCT** from the Covenant of Redemption." (The Reformed Presbyterian Testimony, IX.4 and Error 3). It will be observed that the force of the above quotation turns upon the word "distinct". The Testimony is concerned to rule out the idea that there are two **DISTINCT** covenants, one made with Christ, and the other made with the elect. Section 4 Chap. IX says: ". . . the same establishment, which is to them a Covenant of free Grace, is to Him a Covenant of Redemption." It is correct to say that the one covenant has two **ASPECTS**, an eternal aspect and historical aspect. The eternal aspect may properly be called the "Covenant of Redemption", and the historical aspect the "Covenant of Grace", so long as we bear in mind that these are only two aspects or phases of one and the same covenant, not two distinct covenants made by God with different parties.

**4. What is the importance of the eternal Covenant of Redemption?**

It is of absolute importance for the reality and validity of Christianity, for it lays the solid foundation for the redemption of God's elect. That the elect of God shall certainly receive eternal life and glory, is guaranteed by the eternal counsel and decree of God, which cannot change or fail. The heavens shall wax old as doth a garment, and be folded up as a vesture, but the eternal covenant of Redemption between the Father and the Son shall stand and shall be accomplished to the last detail. The accomplishment of it is anchored to the omnipotence, unchangeability and veracity of the living God.

**5. Who are the parties to the Covenant of Grace?**

The parties are God, in the person of the Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ as the representative of elect sinners (those given Him by the Father, John 17:2).

#### 6. What common errors exist concerning the parties to the Covenant of Grace?

Some say that the parties are "God and the human race"; or, "God and all sinners". This is a wrong idea, and cannot be harmonized with the statements of the Bible, especially the words of Jesus in John 17:9. Those who think of the parties as "God and the human race" always have a reduced idea of what Christ came to earth to accomplish. They say that Christ came to make the salvation of all sinners possible, that He came to provide an offer of salvation for all men, etc. They do not believe that the purpose of the work of Christ was actually to **SAVE** anyone, but only to make available a general offer of salvation on a "take-it-or-leave-it" basis, leaving the results to human free will. But according to the Bible, Christ came, not merely to offer men salvation, but to bring about their salvation: "He shall **SAVE HIS PEOPLE** from their sins" (Matt. 1:21); "that he should **GIVE ETERNAL LIFE** to as many as thou hast given him" (John 17:2).

#### 7. Is it correct to say that the parties to the Covenant of Grace are God and elect sinners?

This mode of statement is correct, provided we bear in mind that the Covenant of Grace is not made with elect sinners **DIRECTLY**, but only through Christ, their representative and Mediator. We have no quarrel with those Reformed theologians who speak of the Covenant of Grace being made between God and elect sinners, for they fully realize that it is made on the basis of the redemptive work of Christ as their representative and head. This difference is really a matter of terminology, rather than an actual doctrinal difference.

#### 8. What is the objective of the Covenant of Grace?

The objective is the eternal redemption of the elect of God. Thus the objective is **ETERNAL LIFE**, just as in the case of the Covenant of Works. The difference consists (a) in man's own condition; man has become a sinner, and needs divine redemption from sin; and (b) in the method by which eternal life is to be obtained — i.e., by Jesus Christ, the divinely-provided Substitute not by Adam nor yet by the sinner's own personal obedience to God.

#### 9. What are the terms or content of the Covenant of Grace?

God the Father having chosen a particular body of human beings to eternal life, planned to send His only begotten Son to this world to redeem them from sin. Accordingly, the Father planned to make all things ready for the entry of His Son into the world. The Father agreed to give the Son "power over all flesh" (John 17:2), and to **SEND** the Son on a definite task or mission (John 17:4). God the Son agreed to this plan or covenant, and engaged to accomplish fully the

will of the Father. He agreed to be born as an infant, taking human nature upon Himself; to live a perfect life of obedience to the law and will of God among men; to accomplish perfectly every detail and item of the task appointed for Him according to the plan; and finally to suffer and die on the cross as the Substitute for sinners, to be buried, to rise again the third day, to send the Holy Spirit, and to come again to judge the living and the dead at the Last Day. All these items fit perfectly together as parts of the great plan which in its eternal aspect is called the Covenant of Redemption and which in its historical aspect is called the Covenant of Grace.

#### 10. Is the Covenant of Grace conditional or unconditional?

Viewed as a covenant made between God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ, it is conditional, the stipulated condition being Christ fulfilling all righteousness as the representative of the elect. Thus the righteousness of Christ is the condition of the Covenant of Grace, a condition that has been fully met by our Saviour.

Viewed as a covenant made between God and elect sinners through Christ their representative the Covenant of Grace is unconditional. That is, there is no condition, in the strict sense of the term, that must be met or carried out by the elect. Christ has paid it all; He has completely purchased and guaranteed their eternal salvation.

Note: The Larger Catechism, Q. 32, says: "The grace of God is manifested in the second covenant, in that he freely provideth and offereth to sinners a Mediator, and life and salvation by him; and, **REQUIRING FAITH AS THE CONDITION TO INTEREST THEM IN HIM**, promiseth and giveth his Holy Spirit to all his elect, to work in them that faith, with all other saving graces; . . . ". Though the word "condition" is used here, still the Catechism does not represent faith as a condition in the strict and proper sense of the term, for it immediately proceeds to state that the very faith which God requires is wrought in the elect by the Holy Spirit, promised and given to all the elect. Thus it is clear that the Catechism uses the word "condition" in the old-time sense of "means" or "instrument". Faith is the God-appointed means by which sinners are to receive Christ; but since that very faith is itself a **BENEFIT** of the Covenant of Grace, purchased by Christ for the elect and bestowed on them by Christ's Holy Spirit, it cannot be a **CONDITION** of that covenant in the strict sense. See Eph. 2:8, which proves that saving faith is itself a gift of God.

#### 11. What is the relation of the Covenant of Grace to the Trinity?

(1) Redemption was **PLANNED** by God the Father, who elected sinners and commissioned the Son to redeem them.

(2) Redemption was **PURCHASED** by God the Son, through His incarnation, obedience to the law, atonement, resurrection, etc.

(3) Redemption is **APPLIED** to the elect by God the Holy Spirit, through the Word of God, the new birth, the means of grace, etc. Thus the Plan of Salvation, as revealed in the Bible, depends wholly upon the truth of the doctrine of

the Trinity. Salvation is the product of an eternal covenant between the Persons of the divine Trinity. If God is not a Triune God, then there is no Plan of Salvation as held by historic Christianity. The doctrine of the Trinity is not a philosophical abstraction; it is eminently practical, and absolutely essential to the Christian view of salvation.

## LESSON 5

### The Implementation of the Covenant of Grace

"It pleased God, in His eternal purpose, to choose and ordain the Lord Jesus, His only begotten Son, to be the Mediator between God and man; the Prophet, Priest, and King, the Head and Saviour of His Church, the Heir of all things, and Judge of the world; unto whom He did from all eternity give a people, to be His seed, and to be by Him in time redeemed, called, justified, sanctified, and glorified." — The Westminster Confession of Faith, VIII.1.

"This office the Lord Jesus did most willingly undertake; which that He might discharge, He was made under the law, and did perfectly fulfill it, endured most grievous torments immediately in His soul, and most painful sufferings in His body, was crucified, and died; was buried, and remained under the power of death; yet saw no corruption. On the third day He arose from the dead, with the same body in which He suffered, with which also He ascended into heaven, and there sitteth at the right hand of His Father, making intercession, and shall return to judge men and angels at the end of the world." — The Westminster Confession of Faith, VIII.4.

"The Lord Jesus, by His perfect obedience, and sacrifice of Himself, which He, through the eternal Spirit, once offered up unto God, hath fully satisfied the justice of His Father; and purchased, not only reconciliation, but an everlasting inheritance in the kingdom of heaven, for all those whom the Father hath given unto Him." — The Westminster Confession of Faith, VIII.5.

#### Scripture References:

Isa. 42:1. 1 Pet. 1:19,20. John 3:16. 1 Tim. 2:5. Heb. 12:24. Christ chosen and ordained by the Father as the Mediator of the Covenant of Grace.

1 Cor. 15:1-4. Christianity is dependent on the historical facts of redemption, especially the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Rom. 5:19. Heb. 9:12-16; 10:14. Rom. 3:25,26. Christ's work as Mediator is fully effective for its intended purpose, the eternal redemption of the elect of God.

#### Questions:

1. How was the eternal plan of God for the

**redemption of the elect implemented, or put into effect?**

It was implemented, or put into effect, by a series of acts of God in human history, culminating in the death, resurrection and ascension of the Mediator, Jesus Christ. Thus, unlike other religious systems, Christianity is a religion of **HISTORICAL FACTS**, not a mere system of ideals or abstract truths. Christianity is dependent on events that happened — it is anchored to historical facts from beginning to end.

**2. How is this historical or factual nature of Christianity denied at the present day?**

At the present day, many people who suppose that "science" has disproved the historical facts of Christianity (especially the miracles, including the resurrection of Christ), vainly imagine that they can let the facts go and still retain the spiritual "essence" of Christianity in the form of "eternal truths" or "timeless verities" such as goodness, beauty, unselfishness, reverence, etc. A renowned novelist is reported to have said that she could still be a Christian even if it could be proved that Jesus Christ never lived. That is just another way of saying that historical facts do not matter, that Christianity is not a matter of redemption but of ideals. If we get our ideas of Christianity from the Bible instead of from modern novels, we will realize that Christianity is absolutely dependent on historical facts which happened at particular times and places. "If Christ be not raised, your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins" (1 Cor. 15:17).

**3. When did the central facts of redemption take place?**

At a point in world history which the Bible calls "the fulness of the time" (Gal. 4:4,5) when the Mediator, the eternal Son of God, became incarnate in human flesh in order to fulfil the commission He had received from the Father. The pivotal character of that brief period is reflected in the fact that all human chronology is divided into B.C. and A.D. The advent and work of the Mediator forms the central fact, not only of redemption, but of world history as well.

**4. How may the implementation of the Covenant of Grace be divided?**

It may be divided into three periods, as follows: (a) The Period of Preparation, from Adam to Christ. (b) The Period of Realization, from the birth of Christ to His ascension. (c) The Period of Application, from the ascension of Christ to the end of the world. It will be noted that the central period in this scheme is the Period of Realization, when the Mediator was on earth in person achieving the redemption of the elect. The whole history of the world before that — from Adam to Christ — was divinely-ordained preparation for the coming of the Mediator. The whole history of the world after that — from Christ to the end of the world — is a period of application of the purchased redemption to the elect of God throughout the world.

**5. What preparations did God make, in the period from Adam to Christ for the coming of the Mediator?**

For a complete view of the preparations, it would be necessary to consider the entire body of history recorded in the Old Testament, and at the same time to realize that by His providence God also carried out preparations among the Gentile nations of ancient times (for example in the rise and expansion of the power of Rome, the Roman network of highways, the wide diffusion of the Greek language, etc.). More narrowly, we may say that the preparations took the form of preserving the knowledge and worship of the true God in a separated people, to whom God specially revealed Himself and His will, whom He delivered from their enemies, with whom He entered into a covenant relationship, and specially prepared them for the coming of the Mediator. It was necessary, according to God's plan, that there be such a separated, covenant people, in order that from them the Mediator (as to His human nature) could be born, and that among them He could live and carry out His redemptive acts. From the time of Adam and Eve, there always existed in the world a body of people who knew and worshipped the true God. At the time of Noah this body of people—the Church of that day—was reduced to an extremely small fraction of the human race, eight individuals, but still it existed. With God's call of Abraham the preparations took a big step forward toward a separated, covenant nation. With the redemption of the children of Israel from Egypt under Moses, the covenant nation became an actuality. The rest of the Old Testament records God's dealings with the covenant nation of Israel, in preparation for the coming of Christ, the Mediator. The final stage of preparation is recorded in the New Testament: the ministry of John the Baptist, God's final messenger to Israel, commanding the people to prepare for the coming of God's Son.

**6. What was accomplished during the Period of Realization?**

During the Period of Realization, the Mediator, Jesus Christ, was born in Bethlehem of Judea, grew to manhood, received John's baptism at the Jordan, was anointed with the Holy Spirit above measure to equip Him for His redemptive work, went about doing good, preached to the multitudes, taught those who became His disciples, performed mighty miracles, trained the twelve apostles for their future tasks, bore a faithful witness to the truth before Pontius Pilate, was despised and rejected of men, submitted to the accursed and agonizing death of the cross, endured the weight of the wrath of God by reason of the sins that had been laid upon Him, was buried, rose again the third day, appeared repeatedly to His disciples during a period of 40 days, promised that the Father would soon send the Holy Spirit in His name, and finally ascended visibly and bodily to heaven. Throughout this entire ministry, the Lord Jesus Christ (a) perfectly fulfilled all righteousness, completing every detail of the commission given Him by the Father in the eternal covenant; and (b) lived a blameless life of obedience to the law of God. By His life and ministry as a whole and especially by His sacrifice of Himself on the cross, He satisfied the justice of God on account of human sin, and purchased the eternal redemption of God's elect. This included the purchase of the Holy Spirit to work in the hearts of the elect, persuade and enable them to repent and believe in Christ, sanctify them and bring them to eternal glory. All this, with its eternal fruits and blessings, was achieved and purchased by the Mediator, Jesus Christ, during His life and ministry on earth.

**7. What is the character of the Period of Application?**

The period of Application is the period from the ascension of Christ to the end of the world. This is also known as "the age of the Holy Spirit", because it is the special work of the Holy Spirit to apply the redemption purchased by Christ to the elect of God throughout the world. The Holy Spirit uses the Word of God—the external call of the Gospel message—as a means toward the salvation of the elect. In the case of elect persons, this external call of the Gospel is accompanied and followed by a direct work of the Holy Spirit in the person's soul, known as internal or effectual calling. By this inward work of the Holy Spirit the elect are born again, enabled to have saving faith in Christ, to repent of their sins, are sanctified and enabled to persevere to the end. The preaching of the Gospel alone cannot bring a person to salvation; it requires in addition the almighty, inward working of the Holy Spirit in the person's soul to bring about personal salvation, or vital union with Christ.

## LESSON 6

## The Revelation and Administration of the Covenant of Grace

"This covenant was differently administered in the time of the law, and in the time of the gospel: under the law, it was administered by promises, prophecies, sacrifices, circumcision, the paschal lamb, and other types and ordinances delivered to the people of the Jews, all fore-signifying Christ to come: which were, for that time, sufficient and efficacious, through the operation of the Spirit, to instruct and build up the elect in faith in the promised Messiah, by whom they had full remission of sins, and eternal salvation; and is called, the Old Testament." — The Westminster Confession of Faith, VII.5.

"Under the gospel, when Christ, the substance, was exhibited, the ordinances in which this covenant is dispensed are the preaching of the Word, and the administration of the sacraments of Baptism and the Lord's Supper: which, though fewer in number, and administered with more simplicity, and less outward glory; yet, in them, it is held forth in more fulness, evidence, and spiritual efficacy, to all nations, both Jews and Gentiles; and is called the New Testament. There are not therefore two covenants of grace, differing in substance, but one and the same, under various dispensations." — The Westminster Confession of Faith, VII.6.

**Scripture References:**

2 Cor. 3:6-9. The Covenant of Grace administered differently in the time before and that after the coming of Christ.

Rom. 4:11. 1 Cor. 5-7. Hebrews chapters 8-10. Under the Old Testament, the Covenant of Grace was administered by promises, prophecies, sacrifices, circumcision, etc.

1 Cor. 10:1-4. Heb. 11:13. John 8:56. The promises, prophecies, sacrifices, etc., were sufficient, for that time, to build up the elect in faith in the promised Messiah.

Gal. 3:7-9,14. Believers under the Old Testament received full remission of sins, and eternal salvation.

Col. 2:17. Christ is the "substance" or fulfilment of the prophecies, types, sacrifices, etc., of the Old Testament.

Matt. 28:19,20. 1 Cor. 11:23-25. Under the New Testament, the Covenant of Grace is administered by the preaching of the Gospel and the administration of Baptism and the Lord's Supper.

Heb. 12:22-28. Jer. 31:33,34. The ordinances of the New Testament are fewer and simpler, but more spiritual and effective, than those of the Old.

Eph. 2:15-19. Under the New Testament, the

Covenant of Grace is administered to all nations, including both Jews and Gentiles.

Gal. 3:14,16. Rom. 3:21-30. Psalm 32:1 compared with Rom. 4:3,6,16,17,23,24. Heb. 13:8. One and the same Covenant of Grace was administered under the Old Testament and the New Testament.

**Questions:****1. When was the Covenant of Grace first revealed to mankind?**

Immediately after Adam's fall, in God's words addressed to the serpent: "I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel" (Gen. 3:15). This statement includes the promise that at a future day the seed of the woman would destroy the serpent; that is, that Jesus Christ would be born and would destroy the works of the devil. Though the language is not detailed, it is very specific and very inclusive. This declaration on God's part amounted to an INFORMAL establishment of the Covenant of Grace with God's elect in this world.

**2. How was the Covenant of Grace further revealed to mankind in early times?**

By the institution of sacrifice, which pointed forward to Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world. We do not know when God first commanded sinful men to approach Him by means of a sacrifice which involved the shedding of blood, but presumably it was soon after the fall, for we find Abel offering "of the firstlings of his flock and of the fat thereof" (Gen. 4:4), and it is recorded that "the Lord had respect unto Abel and to his offering", and also that Abel's sacrifice was offered to God "by faith" (Heb. 11:14)—therefore it was done with the approval of God, and presumably in obedience to a revelation of God's will.

Again, immediately after the Flood, we find Noah offering sacrifices to the Lord, and it is recorded that "the Lord smelled a sweet savour" (Gen. 8:20,21). The institution of sacrifice taught God's people the lesson that salvation is not by personal efforts or moral culture, but by the shedding of the blood of a Substitute. This is the heart of the Biblical Plan of Salvation, and throughout the Old Testament period it was kept before the minds of the people of Israel by continually repeated blood sacrifices.

**3. How was the Covenant of Grace formally established with the people of God on earth?**

By God's call of Abraham to be the father of a peculiar people, and the establishment of the covenant relationship between God and Abraham (and Abraham's descendants). This is recorded in Genesis 17:1-14. Note that the covenant was established by God, not by Abraham; that it involved promises on God's part, and obligations on Abraham's part; that it included Abraham's posterity as well as Abraham himself; and that there was an appointed external sign or token of the covenant relationship. From the time of Abraham to Moses, the Covenant of Grace was administered to Abraham and his descendants on a family or patriarchal basis. It was made perfectly clear that this family or clan was to be different from all other people in the world. God's special revelations came to them. The special promises of God belonged to them. As signs and seals of the covenant they had the ordinances of circumcision and sacrifice.

**4. What great change in the administration of the Covenant of Grace took place in the time of Moses?**

By the time of Moses, the descendants of Abraham had increased to a very large number of people. They had become a nation. Accordingly, the administration of the Covenant of Grace was broadened to a national basis, in place of the family or patriarchal basis that had existed previously. There was the divine deliverance of Israel from Egypt, prefiguring Christ's redemption of His people from sin. There followed a very full and extensive revelation of God's truth and God's will, which is recorded in the books of Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy. The Ten Commandments were revealed, and the covenant bond was formally confirmed at Mount Sinai. Many ceremonial or ritual ordinances were prescribed, which pointed forward to Christ, the Mediator of the Covenant of Grace. The people of Israel became a nation in covenant with God, whose very life and activities were to act out, as in a pageant, the essential meaning of the Covenant of Grace—the Plan of Redemption which would “in the fulness of the time” be accomplished by Jesus Christ.

**5. What difference in the administration of**

**the Covenant of Grace was made by the coming of Jesus Christ?**

(a) The administration of the Covenant of Grace was shifted from a national basis (Israel) to a universal basis (world-wide, Jews and Gentiles); the covenant nation of Israel gave way to the New Testament form of the Church. (b) The ordinances by which the Covenant of Grace is administered under the New Testament (the preaching of the Gospel, the sacraments of Baptism and the Lord's Supper) are much simpler and fewer in number than the many and complicated ritual ordinances of the Old Testament. (c) The New Testament ordinances have less external display, and are more spiritual in their character, and more effective in giving believers an assured consciousness of their salvation, than the ordinances of the Old Testament. (d) Yet the essential meaning of the two dispensations of the Covenant of Grace is exactly the same. The one pointed forward, the other points backward, to the same Christ, the Mediator of the Covenant of Grace. The essential meaning of baptism is identical with that of circumcision; the essential meaning of the Lord's Supper is identical with that of the Passover. The difference between the two dispensations is partly a matter of degree, partly a matter of external form; it is in no sense a matter of essential meaning.

**6. Were the Old Testament Israelites saved by grace, or by works?**

Certainly they were saved by grace alone, not by works. It is an old but persistent error that the Jews were saved by works, or by obedience to the law of God. If the Bible teaches anything clearly, it teaches that no one was ever saved by the works of the law (Rom. 3:20). The error mentioned above teaches that the Covenant of Works was from Moses to Christ, and the Covenant of Grace from Christ's crucifixion to His second coming. This is entirely wrong and contrary to the Bible. The Covenant of Works was from the creation of Adam and Eve until they fell into sin. Then the Covenant of Grace was revealed, and it has been the only way of salvation and eternal life since Adam's fall. Believers under the Old Testament were saved by grace, through faith, just as Christians are today. They participated in the same Covenant of Grace that Christian believers share in today.

**LESSON 7**

**The Covenant of Grace and the Salvation of the Christian**

“The grace of God is manifested in the second covenant, in that he freely provideth and offereth to sinners a Mediator, and life and salvation by him; and, requiring faith as the condition to interest them in him, promiseth and giveth his Holy Spirit to all his elect, to work in them that faith, with all other saving graces;

and to enable them unto all holy obedience, as the evidence of the truth of their faith and thankfulness to God, and as the way which he hath appointed them to salvation.” — The Larger Catechism, 32.

“The Covenant of Grace being formed with Christ as a Federal Head, all the elect are in

him as their representative, a party with God in the Covenant, and to this each individual shall consent, when, effectually called to choose the Mediator as his Representative in particular; every true believer has to say, God hath made with me an everlasting Covenant, ordered in all things, and sure." — The Reformed Presbyterian Testimony, IX.7.

"The goodness of the elect is not the cause of their being taken into this Covenant, neither is faith, repentance, sincere obedience, or any other thing, except the righteousness of the surety, the condition of it; but God has promised, in this Covenant, to bestow on all the elect, faith, repentance, and holiness, as well as happiness; and Christ, their glorious head, enables them to believe, repent, and live a life of sincere godliness." — The Reformed Presbyterian Testimony, IX.9.

#### Scripture References:

Gen. 3:15. Isa. 42:6. John 6:27. In the Covenant of Grace, God freely provides and offers to sinners a Mediator.

1 John 5:11, 12. In the Covenant of Grace, God offers sinners life and salvation through the Mediator.

John 1:12; 3:16. God has appointed faith as the means by which sinners are to be united to Christ.

Joel 2:28,29. Ezek. 37:14. Isa. 44:3; 59:21. God has promised to give the Holy Spirit to all His elect.

2 Cor. 4:13. Gal. 5:22,23. Faith, and all other saving graces, are produced in the elect by the work of the Holy Spirit.

Ezek. 36:26,27. All holy obedience and godly living is the product of the working of the Holy Spirit in the hearts of the elect.

James 2:18,22. 2 Cor. 5:14,15. Eph. 2:10. A holy obedience is an evidence of the reality of a believer's faith, and of his thankfulness to God; also it is the God-appointed path for the believer to walk in.

Isa. 55:3, 2 Sam. 23:5. Every believer can be assured of his personal participation in the Covenant of Grace.

Titus 3:5-7. The elect are not included in the Covenant of Grace because of their own goodness, but by God's mercy.

Jer. 23:6. The righteousness of Christ is the only condition of the Covenant of Grace.

Phil. 1:29. Heb. 12:2. Christ enables the elect to believe, repent and live a godly life.

#### Questions:

##### 1. How has God, in the Covenant of Grace, provided for the salvation of the elect?

God's provision, in the Covenant of Grace, for the salvation of the elect is a complete provision, including everything necessary to bring the elect to eternal glory without fail. This provision, which has been completely purchased and guaranteed by Christ, includes both the OBJECTIVE and the SUBJECTIVE factors in salvation.

##### 2. What is meant by the objective side of salvation?

The objective side of salvation consists of what Christ has done FOR the elect, in the great historical facts of His redemptive work. This includes Christ's being born and His entire earthly life and work, but especially it includes (a) His perfect life of obedience to the law of God, by which He provided a perfect righteousness; (b) His sacrificial death as an atonement for sin; and (c) His resurrection and ascension to the right hand of the Father in heaven. All of this Christ has done FOR the elect, and by it He has purchased salvation and eternal life, with all graces and blessings, for them. Thus the objective side of salvation is really the foundation of our salvation, which was built by the redemptive work of Christ in history.

##### 3. What is meant by the subjective side of salvation?

The subjective side of salvation consists of what Christ does IN the elect, by His Holy Spirit, who takes the purchased salvation and applies it to the elect, working faith in them, persuading and enabling them to come to Christ, etc. The subjective side of salvation includes all that the Holy Spirit does IN the elect, just as the objective side includes all that Christ has done FOR the elect. The elements of the subjective side of salvation may be summarized as: the new birth, faith, repentance, justification, adoption, sanctification, assurance of God's love, peace of conscience, joy in the Holy Spirit, increase of grace, and perseverance therein to the end (See The Shorter Catechism, Q. 30-36).

##### 4. Why is it important to believe that Christ has purchased both the objective and the subjective factors in salvation for the elect?

This is very important, for only so can we believe that Christ provides a complete salvation, or really saves His people from their sins (Matt. 1:21). Many people today say that Christ provides the objective side of salvation (His blood and righteousness), but the subjective side is left up to human free will, (faith, repentance, etc.). They say that we have to repent and believe first by our own free will, and then after that we will be "born again" and receive the

Holy Spirit. Such people believe that Christ has provided HALF of our salvation (the objective side), and left the other half up to us to provide (repentance, faith, etc.).

The Bible states that Christ shall save His people from their sins (Matt 1:21). Surely one of the sins that they need to be saved from is the sin of UNBELIEF or LACK OF FAITH. If Christ really SAVES His people from the sin of unbelief, then faith must be a gift which Christ bestows on His people through the work of the Holy Spirit in their hearts.

Salvation consists not merely of what Christ did FOR us long ago, but also of what He does IN us here and now, by His Holy Spirit. Both parts are included in the Covenant of Grace, purchased and guaranteed by Jesus Christ the Mediator. He has not thrown us a life-preserver and then left us to reach it and grasp it in our own strength if we can; He has provided the life-preserver and He also, by the Holy Spirit, works in His elect the desire and the ability and the decision to grasp and cling to it.

It is very dishonoring to Jesus Christ, and to the Holy Spirit, to imagine that repentance, faith, etc., are the products of our own free will, when they are really the products of the almighty, special working of the Holy Spirit in our hearts. Read Ezek. 36:25-27 and note the bearing of those verses on this question.

#### **5. What is the function of faith in receiving salvation?**

Faith is the God-appointed means or channel by which sinners receive Jesus Christ as their Saviour. Faith is a "condition" of salvation only in the sense that it is the appointed means by which sinners embrace Christ. "Faith in Jesus Christ is a saving grace, whereby we receive and rest upon him alone for salvation, as he is offered to us in the gospel" (The Shorter Catechism, Q. 86).

Faith is not the condition of the Covenant of Grace in the proper and strict sense of the term "condition", for in the strict legal sense the only condition of the Covenant of Grace is that Christ fulfil all righteousness as Representative of the elect. Strictly speaking, the Covenant of Grace is to the elect an UNCONDITIONAL covenant of promise. But faith is required as the channel or means of receiving the benefits.

However we should understand that faith is itself one of the benefits included in the Covenant. And the faith which God requires, He himself bestows as a free gift by the work of His Holy Spirit (Gal. 5:22. Eph. 2:8). Therefore faith is not a "work" in the Bible sense, has no "merit" attached to it, and cannot be a real condition of the Covenant of Grace.

#### **6. What is the relation of the Covenant of Grace to the Christian's perseverance in grace and assurance of salvation?**

Salvation ultimately depends not upon anything human but upon the finished work of Christ and the covenanted promises of God. Since the redemptive work of Christ is absolutely complete and perfect, and the promises of God are absolutely true and reliable, it follows that the Christian's perseverance in grace and his eternal security are guaranteed by the Covenant of Grace. If the Christian's perseverance and his eternal security depended on his own will power, there would be no real guarantee of his final salvation. He might be saved today and lost again tomorrow. He could never be sure he would be able to hold out to the end. But since the Christian's continuance in grace and his eternal security depend upon the unbreakable covenant of the God who from all eternity elected him to everlasting life, his final salvation is guaranteed.

Since the final salvation of the elect is guaranteed by the Covenant of Grace, personal ASSURANCE of salvation is possible. If the final issue were still uncertain, personal assurance would always be impossible; a person could never be sure of his salvation until his actual entrance upon the life of glory in heaven. A person cannot be sure about something which is itself uncertain. But since the final salvation of the elect is an absolute certainty, being purchased by Christ and guaranteed by the Covenant of Grace, it is possible for a Christian to attain full assurance of his salvation in his own mind. The true believer can reach the place where he can say: "God hath made with me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things, and sure" (2 Sam. 23:5).

On the subject of the possibility of assurance, and its degrees, the student is referred to The Larger Catechism, Q. 80, 81.

### **LESSON 8**

#### **The Covenant of Grace and the Christian Family**

"The family is a moral person. It is to be in covenant with God. It has institutions of worship peculiar to itself. It is embraced in the bosom of the church. These are principles which the Covenanter Church has always recognized.

The children born in a Christian home are born church members, and entitled to the sacramental seal of baptism. The church imposes obligations upon her members to maintain family religion, and one purpose of family visitation is to see that

these engagements are kept." — R. J. George, "Lectures in Pastoral Theology: Series I. The Covenanter Pastor", p. 163.

"The children of believing and professing parents are born in the church. 'Else were your children unclean, but now are they holy.' To treat the children of the covenant as if they were aliens, is to despoil them of their birthright." — R. J. George, as cited above, p. 135.

"Children of professing parents are born in the Church and are entitled to the initiatory rite of baptism. To speak of persons already baptized in our Church as 'joining the Church' when they are received into full communion, is not strictly correct and is productive of error, because it leads such persons to regard themselves as free from all covenant obligations until they make a public profession. The truth is, that they are children of the covenant, and, if they refuse or neglect to make a public profession, they despise their birthright and become covenant-breakers. N. B.—The record as to their reception should differ from that taken in from the world. It should state distinctly that they were baptized members of the Church, and were admitted to full communion on examination and profession of their faith."—R. J. George, "Lectures in Pastoral Theology: Series II. Pastor and People", p. 168.

"Family worship is the daily gathering of the household for the purpose of praise, Scripture reading and prayer. . . . This service, conducted morning and evening, is a distinguishing mark of a Christian home, and is essential to the development of family religion. The head of the family is responsible for this important service and all available members of the household should be present and may be invited to take some part."—The Directory for the Worship of God (adopted 1945 by the R. P. Church), V. 2.

#### Scripture References:

Gen. 2:18, 24. The family is a divine institution.

Mal. 2:14, 15. The Christian family is a divine institution within the sphere of the Covenant of Grace.

Gen. 17:7-10. The Covenant of Grace is established by God with believers and their children after them.

Acts 2:39. The covenant promises are made to believers and to their children.

Gen. 18:19. Deut. 6:6,7. Josh. 24:15. Religious duties of the covenant family.

#### Questions:

1. What is the origin of the institution of the family?

The family is a divine institution, established by God at the creation of the human race. Therefore the speculations of anthropologists concerning the origin of the family are false and wrong. These experts almost always take for granted that the human race came into existence by evolution from a brute ancestry. Therefore they try to explain the existence of the family on an evolutionary basis. Their diverse theories and speculations can be seen by consulting an encyclopedia. Most of them try to explain the family as a gradual development out of the social conditions of the jungle. At best, according to evolutionary speculations, the family is a product of experience and expediency — it is what the human race has found to be best for the welfare of society, but it has no absolute divine authority back of it. As believers in the Word of God, we know that humanity is a special creation of God, and the family is a divinely ordained institution.

#### 2. Is the family a covenant institution?

Since marriage and the family are not confined to Christian people, but are co-extensive with the human race, the family AS SUCH cannot be a covenant institution. There are families among atheists, as well as among Christians. The family is indeed a divine institution, but it is not peculiar to Christianity; it pertains to the sphere of "nature" or "common grace" rather than to the sphere of "salvation" or "special grace".

But in the case of Christian people, the institution of the family takes on a new significance. It is related, in their case, to the Covenant of Grace; it exists within the sphere of the Covenant of Grace. As Dr. R. J. George pointed out many years ago: "The family is a moral person. It is to be in covenant with God. It has institutions of worship peculiar to itself. It is embraced in the bosom of the church. These are principles which the Covenanter Church has always recognized."

#### 3. What is a Christian family?

A Christian family is one in which the parents make a public profession of the Christian Faith. The Westminster Confession of Faith warns against marriages between "such as profess the true reformed religion" and "infidels, papists, or other idolaters", and adds, "neither should such as are godly be unequally yoked, by marrying with such as are notoriously wicked in their life, or maintain damnable heresies" (XXIV. 3). Obviously there cannot be truly Christian families unless Christian people are careful to avoid marriages with persons who do not profess the Christian Faith, make no effort to live as Christians, or are "just not interested in religion." Read 2 Cor. 6:14-18 and note its bearing on this question.

#### 4. How can it be shown that the children of believers are included in the Covenant of Grace?

This can be shown by a number of arguments from Scripture, some of which may be summarized as follows: (a) By God's statements to Abraham, Gen. 17:7-10, including the rite of circumcision which proves that the children of believers are included in the covenant, for the rite was the sign of the covenant relationship. (b) By the apostle Peter's statement in his sermon on the day of Pentecost, Acts 2:39. (c) Mal. 2:15 shows that a divinely-ordained purpose of marriage between believers is that there may be "a godly seed", that is, children, a new generation also in covenant with God. (d) The apostle Paul in 1 Cor. 7:16 affirms that where both parents are non-Christians the children are "unclean", but where one parent is a believer the children are "holy": therefore we may rightly conclude that the children of one or both believing parents are included in the Covenant of Grace.

#### 5. If the children of believers are included in the Covenant of Grace, how can we explain the fact that some grow up to be ungodly?

This is a very real difficulty and it must be frankly faced. Hebrews 8:9 speaks of some of the children of Israel as covenant-breakers: "they continued not in my covenant, and I regarded them not, saith the Lord." Also Romans 9:6-13 shows that not all children born to believers are of the elect; Esau was born in the covenant, a son of Isaac, yet he was not an elect person (verse 13). If we think over the Christian families we have known, we will easily be able to recall some child of godly parents who grew up to be irreligious. Thus it must be admitted that the fact that the children of believers are included in the Covenant of Grace does not imply that all children of believers, without exception, are elect persons who shall receive eternal life. All are born in the covenant, but some turn out to be covenant-breakers and are eternally lost.

What is the explanation of this paradox, or apparent contradiction? We should realize that there are two phases of the Covenant of Grace, (a) a legal or external phase, and (b) a vital or spiritual phase. We may think of these two phases as two circles, one within the other — an outer and an inner circle. Every child born of believing parents is in the outer circle, the legal or external sphere of the Covenant of Grace. But only those truly born again are in the inner circle, the vital or spiritual sphere of the Covenant of Grace. Some people born in the external sphere, the outer circle, are non-elect persons and never come to Christ. Every one that is of the elect will, at some time in his life, come into the inner circle, the vital or spiritual sphere.

When the apostle Paul affirms that the children of one believing parent are "holy" (1 Cor.

7:16) this obviously does not refer to personal holiness of heart and character, for the apostle argues that "the unbelieving husband is sanctified by the wife, and the unbelieving wife is sanctified by the husband". Clearly the "holiness" and "sanctification" of which the apostle speaks is an external matter of position, standing or privilege, not a matter of vital spiritual life. He is speaking of the outer circle, the legal or external sphere of the Covenant of Grace. Even if the husband or wife is not a Christian, he or she is "sanctified" by the believing partner, and thus has a "holy" standing. This carries with it certain valuable opportunities and privileges, as well as solemn obligations, but it does NOT guarantee that the unbelieving partner will certainly become a Christian.

It should be the constant aim of Christian parents, and of the Church, that all children of the covenant should be brought into the INNER circle, and have a personal faith in Christ as their Saviour.

#### 6. What is the importance of family worship, religious instruction and a godly example in the Christian family?

The importance of these elements of family religion cannot be overstressed. In our day the increasing complexity of life has tended to crowd family worship out entirely, or make it very difficult to attend to. The result is not only a great sin, but a tragic loss to the family and especially to the children. Of course there is little value in a merely formal observance of family worship. Yet it is better that family worship be held briefly than that it be omitted altogether. And while family worship ought to be conducted in a Christian home both morning and evening, it is far better to have it once daily than to omit it altogether. We should resist the steady encroachment of the world upon the home, and maintain the ordinances of family religion faithfully.

When Sabbath Schools were first introduced, some godly people objected to them on the ground that parents would thereafter neglect the instruction of their own children and shift the burden to an (often incompetent) teacher. While we are not opposed to Sabbath Schools, we should realize that time has proved that there was some basis for the objection. God has entrusted the religious nurture and instruction of covenant children to their parents. It is the parents that will be held responsible for this task. It cannot rightly be shifted to anyone else. The Sabbath School can be a supplementary help, but it cannot be an adequate substitute for parental instruction.

#### 7. What is the relation of the Covenant of Grace to Infant Baptism?

This question will be taken up in detail in Lesson 9. Briefly, the relation may be summed

up as follows: (a) Baptism is a sign and seal of the Covenant of Grace. (b) The children of believers are included in the Covenant of Grace. (c) Therefore the children of believers are entitled to Baptism which is a sign and seal of the Covenant of Grace.

Note: Infant Baptism is not dependent on isolated "proof-texts" for its validity. It follows from the doctrines of the sacraments and of the Covenant of Grace. For centuries Infant Baptism has been argued pro and con on the basis of "proof-texts" and hardly anyone has been convinced by the arguments, one way or the other. The real proof of Infant Baptism depends on the truth that the children of believers are included in the Covenant of Grace. Those who reject that truth, will inevitably be opposed to Infant Baptism. But for those who accept that truth, the "proof-texts" that can be cited form a valuable line of corroboratory evidence.

**8. What is the relation of the Covenant of Grace to the question of the Church membership of the infant children of believers?**

This question will be taken up in detail in Lesson 10. Briefly, the children of believers are born in the Church, and are members of the Church from birth because of God's covenant with their parents. However they do not have all the privileges of Church membership until they reach years of discretion and themselves make a public profession of faith in Christ and obedience to Him.

**9. What is the relation of the Covenant of Grace to the question of the salvation of infants dying in infancy?**

This question will be taken up in detail in Lesson 11. Briefly, (a) the Bible says nothing whatever about the salvation of non-covenant infants dying in infancy, one way or the other, and therefore we cannot prove from the Bible that such are saved, though we may cherish a probable hope based on general considerations concerning God's mercy, etc.; (b) the Bible warrants us in holding that the salvation of covenant infants dying in infancy is an absolute certainty, concerning which we should entertain no doubts whatever.

## LESSON 9

### The Covenant of Grace and Infant Baptism

"Not only those that do actually profess faith in and obedience unto Christ, but also infants of one or both believing parents, are to be baptized." — The Westminster Confession of Faith, XXVIII.4.

"Baptism is not to be administered to any that are out of the visible Church, and so strangers from the covenant of promise, till they profess their faith in Christ, and obedience to him; but infants descended from parents, either both or but one of them professing faith in Christ, and obedience to him, are, in that respect within the covenant, and to be baptized." — The Larger Catechism, 166.

"One of the chief sources of the church's membership is her own children. In presenting them for baptism, parents not only claim for their children the privileges of the church, but dedicate them to God and the service of Christ. They obligate themselves to teach them to fear God and keep his commandments; to respect and honor the church and her worship; and in due time to profess their faith in Christ, and to seek full membership in the church. . . . In administering baptism to her children the church recognizes their rightful place within the Covenant, and her obligation to give them pastoral care and oversight, and to assist the parents in carrying out their vows. . . ." — The Form of Church Government (adopted 1945 by the Reformed Presbyterian Church), 1.8,9.

#### Scripture References:

Rom. 6:4. Gal. 3:27. Baptism is a sign and seal of the Covenant of Grace.

Gen. 17:7-9. The children of believers are included with their parents in the Covenant of Grace.

Gen. 17:10. Under the Old Testament, the appointed sign and seal of the Covenant of Grace was the rite of circumcision.

Col. 2:11,12. Under the New Testament, baptism has taken the place of circumcision as the appointed sign and seal of the Covenant of Grace.

Acts 2:39. The covenant promises belong not only to believers, but also to their children; therefore the sign and seal of the covenant belongs to them too, and they should be baptized.

#### Questions:

**1. What unsatisfactory method is often used in an attempt to prove the propriety of Infant Baptism?**

See the note appended to Question 6 of the previous lesson (Lesson 8). Infant Baptism is a Scriptural practice which does not depend upon isolated "proof-texts". It follows logically from other truths of the Scriptures; the proof may be stated, essentially, in the following form; (a) Baptism is a sign and seal of the Covenant of

Grace. (b) The children of believers are included in the Covenant of Grace. (c) Therefore the children of believers are entitled to Baptism, which is a sign and seal of the Covenant of Grace.

**2. What is meant by saying that Baptism is a sign and seal of the Covenant of Grace?**

A "sign" is that which portrays or represents something. The sacraments SIGNIFY the benefits of Christ's mediation unto those that are within the Covenant of Grace. Spiritual realities are represented by material elements and external actions.

The word "seal" is used in the sense of "a pledge", "a guaranty", or "a legal certificate". The sacraments were instituted by Christ to SEAL the benefits of His mediation to those that are within the Covenant of Grace; that is, to guarantee or legally to certify these benefits to those persons. This does not of course mean the Baptism as a mere outward ordinance can guarantee anything to those who are baptized. It rather means that where Baptism is rightly used, with true faith in Christ, it serves as a "seal" or divinely-given certificate of the benefits of Christ's redemption.

Baptism is a sign and seal of partaking of the benefits of the Covenant of Grace, under the New Testament, just as truly, and in the same sense as circumcision was a sign and seal of partaking of the benefits of the Covenant of Grace, under the Old Testament. Gen. 17:10,14.

**3. What is meant by saying that the children of believers are included in the Covenant of Grace?**

See questions 4 and 5 of the previous lesson (Lesson 8). To affirm that the children of believers are included in the Covenant of Grace does not imply that all children of believers are elect persons and will be saved. It means: (a) that all children of believers are born in the external sphere of the Covenant of Grace; (b) that the covenant privileges belong to them by birth; (c) that the covenant obligations rest upon them from infancy; and (d) that it must be assumed that they are elect and regenerate in the absence of evidence which would lead to the contrary conclusion.

God in His eternal decree of election has seen fit to take account of family ties between parents and children. God not merely elected individuals to eternal life — He elected individuals and their children after them. The fact that there are some exceptions to this rule does not cancel the general truth that God has elected the children of believers unto salvation and eternal life. Just as some children of unbelievers turn out to be elect persons, and come to Christ, so some children of believers turn out to be non-elect persons, and

never come to Christ. But in ordinary cases, God has elected the children of believers unto eternal life; note God's promise to Abraham: "I will establish my covenant between me and thee AND THY SEED AFTER THEE IN THEIR GENERATIONS" (Gen. 17:7).

God's eternal decree of election is sovereign, but it is not arbitrary. God did not elect particular persons to eternal life on the basis of their own faith, moral character, good works, etc., for election is of grace, not of works (Rom. 9:15,16). But God's decree of election was not ARBITRARY — it was not a decision without any reasons back of it. God always has the best of reasons for whatever He does, only He has not seen fit to reveal all His reasons to us. When God said "Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated" (Rom. 9:13), certainly He had good reasons for His choice of Jacob and His rejection of Esau, but certainly those reasons did not consist in Jacob's good works, moral character, etc.

One of the factors that God has taken into account in His eternal decree of election, is the factor of family relationship or descent from believing parents. This is reflected in the inclusion of the children of believers in the Covenant of Grace, which the Bible so clearly proclaims. This inclusion of the children of believers in the covenant is not a "legal fiction" — it is a reality, and it is based on the eternal reality of God's decree of election unto eternal life.

**4. How can it be shown that the children of believers are entitled to receive Baptism as the sign and seal of the Covenant of Grace?**

It has already been proved that the children of believers are included in the Covenant of Grace. If they have the reality, then surely they are also entitled to the external sign and seal of that reality. If they have what Baptism stands for, then they also ought to be baptized. If a man has inherited a piece of property by bequest, no one will deny that he is also entitled to receive the title-deed to that piece of property. Possession of the title-deed would not necessarily imply actual possession of the property; but actual rightful possession of the property implies that the title-deed should be made over to the possessor.

**5. How can we answer those who say that the infant children of believers may be unregenerate, and therefore they should not receive Baptism?**

Adults who make a profession of faith and apply for Baptism may also be unregenerate, and yet the Church does not hesitate to baptize them if they made a credible profession of faith in Christ and obedience to Him. The idea that participation in the sacraments depends on proof of being born again is an error. The Church has no way by which it can X-ray people's souls and find out with certainty whether they are regenerate or not. So far as the Church is concerned, admission

to membership and to the sacraments is based on presumption, not on proof. It is presumed that the person who makes a credible profession of faith and obedience is a regenerate person.

Similarly, in Christian charity we must presume that the infant children of Christian believers are regenerate, unless and until there is definite evidence that would lead to the contrary conclusion. John the Baptist was filled with the Holy Spirit before he was born (Luke 1:15); therefore there is nothing unreasonable or unscriptural in assuming that the infant children of Christian believers are regenerate. The fact that there may be some that are not regenerate does not cancel the general rule.

#### **6. What is meant by "Baptismal Regeneration"?**

This is the doctrine of the Roman Catholic Church and of some Protestants, to the effect that regeneration or the new birth is effected by the instrumentality of Baptism. The Church of Rome teaches that the sacraments work automatically (as an "opus operatum", or "a work performed") unless there is a deliberate intention to hinder the effect. Thus Rome teaches that Baptism effects regeneration, and the baptized person is born again. This teaching is rejected by our Church, which condemns as an error the proposition "That infants are as heathens until they are baptized, and that baptism regenerates and christens them" (The Reformed Presbyterian Testimony, XXV, Error 6).

#### **7. What abuses of Infant Baptism are common in American Protestantism?**

(a) Promiscuous Infant Baptism, that is, the practice of baptizing any and all infants whose parents request it, regardless of whether or not the parents are themselves professing Christians and members in good standing in the Church. This practice cannot be too strongly condemned. It is unscriptural, ignores the relation of the Covenant of Grace to Infant Baptism, and brings the whole practice of Infant Baptism into contempt.

(b) Formalism and neglect of baptismal vows, on the part of both parents and children. If Infant Baptism is to be a mere formality, or a mere ceremony for attaching a name to a baby, it cannot

be justified. Rightly considered, it involves the most solemn obligations on the part of the parents — obligations which descend to the children when they teach years of discretion. Gross formalism and gross neglect of baptismal vows, especially on the part of parents, has become a terrible scandal in American Protestantism, and like the practice of promiscuous Infant Baptism, this formalism and neglect threatens to bring the whole practice of Infant Baptism into general contempt.

For a statement of the vows taken by parents when their children are baptized, see "The Directory for Worship", III.3, in "The Constitution of the Reformed Presbyterian Church of North America", p. 313-315.

#### **8. Does Infant Baptism deprive the child of a valuable privilege?**

Opponents of Infant Baptism often argue that it does, but really their argument is without weight. The chief captain told Paul that he had become a Roman citizen by the payment of a great sum of money, but Paul immediately replied that he was a Roman citizen by birth (Acts 22:28). To be a Roman citizen was a coveted privilege in those days; it conferred special rights and benefits. Paul was a Roman citizen by birth. Did Paul's birth as a Roman citizen deprive him of the valuable privilege of being naturalized as a Roman in adult life? Obviously Paul did not think so. Most of us are American citizens by birth; perhaps a few of us were born in foreign countries and have become American citizens by naturalization. Do we who are Americans by birth deplore our birthright, and say that being born as Americans has deprived us of the privilege of being naturalized in adult life?

Infant Baptism deprives the child of no real right or privilege. The parent takes the vows on the child's behalf, as the child's representative. Later the child is to ratify that profession of faith, and take those vows on himself by personal faith, in order to be admitted to the Lord's Supper. Those who oppose parents taking vows for their children, are dominated by an individualism which is unrealistic, contrary to the nature of the family, and utterly alien to the spirit and teaching of the Bible.

## **LESSON 10**

### **The Covenant of Grace and Church Membership of Children**

"The visible Church, which is also catholic or universal under the Gospel (not confined to one nation as before under the law), consists of all those throughout the world that profess the true religion; and of their children: and is the kingdom of the Lord Jesus Christ, the house and family of God, out of which there is no ordinary possibility of salvation." — The Westminster Confession of Faith, XXV.2.

"The visible Church is a society made up of all such as in all ages and places of the world do profess the true religion, and of their children." — The Larger Catechism, 62.

"The Church visible, standing in an external relation to Christ in the visible dispensation of the covenant of grace, comprehends all adults who profess faith in Christ, and give obedience to his

law, together with all their children." — The Reformed Presbyterian Testimony, XXI.2.

"The authority and discipline of the church extends to all members, irrespective of rank and station in life. Children who are baptized members, whether or not they have made their own profession of faith, are under the care of the church and subject to its discipline." — The Book of Discipline (adopted 1945 by the Reformed Presbyterian Church), I.8.

"The Church Visible consists of all those throughout the world who publicly profess their faith in Jesus Christ as their Saviour and Lord, promise obedience to Him, and unite with an organized congregation. The children of members are also included in this number." — The Form of Church Government (adopted 1945 by the Reformed Presbyterian Church), I.1.

"If the member received be the head of a family, it is well to record the names of all the minor children of the family who are not yet in full communion. The reason for this is that God includes children with their parents in the Church covenant; and when the parents are received the children are also taken under the care of the session and should be enrolled, as connected with the flock. Their names cannot appear on the roll of communicants, but may very properly appear in the minutes of session." — R. J. George, "Lectures in Pastoral Theology: Series II. Pastor and People", p. 167

#### Scripture References:

1 Cor. 7:14. Acts 2:39. Ezek. 16:20,21. Rom. 11:16. Gen. 17:7. The children of true believers are members of the visible Church from birth.

Luke 12:42,43. 2 Tim. 4:2,5. John 21:15,17. The Church has a responsibility for all its members, including the children who have not yet made a public profession of faith.

#### Questions:

##### 1. What error concerning the membership of the visible Church is very common in evangelical Protestant circles in America?

The idea that the membership of the visible Church consists solely of COMMUNICANTS, that is, of those who have made a personal profession of faith in Christ and have been admitted to the Lord's Supper. This is a wrong and unscriptural view of the membership of the visible Church, for it excludes the children of believers from Church membership.

This wrong view of the membership of the Church is held in two ways. (a) It is held by such denominations as Baptists, Disciples, etc., which reject Infant Baptism, and administer Baptism only on a personal profession of faith by those who have attained years of discretion. These

denominations are perfectly consistent in regarding the infant children of believers as non-members of the Church; this fits in precisely with their views of Baptism, of the Church and of the Covenant of Grace. Although they are consistent, we believe they are in error and have committed a serious distortion of the Christian Faith. (b) This wrong view of the membership of the Church is held by multitudes of members and ministers of most of the large denominations which practice Infant Baptism, such as Presbyterians, Methodists and Congregationalists. Although Infant Baptism is the accepted practice of these and many other denominations, the children, both before and after being baptized, are spoken of as if they were non-members of the Church; and when they make a public profession of faith and are admitted to the Lord's Supper, this is almost always called "joining the Church". Those who practice Infant Baptism, and still speak of the baptized children several years later "joining the Church" are certainly inconsistent, as well as involved in error concerning the membership of the Church.

##### 2. What is the true Biblical view of the membership of the Church?

The true Biblical view of the membership of the Church is that set forth in the Westminster Confession of Faith and other standards, which affirms that "The visible Church. . . consists of all those throughout the world that profess the true religion; and of their children" (XXV.2.) The Reformed Presbyterian Testimony uses the expression: "together with all their children" (XXI.2), showing that even the youngest children are included as Church members.

##### 3. Why are the children of believers members of the visible Church?

The children of believers are members of the visible Church because they are included with their parents in the Covenant of Grace, as has been shown in Lesson 8 of this course. According to the Bible, the family, not the individual, is the real unit of church membership; and therefore children are included with their parents and counted as Church members. Many people who profess to adhere to the Westminster Standards are surprised at this doctrine of the Church membership of children, and seem to consider it some strange or peculiar teaching. This doctrine, however, is nothing new. It is not only clearly taught by all the standards of our Church, but it has always been a recognized doctrine of the Reformed Faith. However this doctrine of the Church membership of believers' children has been neglected and almost lost sight of for a generation or more, while individualistic and Baptist ideas of Church membership have become quite general. Though some may regard this change as a sign of religious progress, in reality it is an evidence of doctrine decadence and retrogression, of a trend which needs to be checked and reversed.

#### **4. Is counting infants as Church members a Roman Catholic error?**

The fact that the Roman Catholic Church does something, of course does not prove the practice to be wrong. The Roman Catholic Church with perfect propriety counts as members all who have been baptized. Rome's error in this matter does not consist in counting baptized persons as members, but rather in administering Baptism to infants otherwise than on the basis of the Covenant of Grace.

#### **5. Are infants baptized because they are Church members, or are they Church members because they are baptized?**

Apparently there is some confusion on this point at the present day. Because we speak of "communicant members" and "baptized members", the idea has apparently arisen that children are members because they have been baptized, that is, that Baptism confers Church membership on them. However this is not correct, and the true doctrine is that infants are baptized because they already are Church members (from birth). Dr. J. R. George made this point very clear when he wrote: "The children born in a Christian home are born church members, and entitled to the sacramental seal of baptism." ("The Covenanter Pastor", p. 163). They are entitled to Baptism because they are born Church members; therefore Church membership is prior to Baptism. This is the accepted view of orthodox Reformed theologians on this matter. Baptism is a badge or recognition of Church membership, but it does not make a person a Church member. A birth certificate or passport is a badge or evidence of American citizenship, but it does not make a person a citizen. He is a citizen first, and gets the passport later as evidence of his citizenship.

#### **6. Are children an inferior or secondary kind of Church members?**

The analogy of citizenship may help us here again. There exists in the United States only one kind of citizenship. A person is an American citizen, or he is not. An infant one day old, if born in the United States, is an American citizen. It is not a second rate citizen; even though only one day old, it is entitled to the full protection of the government and laws of the United States. But it does not have all the privileges of citizenship; for example, it cannot vote nor hold public office until it reaches the legal age for exercising these privileges.

Similarly, there is really only one kind of membership in the visible Church. A person is a Church member or he is not. An infant one day old (regardless of whether baptized or not), provided it is the child of Christian parents, is a Church member. It is not a second rate member;

throughout infancy and childhood it is entitled to be regarded and treated as a member of the covenant people of God. But still it does not have all the privileges of Church membership; for example, it cannot partake of the Lord's Supper, cannot vote in a congregational meeting nor hold office in the Church, until a proper age is reached for each of these privileges.

The Form of Church Government adopted by the Reformed Presbyterian Church in 1945 speaks of the duty of baptized children "to seek full membership in the Church" (II.8) and of the duty of the Church to instruct such children "with a view to preparing them for full membership" (II.9). This language must be understood to mean "to seek the full privileges of membership in the Church" and "with a view to preparing them for the full privileges of membership". If not so understood, it could easily give rise to the notion that there are two classes of membership in the Church, namely full and partial — a notion which would be contrary to the Reformed doctrine of the Covenant of Grace, as set forth in the Westminster Standards. Dr. R. J. George's language ("the minor children of the family who are not yet in full communion") seems preferable to speaking of "full membership", because the word "communion" involves the idea of the enjoyment of the privileges of membership.

#### **7. Should we continue to use the phrase "joining the Church" concerning covenant children who make a public profession of faith?**

Certainly this phrase should be abolished, except when it is used in its proper meaning, namely, of those received from the world. When used of covenant children and youth, the phrase "joining the Church" betrays an ideology which cannot be reconciled with the doctrine of the Covenant of Grace and the standards of our Church. This is not a mere matter of words and names; it involves the conflict of two irreconcilable ideas of the visible Church and the Covenant of Grace. We should say that our covenant children "make a public profession of their faith", which exactly describes the step taken, and cannot foster any false notions of Church membership. (We should avoid the use of the word "confirmation", which is almost as bad as the phrase "joining the Church", in that it seems to imply that those "confirmed" were not previously real members of the Church).

#### **8. What are the duties of the Church to the children in its membership?**

Adequately to answer this question would require far more space than is available here. The most important matters may be briefly mentioned: (a) The Church should administer the sacrament of Baptism to them. (b) The Church should teach them that they are Church members, and that this

is a high privilege and honor. (c) The Church should teach its children the Word of God and the way of salvation, and, in the name of Christ, should urge and command them to receive Jesus Christ as their personal Saviour. They should be made conscious of their covenant obligations as well as of God's covenant promises. (d) The Church should impress upon its children the duty, when they reach the proper age, of making a personal, public profession of faith and partaking of the Lord's Supper. (e) The children of the Church are subject to the discipline of the Church, regardless of whether or not they have made a public profession of faith and been admitted to the Lord's Supper.

#### 9. What is the proper age for covenant chil-

**dren to make a public profession of faith and be admitted to the Lord's Supper?**

No definite answer can be given to this question. The customary practice varies somewhat in different denominations, and also to some extent in different congregations of the same denomination. Under the Old Testament Jewish boys were expected to begin to participate in the Passover at the age of 12 years (Luke 2:41-43). From this we may perhaps infer that 12 years is a proper age, in ordinary cases, for covenant children to make a public profession of faith and be admitted to the Lord's Table. However, age is only one of the factors that must be taken into account. Much more important are the degree of knowledge and the seriousness of purpose of the applicants.

### LESSON 11

#### The Covenant of Grace and Infant Salvation

"Elect infants, dying in infancy, are regenerated, and saved by Christ through the Spirit, who worketh when, and where, and how He pleaseth: so also, are all other elect persons who are incapable of being outwardly called by the ministry of the Word." — The Westminster Confession of Faith, X.3.

"Since we are to judge of the will of God from His Word, which testifies that the children of believers are holy, not by nature, but in virtue of the covenant of grace in which they together with their parents are comprehended, godly parents have no reason to doubt of the election and salvation of their children whom it pleaseth God to call out of his life in their infancy." — The Canons of the Synod of Dort, XVII.

"Infants as well as adults, are rational and moral agents, and by nature totally depraved. The difference is, that the faculties of infants are in the germ, while those of adults are developed. As regeneration is a change wrought by creative power in the inherent moral condition of the soul, infants may plainly be the subjects of it in precisely the same sense as adults; in both cases the operation is miraculous, and therefore inscrutable." — A. A. Hodge, "Outlines of Theology", XXVI.20.

"There are two ways by which God saveth infants. First, by interesting them in the covenant, if their immediate or remote parents have been believers. He is a God of them and of their seed, extending his mercy unto a thousand generations of them that fear him; secondly, by his grace of election, which is most free, and not tied to any conditions; by which I make no doubt but God taketh unto him in Christ many whose parents never knew, or were despisers of, the gospel." — John Owen, "Works", Goold edition (1852), vol. X, p. 81.

#### Scripture References:

Luke 18:15,16 and Acts 2:38,39 and John 3:3,5 and 1 John 5:12 and Romans 8:9 compared together. Elect infants, dying in infancy, are regenerated and saved by Christ through the sovereign action of the Holy Spirit.

John 3:8. The regenerating work of the Holy Spirit is hidden from human observation.

1 John 5:12. Acts 4:12. The same principle applies to all other elect persons, regardless of their age, who are incapable of being called by the ministry of the Word; that is, those that are insane, mentally deficient, etc. Such are saved by Christ through the miraculous working of the Holy Spirit, apart from the preaching of the Gospel and personal faith.

#### Questions:

**1. What is the popular idea concerning the salvation of infants dying in infancy?**

The popular idea concerning the salvation of infants dying in infancy is that such infants are saved because they have never committed sin and are therefore regarded as "innocent". The idea is that infants are born sinless, and become sinners only when they reach years of discretion and voluntarily choose evil rather than good.

**2. How can it be shown that this popular idea of the "innocency" of infants is contrary to the Bible?**

According to the Bible all human beings are both sinful and guilty from birth. "Behold, I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me" (Psalm 51:5). "Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? Not one" (Job. 14:4). "By one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for

that all have sinned" (Rom. 5:12; in verse 14 the apostle argues that from Adam to Moses death reigned even over infants, who had not committed a deliberate transgression as Adam had; therefore, since death is the wages of sin — Rom. 6:23 — the infants who died must be regarded as guilty of sin).

According to the Bible, the guilt of Adam's first sin is imputed by God to all whom Adam represented in the Covenant of Works; that is, to all human beings with the single exception of Jesus Christ the Second Adam. This is proved by Rom. 5:18, ". . . by the offense of one judgment came upon all men to condemnation". Judgment to condemnation implies guilt before God. Those whom God judges and condemns must be guilty. But Rom. 5:18 teaches that this judgment to condemnation came upon all men "by the offense of one"; that is, by Adam's first sin. Therefore the guilt of Adam's first sin is charged by God against every human individual (except Jesus Christ). Because of the imputed guilt of Adam's breach of the Covenant of Works, every human individual is also born with a corrupt and sinful "heart" or nature, and in due time proceeds to commit all kinds of actual transgressions, in thought, word and deed.

The notion that infants and little children are "innocent" or sinless is a piece of popular sentimentalism which is not based on the Bible. The Bible doctrine of Original Sin teaches that infants are guilty before God and have a sin-corrupted nature. If infants dying in infancy are saved, it cannot be because of their "innocence" but must be solely by the grace and mercy of God through Christ's redemption.

### **3. What are we to believe concerning the salvation of covenant children which die in infancy, or before reaching years of discretion?**

We should not entertain the slightest doubt that all covenant children which die before reaching years of discretion are of the elect and are saved by the mysterious operation of the Holy Spirit. This conviction is not based on the notion of "innocency", but on the Bible doctrine of the Covenant of Grace. David was comforted by the knowledge that his child that had died was not lost forever; he said, "I shall go to him, but he shall not return to me" (2 Sam. 12:23). The infants of Bethlehem that were murdered by orders of king Herod (Matt. 2:16-18) were not forever lost; Jeremiah's prophecy (31:15-17) proves that they were saved: "There is hope in thine end, saith the Lord, that thy children shall come again to their own border". ("The words, 'There is hope in thine end', are to be fulfilled ultimately, when Rachel shall meet her murdered children at the resurrection. . .", J. F. & B., "Commentary on the Whole Bible").

Christian parents who have been bereaved of

their little ones should be comforted. They are not lost, nor have they been separated from them forever. The great and precious promises of the Covenant of Grace — that everlasting covenant, ordered in all things, and sure — afford a solid basis for the sure conviction that their little ones are "with Christ, which is far better" (Phil 1:23). There shall be a blessed reunion in heaven, and a still higher enjoyment of blessedness and glory at the resurrection day. For those who can say "The Lord has made with me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things, and sure", this hope is not a mere probability but a certainty.

God's covenant established with Abraham (Gen. 17:1-14) proves that every child of believing parents is born within the Covenant of Grace. It is true that some of the children of believing parents are not of the elect, and turn out to be covenant-breakers. But an infant that dies before reaching years of discretion cannot be a covenant-breaker; it cannot despise and violate the obligation of the Covenant of Grace. Therefore we have the best of reasons for believing that all children of believing parents dying in infancy are not only within the Covenant of Grace, but also of the number of the elect and shall certainly be saved. Just as they were made guilty and sinful by Adam's fall, apart from any act of their own, so they are made righteous and holy by Christ's redemption, apart from any act of their own. If anyone should say that regeneration cannot take place in infancy, it is sufficient to cite Luke 1:15, which proves that this miraculous act of the Holy Spirit can take place even before birth.

### **4. What does the Bible teach concerning the children of non-Christian parents, that die in infancy?**

The Bible is silent concerning the question of whether the children of non-Christian parents, dying in infancy, are saved or lost. Since the Bible says nothing on this subject, nothing can be proved concerning it, one way or the other. We must respect the silences of Scripture. This is a question that may safely be left to the justice and mercy of God. If we needed to know the answer to it, God would have revealed the answer in His Word. The fact that Scripture is silent on the matter indicates that the answer would not be of value or benefit to us if we knew it.

In the early centuries of the history of the Church, this question was complicated by a belief in the false doctrine of baptismal regeneration. Because of the belief that baptism is absolutely necessary to salvation, it was common to teach that all infants that died without baptism were inevitably eternally lost. This meant, of course, that all infants dying throughout the vast non-Christian world would inevitably perish eternally, and even the infants of Christian parents, if they should die without having been baptized,

could never enter heaven. But this linking of the question of infant salvation to Baptism (and to the false doctrine of baptismal regeneration at that) was basically wrong, and only gave rise to more errors, as well as causing limitless pain to Christian parents whose children, for any reason, had died unbaptized. Having come to a clearer understanding of God's Word, we know that if infants are saved, it is not because of Baptism, and if they are lost, it is not because of the lack of Baptism. God has not made salvation contingent upon a sacrament.

Many orthodox Reformed theologians have held, as a matter of opinion, that all infants dying in infancy are saved. Those who hold this opinion base it on general considerations such as the great mercy of God, the fact that infants have only original sin (never having committed actual transgressions), the truth that God's election unto eternal life is absolutely free and not limited by any conditions, etc. It is usually admitted that this view that all infants are saved cannot be proved or demonstrated in the sense that the doctrine of justification by faith can be demonstrated, for the Bible is silent on the subject.

It is also generally admitted that the Bible warrants us in saying that the salvation of covenant infants is a certainty, whereas in the case of non-covenant infants we are not warranted in speaking of the certainty of their salvation, but may at most entertain a probable hope of it based on such general considerations as are mentioned above.

We should realize clearly that IF all infants dying in infancy are saved, this is not because of "innocency" but only because of the free mercy of God, by the redemption of Christ being applied to them by the Holy Spirit. The popular notion that all infants are saved because they are "innocent" is a heresy and is definitely contrary to the Scriptures. Only the Reformed theology (Calvinism) affords any ground whatever for even a probable hope that all infants will be saved, for only the Reformed theology teaches that salvation proceeds wholly from God and not at all from man. If salvation is dependent on Baptism, or on a "decision" made by human free will, then there is no hope for the salvation of all infants, for millions die without Baptism, and none can exercise free will in infancy. If salvation depends on "innocency", then there is no hope at all for the salvation of infants, for they are not "innocent" — the Bible teaches that they are born guilty and with a corrupt nature. But if the Reformed Faith is true, then salvation depends on (a) God's decree of election, (b) the finished work of Christ, and (c) the almighty work of the Holy Spirit. On this basis, and on this basis alone, can we entertain a probable hope of the salvation of all infants dying in infancy.

Some people would like to say positively

that the Bible teaches that all infants will be saved. However, we have no right to say this positively unless at the same time we can show where and how the Bible teaches it. Actually, reverence requires that we must respect the silence of the Scripture on this subject.

Note: Ministers who wish to study the history of the doctrine of Infant Salvation are referred to B. B. Warfield, "The Development of the Doctrine of Infant Salvation", in "Studies in Theology" (Oxford Univ. Press, N.Y., 1932), pp. 411-444.

#### 5. Does the Westminster Confession of Faith teach the doctrine of infant damnation?

Although it has been repeatedly charged that the Westminster Confession of Faith teaches this doctrine, the charge is without foundation and is due to a very stupid failure to read carefully the exact words of the section of the Confession in question. The Confession says: "Elect infants, dying in infancy, are regenerated, and saved by Christ through the Spirit, who worketh when, and where, and how He pleaseth" (X.3). Note that this sentence occurs, not in the chapter on election, but in that dealing with the subject of regeneration ("effectual calling"). The question being discussed is NOT whether some infants are non-elect, but how elect infants are regenerated (in view of the fact that they cannot attend upon the ministry of the Word).

It is generally recognized that there are elect infants, dying in infancy. Whether or not there also exists such a class as "non-elect infants dying in infancy", the Confession does not undertake to decide. Because the Bible itself is silent on this question, the Confession of Faith, respecting the silence of Scripture, also leaves the question undecided. If there are non-elect infants that die in infancy, they are not under discussion in the Confession of Faith Chapter X, Section 3. That section deals only with the question of how ELECT infants are saved.

Yet it has been repeatedly claimed that the Westminster Confession teaches the doctrine of "infant damnation". For example, A. H. Strong says: "The Westminster Confession, in declaring that 'elect infants dying in infancy' are saved, implies that non-elect infants dying in infancy are lost" (Systematic Theology" p. 663). We reply, it implies no such thing, and has never been so understood by theologians who adhere to the Westminster Confession. The implied contrast is not between "elect infants" and "non-elect infants"; it is between "elect infants dying in infancy" and "elect infants living to grow up to years of discretion". The latter are saved in the ordinary way, through the ministry of the Word; the former are saved "by Christ through the Spirit, who worketh when, and where, and how He pleaseth."

The Westminster Confession carefully refrains from saying that all infants dying in infancy are saved. That is, it leaves the question undecided. That is very different from the doctrine of "infant damnation" which is unjustly and slanderous-

ly attributed to the Westminster Confession of Faith. This unjust slander has doubtless been repeated by many who have never taken the trouble to read the Westminster Confession for themselves.

## LESSON 12

### The Covenant of Grace and the Unity of Scripture

"Under the name of Holy Scripture, or the Word of God written, are now contained all the books of the Old and New Testaments. . . All which are given by inspiration of God, to be the rule of faith and life." — The Westminster Confession of Faith, I.2.

"And. . . the consent of all the parts, . . . the full discovery it makes of the only way of man's salvation, the many other incomparable excellencies, and the entire perfection thereof, are arguments whereby it doth abundantly evidence itself to be the Word of God: . . ." — The Westminster Confession of Faith, I.5.

"God hath, from time to time, made known to men his will respecting the salvation of sinners, and hath authorized certain persons qualified for the work, to communicate a Divine Revelation to mankind, specifying the only method of escaping eternal punishment on account of sin, and accompanied with sufficient evidence of its authenticity." — The Reformed Presbyterian Testimony, III.2.

"It hath pleased God, in condescension to human wants and weakness, to inspire, and infallibly to guide, chosen men to commit to writing the Revelation of his Will, for the instruction and comfort of his Church in the world." — The Reformed Presbyterian Testimony, III.3.

#### Scripture References:

Luke 16:29,31. Eph. 2:20. 2 Tim. 3:16. All the books of the Bible are the Word of God, and constitute the rule of faith and life.

Heb. 1:1. Eph. 3:9. 2 Tim. 3:16,17. God has not only revealed His will to mankind, but has committed the revelation to written form for the permanent instruction of His Church.

#### Questions:

##### 1. What is meant by "the unity of Scripture"?

This phrase means that the Bible, in spite of the fact that it consists of 66 books in two Testaments, written by some 40 different writers, is nevertheless truly ONE BOOK, because it is inspired throughout by the Holy Spirit and is entirely self-consistent, presenting a single consistent message from Genesis to Revelation. When we speak of the unity of Scripture, we mean that the unity of the Bible is more basic than its obvious diversity.

Of course there is diversity in the Bible. It

is obvious that there is in the sacred volume great diversity of human authorship, language, subject matter, literary style, historical circumstances, and the like. When we speak of the unity of the Bible, we have no thought of denying the obvious diversity that exists in the Bible. But we mean that in spite of all this diversity, there is a true and deeper unity. Only one person was THE REAL AUTHOR of the Bible — the Holy Spirit; the human writers were His organs in this process. And from Genesis to Revelation a single, consistent message (or system of truth) is presented.

##### 2. What is the importance of the unity of the Bible?

If the Bible is not really a unity, then the Bible is not really the Word of God. If the Bible presents fragments of irreconcilable viewpoints, contains mutually contradictory statements, etc., then it is merely the reflection of the various opinions of the human writers. If the Bible is not an organic unity, it cannot be the Word of God; if the Bible does not present a consistent message throughout, it cannot really be the Word of God; if the Bible is not really the Word of God, then it cannot be our authority for faith and life; and so, if the Bible is not a unity, we are left with no authority beyond human reason.

##### 3. How is the unity of the Bible denied to-day?

The unity of the Bible is denied or destroyed today by three wrong approaches to the Bible, namely (a) the atomistic view of the Bible; (b) the higher critical view of the Bible; and (c) the modern dispensational view of the Bible. Each of these views of the Bible is held by multitudes of people at the present day, and each undermines the true unity of the Scriptures.

##### 4. What is meant by the atomistic view of the Bible?

This is the error of those who fail to realize that the Bible is an organism. They take each verse or portion of Scripture more or less by itself, without realizing that it has an organic connection with all other parts of the Bible. This may be called the "Sears, Roebuck catalogue view of the Bible". In a mail-order catalogue there is no organic relation between a suit of clothes on one page and a washing machine on another page; the only relation is a mechanical one; they just happen to be listed in the same book. But in the

Bible everything is organically related in everything else. For example, the fall of Jericho in Joshua chapter 6 is organically related to the birth of Christ in Bethlehem in Matthew chapter 2, and this again is organically related to the Christian being justified by faith and having peace with God in Romans chapter 5. It all fits together and one part depends on another part. The Bible is not a miscellaneous collection of moral and religious truths as a mail-order catalogue is a miscellaneous collection of merchandise; the Bible is an organism like a tree; every part is organically related to every other part. Multitudes of people fail to realize this, and the result is that they approach and use the Bible in a very mechanical manner, to their own great error and loss.

#### **5. What is the higher critical view of the Bible?**

The "higher criticism" claims to subject the Bible to a close study in the light of historical circumstances, conditions, etc., to discover the origin, character, purpose, authorship, time of composition, etc., of the various Biblical writings. There is no objection to such investigations if rightly carried on.

But the "higher criticism" has become so dominated by unbelief in the Bible as the Word of God, that the very term "higher criticism" has acquired a bad reputation in Christian circles. As long ago as 1895 Dr. William Henry Green wrote: "The Higher Criticism has been of late so associated with extravagant theorizing, and with insidious attacks upon the genuineness and credibility of the books of the Bible that the very term has become an offense to serious minds. It has come to be considered one of the most dangerous forms of infidelity, and in its very nature hostile to revealed truth" ("The Higher Criticism of the Pentateuch", p.v).

The higher criticism holds that the Bible is a human product, filled with errors and contradictions. Its divine inspiration and authority are denied or explained away. The Pentateuch is split up into fragments assigned to various hypothetical documents, alleged to have been written at various times, for diverse purposes, by different authors, and later combined in a patchwork or crazy-quilt pattern by an editor or "redactor", or by a number of such "redactors", the whole being finally (falsely) attributed to Moses. The book of Deuteronomy is said to have been written at the time of Josiah; Daniel is said to have been written subsequently to the events prophesied in the book; Isaiah is said to have been written by two or even by three different "Isaias", and later welded into a single book by some unknown "redactor". The four Gospels are said to be largely unreliable and probably not written

by Matthew, Mark, Luke and John; in particular, the Gospel of John is said to be not historical, but a piece of philosophic interpretation of the life of Jesus, written long after the events it purports to record.

#### **6. What is the importance of the higher critical view of the Bible today?**

The answer to the previous question quoted from a book written by Dr. W. H. Green in 1895. It may safely be said that the situation is even worse at the present day. What was being valiantly resisted in Dr. Green's day has been accepted as truth, in general, by the theological world of 1959. Just as evolution is taken for granted by the scientific world today, so the higher critical view of the Bible is taken for granted, by and large, by the theological world of our day. There are exceptions to this statement, of course; there remain a few fairly large and many small denominations that have not surrendered to the higher critical view of the Bible. The same is true of the theological seminaries of the world; but most of the large and influential ones are dominated by the higher criticism. Their scholars are so sure that the higher criticism is valid, that they do not even take the trouble to read and answer the books written in defense of the Bible by orthodox scholars. The sentiment among Modernists is that their battle has been won; they feel that the idea of an infallible Bible is dead, and the few who still try to believe in it are not important. We should realize that this higher critical view of the Bible is not only tolerated, but actually dominates, most of the large Protestant denominations in America today. The seriousness of the situation cannot easily be exaggerated.

#### **7. How does the higher critical view of the Bible destroy the unity of the Bible?**

It destroys the unity of the Bible by denying the real divine authorship back of the human writers, and by holding that the Bible is a scrapbook of contradictory records and viewpoints. If the Bible is the composite patchwork the critics claim, then it is not a unity except in the merely mechanical sense that it is printed and bound in a single volume. If the critics are right, the Bible possesses no organic unity; it is not a divine guidebook, but a human scrapbook.

#### **8. Over against the atomistic and higher critical views of the Bible, how does the doctrine of the Covenant of Grace safeguard the unity of the Bible?**

Both the atomistic view and the higher critical view rule out and render impossible any real plan in the Bible. The atomistic view makes the Bible a hodge-podge of miscellaneous ideas; the higher critical view makes the Bible, at best, a

patched-up record of "man's age-long search for God". But the doctrine of the Covenant of Grace really maintains the unity of Scripture. For it teaches that the whole Bible, from Genesis to Revelation, is the divinely-inspired record of God's redemption of sinful man. It shows how the whole Bible deals with the working out of God's eternal Covenant of Redemption on the

field of human history. Every book, chapter and verse of the Bible fits into this plan, like the pieces of a jig-saw puzzle. Viewed from the standpoint of the Covenant of Grace, as the infallible revelation of God to man, the Bible is seen to be a harmonious and consistent whole from beginning to end, the grand theme of which is Jesus Christ the Redeemer of God's elect.

## LESSON 13

### The Covenant of Grace and the Unity of Scripture, Continued

"The covenant of grace was not always administered after the same manner, but the administrations of it under the Old Testament were different from those under the New." — The Larger Catechism, 33.

"There are not therefore two covenants of grace, differing in substance, but one and the same, under various dispensations." — The Westminster Confession of Faith, VII.6b.

#### Scripture References:

2 Cor. 3:6-9. The administration of the Covenant of Grace was different under the Old Testament from that under the New.

Gal. 3:14,16. Acts 15:11. Rom. 3:21-23, 30. Psalm 32:1 compared with Rom. 4:3,6,16,17,23,24. Heb. 13:8. Though the administration differed under the two Testaments, there were not two covenants, but only one throughout.

#### Questions:

##### 1. What is modern dispensationalism?

In a certain sense all Christians are "dispensationalists", for all believe in at least two dispensations, one before and the other after the crucifixion of Christ. But properly speaking, "modern dispensationalism" is the special scheme of Bible interpretation based on the writings of J. N. Darby and popularized largely by the Scofield Reference Bible and by many Bible institutes and conferences.

##### 2. What is the modern dispensationalist view of the Bible?

Modern dispensationalism is a false system of categories imposed on the Bible, which divides the history of the world into seven distinct periods or dispensations, from Adam to the end of the world, and asserts that in each of these dispensations God tests the human race with respect to some specific revelation of His will. The seven dispensations, as given in the Scofield Reference

Bible, are as follows: Innocency, Conscience, Human Government, Promise, Law, Grace, Kingdom. Of these seven dispensations, only three can actually be found in the Bible, and those three (Innocency, Law and Grace) correspond, respectively, to (1) the Covenant of Works; (2) the Old Testament dispensation of the Covenant of Grace; and (3) the New Testament Dispensation of the Covenant of Grace. The other four of the Scofield Bible's dispensations (Conscience, Human Government, Promise and the Kingdom) are not to be found in the Bible as periods of time **DISTINCT FROM THE COVENANT OF GRACE**. Moreover, what the Scofield Bible calls "the dispensation of Law" was actually a dispensation of the Covenant of Grace (the period from Moses to Christ).

##### 3. What is the harm in the modern dispensational view of the Bible?

The harm in the modern dispensational view of the Bible consists in the fact that this popular system virtually nullifies the unity of the Bible by so sharply setting off one part of the Bible against another part of the Bible. For example, the dispensation of Law against the dispensation of Grace, and vice versa. Scofield actually asserts that at Mount Sinai the people of Israel "rashly" accepted the law (p. 20), and even that at Mount Sinai the Israelites "exchanged grace for law" (p. 20). The result of this is the notion that the approach of sinful men to God was on a radically different basis in different dispensations. Even the Lord's Prayer is declared to be "on legal ground" (p. 1002), and, as a form of prayer, to be unfit for Christian use (p. 1089-1090).

Thus this system tends toward the idea that there is no law in the dispensation of Grace, and that there was no grace under the dispensation of Law (although this antithesis is by no means consistently carried out, for there are apparent contradictions within the Scofield Bible's statements). Darby-Scofield dispensationalism regards law and grace as mutually exclusive principles, instead of recognizing the truth that the law, in the period from Moses to Christ, was a part of the system of grace, and subsidiary to the administration of the Covenant of Grace.

#### 4. How does the dispensational view of the Bible affect the unity of the Bible?

According to the orthodox Reformed theology, there was first the Covenant of Works (from the creation of man until Adam's fall), and then the Covenant of Grace (from Adam's fall to the end of the world). According to the Reformed theology, the entire span of world history between Adam's fall and the end of the world comes under the one Covenant of Grace, and throughout this entire period God's dealings with mankind are based on ONE SINGLE PRINCIPLE, NAMELY, THE REDEMPTION PURCHASED ON CALVARY BY THE LORD JESUS CHRIST. There are differences of external administration in the different periods, but the underlying principle, the essential meaning of God's relations with men, is identical from Adam's fall to the end of the world.

According to modern dispensationalism, on the other hand, God's dealings with men (subsequent to Adam's fall) are based on SIX DIFFERENT PRINCIPLES, EACH OF WHICH IS THOUGHT OF AS IMPARTING A SPECIFIC CHARACTER TO A PARTICULAR PERIOD. Thus one period of history is set over against another, and one part of the Bible is set over against another, and sometimes even in opposition to another (e.g., the Scofield Bible's teachings about the Lord's Prayer, as cited above).

The result of this system is that the Bible ceases to have one consistent message from beginning to end. The sweep of the Covenant of Grace from Adam to the end of the world is nullified, and the Covenant of Grace is virtually limited to the period between the crucifixion of Christ and His second coming.

Scofield states (p. 1343) that FOUR forms of the Gospel are to be distinguished, namely, (1) the Gospel of the Kingdom, or "the good news that God purposes to set up on the earth. . . a kingdom, political, spiritual, Israelitish, universal, over which God's Son, David's heir, shall be King. . . for one thousand years." (2) The Gospel of the Grace of God, or "the good news that Jesus Christ . . . has died on the cross for the sins of the world." (3) The everlasting Gospel (Rev. 14:6), which is "neither the Gospel of the kingdom, nor of grace". (4) What Paul calls "my Gospel" (Rom. 2:16), which is "the Gospel of the grace of God in its fullest development."

Over against this scheme, we believe that there never has been nor will be but ONE TRUE GOSPEL, namely, THE GOSPEL OF THE GRACE OF GOD, and that all possible benefits and blessings that sinful men can receive from God are included under that one true Gospel of divine grace. Christ purchased all blessings and benefits for

all the elect of God by His perfect life and sacrifice on the cross. The "Gospel of the kingdom" mentioned in the New Testament is identical with "the Gospel of the grace of God" — "Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom" (Luke 12:32) — the "kingdom" is a GIFT of God's GOOD PLEASURE: what is that but the Gospel of God's grace?

#### 5. What does modern dispensationalism teach concerning Israel and the Church?

Modern dispensationalism draws a very sharp distinction between Israel and the Church. It is asserted that God has TWO bodies of people in Covenant with Himself, namely an earthly people (Israel) and a heavenly people (the Church). It is an axiom of dispensationalism that Israel is Israel, the Church is the Church; that is, these two are distinct and cannot be identified. Dispensationalists distinguish carefully between promises intended for Israel and promises intended for the Church.

Over against the idea, the Reformed theology teaches the CONTINUITY and SPIRITUAL IDENTITY of Israel with the Church. It teaches that from Adam and Eve to the end of the world, God has only ONE body of people on earth in covenant with Himself, namely, the Church. The form of the Church has changed, but the life and essence has remained identical. Israel was merely the form of the Church in the period from Moses to Christ. After the Day of Pentecost, the true spiritual life of Israel was continued in the New Testament form of the Church. Today the Church is the true Israel, just as in David's day every true Israelite was a member of the Church.

#### 6. How does the doctrine of the Covenant of Grace guard against these errors of modern dispensationalism?

The doctrine of the Covenant of Grace guards against these errors of modern dispensationalism (a) by making it clear that the Bible has one single consistent theme from beginning to end, to which all parts of the Bible are subsidiary and to which all contribute. That one theme, of course, is the accomplishment in history of God's eternal Covenant of Redemption; the Bible is the record of the preparations for, realization of, and application of, Christ's redemption. (b) By making it clear that from the creation of mankind to the end of the world there is one single body of people on earth in covenant with God, namely, the Church, of which the Old Testament Israel was a temporary, preliminary form or phase.

(To be continued)

## Reviews of Religious Books

The favorable reviewing of a book here is not to be understood as necessarily implying an endorsement of everything contained in it. Within the editorial policy of Blue Banner Faith and Life each reviewer is solely responsible for the opinions expressed in his reviews. Please purchase books from your book dealer or direct from the publishers; do not send orders for books to the manager of this magazine.

**WHAT THE SECTS TEACH**, by Edward J. Tanis. Baker Book House, Grand Rapids 6, Michigan. 1958, pp. 89, paper cover. \$1.00.

This booklet effectively presents a study of four main cults which do immeasurable damage to men and women, and which are outstanding in their zeal: "Jehovah's Witnesses," Seventh-Day Adventists, Christian Science and Spiritism.

In each case we have an historical sketch of the cult, an analysis of the Truth it denies and the errors it propagates, with refutation from Scripture. There are several chapters in each section, and after each chapter there are a number of questions for discussion.

Edward J. Tanis has read orthodox literature, and so we have good quotations from Dr. Charles Hodge, Dr. William Hendriksen, Dr. F. W. Grosheide and other Reformed scholars, both past and present. While one may not always agree with the author, the whole book is well worth reading, and we recommend it for use in discussion groups especially. This "study-manual on the major sects" is timely, and reveals the author's painstaking research in a field which needs to be explored from time to time — a task which few have the patience to undertake. Here is a booklet to give to people who are becoming entangled with any of the prevalent sects.

— Fred. S. Leahy

**AN EXPOSITION OF JOHN SEVENTEEN**, by Thomas Manton. Sovereign Grace Book Club, 1124 S.E. First St., Evansville 13, Indiana. 1958, pp. 451. \$5.95.

In this attractive volume we have forty-four sermons on the "High-Priestly Prayer" of our Lord. Here is the preaching of the Puritans at its best; and while this work is couched in the language and style of the 17th century, and could not be considered popular or easy reading today, it repays serious study and helps to restore some of the lost notes in modern "evangelical" preaching. For the Puritans were diligent students of Scripture, and God's Word was like fire in their bones.

This well bound volume is further enhanced by a concise, helpful foreword by the Rev. J. Marcellus Kik. As the Puritans go, Man-

ton's style is plain and to the point. Mr. Kik quotes F. R. Weber who gives the reason for this in his recent book, "A History of Preaching." On one occasion Manton was asked to preach before the Lord Mayor and aldermen. His sermon was notable for its display of learning, but was sadly lacking in the doctrines of grace. As he left the building, a shabby man seized him by the sleeve of his robe and said, "Sir, I came hoping to get some good for my soul, but I could understand very little of what you said." Dr. Manton looked at the ragged man for a moment and then said, "My friend, it was not I who gave you a sermon. You have given me one; and with the help of the living God I shall never be so great a fool again."

Thomas Manton was born in 1620 at Lawrence-Lydiat, Somerset, England. He was educated at Oxford. During the Commonwealth he was one of Cromwell's chaplains; he made the prayer at Cromwell's installation in 1657. He frequently preached before Parliament. Later he was a royal chaplain to Charles II. He refused to take the oath of conformity and so was deprived of his living in 1662 — along with 2,000 others — by the Act of Uniformity. He continued to preach in his own rooms, and was arrested and imprisoned for a short time. After his release, he continued to preach until his home-call in 1677 at the age of 57. Among his contemporaries were Archbishop Ussher, Stephen Charnock, Richard Baxter, Edward Reynolds and John Owen, all of whom went to hear him preach at Covent Garden, London. At Dr. Manton's funeral, Dr. Bates described him in his sermon as "a divine of rich fancy, a strong memory, and happy elocution" (Neal's **History of the Puritans**, Vol. 3, page 209).

In these sermons we have Manton at his best. His exposition is always reverent, loving and scholarly, not to mention thorough. Many gems shine in these sermons; e.g., commenting on the words "Neither pray I for these alone, but through their word," he says, "We were provided for before we were born. . . . As parents provide for their children's children yet unborn, so doth Christ remember future believers, as well as those of the present age, and pleadeth their cause with God. . . . It was Esau's complaint, 'Hast thou but one blessing, O my father?' when

he came too late, and Jacob had already carried away the blessing. We were not born too late, and out of due time, to receive the blessing of Christ's prayers" (p. 347).

Sermon XX does not seem to be complete: in this discourse, Manton dealing with Judas, "the son of perdition," sees Papal Rome as his modern successor, betraying Christ with a kiss. "One egg," he remarks, "is not more like another than Judas and antichrist!"

The Sovereign Grace Book Club has republished this work as part of the Puritan Commentary, and has done so most attractively.

— Fred S. Leahy

COMMENTARY ON THE EPISTLES TO THE EPHESIANS AND COLOSSIANS, by E. K. Simpson and F. F. Bruce. Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, Grand Rapids 3, Michigan. 1957, pp. 328. \$4.00.

This is another volume in the New International Commentary on the New Testament. Previous volumes have received favorable reviews in this magazine. The present volume on Ephesians and Colossians is authored by two men. F. F. Bruce is better known for his writings on Acts in this series, a church history, *The Spreading Flame*, and *Second Thoughts on the Dead Sea Scrolls*.

Mr. Simpson occupies a different position from most commentators. In the Editor's preface, we read that "his competence in the New Testament field was recognized, though he was neither an ordained minister nor a professional scholar, when he was invited to serve as Lecturer in this field in the Free Church College of Edinburgh in 1935, a post he filled for two years." Having private wealth, he took advantage of the opportunity to study a wide range of literature. The original plan had called for him to write on both of these books, but failing eye-sight forced him to limit his labors to one book. F. F. Bruce has ably written on the other book.

Mr. Simpson's commentary on Ephesians is well written with a good and wide choice of words and illustrations, indicative of his wide background. The average reader will need to consult his dictionary freely. There are good notes on almost every page indicating in many cases the meaning of original Greek words used. Two brief quotations on familiar passages will demonstrate his ability. On Ephesians 2:8, he writes, "Here we sight what may fairly be termed the central message of the Epistle, already not obscurely foreshadowed. Salvation is of Jehovah (Ps. 3:8), His august monopoly. We have undone ourselves, but in Him resides our help" (p. 54).

On Ephesians 5:25-33 he writes, "This mar-

velous analogy, like the paeon which closes the third chapter, defies exhaustive analysis. It is impossible to partition its intricate fabric into segments. The earthly and heavenly bridal are inextricably blended. All we can do is to gather up its pregnant instruction under four outstanding heads" (p. 130). This he ably does.

F. F. Bruce is quite well known in Christian circles, and his comments on Colossians match his reputation. Here again, there are good notes at the bottom of most pages, freeing the text itself from notations, and making the work easier for the layman to read.

This whole book is recommended for both pastor and people. The print is good, passages are easily found, and the book shows evidence of careful proof-reading. There are five indexes in the back of the book, adding to the value of the book in the library. The careful reader will be enriched spiritually by this book.

— James D. Carson

GOD, GOLD AND GOVERNMENT, by Howard E. Kershner. Prentice-Hall, Inc. Englewood Cliffs, N. J. 1957, pp. 146. \$2.95.

The purpose of this book is stated in the sub-title, "The Interrelationship of Christianity, Freedom, Self-Government and Economic Well-Being." The book is divided into three parts, from which it takes its title.

Part One concerns God. The author seeks to show the place of God in the life of man, and to show the source from which all freedom must come. This surely is an important objective, and one which ought to concern each one of us. However, we cannot accept the brand of religion as taught in the book. It is built around the all-too-common belief today that man has within himself the power to get free from whatever shackles may bind him. Three quotations will be sufficient to illustrate this point. "After forty years of worship and meditation in the wilderness, Moses gained the insight and the strength to lead forth from Egypt a horde of slaves, and under most trying and difficult conditions in the desert, to forge from this disorganized mob a disciplined and dedicated people" (p. 19). This ignores the call of God to Moses at the burning bush.

"When Moses came down from his great experience on Mt. Sinai and found the people dancing about the golden calf, the shock was so great that the vision crumbled and he found it necessary to retrace his steps back up the mountain and to spend many days seeking renewal of his insight" (p. 35). We believe the Ten Commandments were revealed to Moses by God, and not the product of Moses' insight.

"If we persist in worshipping God, little by little evil is discarded and replaced by righteous-

ness until finally that which was corruptible has put on incorruption" (p. 36). The Bible teaches us that the source of man's righteousness is by transformation, not evolution.

Part Two concerns Gold. In this section the author makes a strong appeal for return to the gold standard. Some statements here are worthy of note. For example, he writes, "In my opinion the explanation of the miracle of America lies in the spiritual rather than in the material realm" (p. 60). We would agree. Again he says, "For the first time in history, I believe, a new country was established for the purpose of serving God" (p. 61). What, we would ask, was ancient Israel established for?

The author reviews the history of many nations of the world, showing the need for "trusted money", by which he means a monetary unit of intrinsic value that will not lose its purchasing power. Our government departed from this standard in 1934. He writes, "I know of no currency in history that has lasted more than forty-two years after its intrinsic base has been abandoned" (p. 68). Since it has already been twenty-four since this took place, he feels that we shortly face the destruction of our fiscal system. There follows a good chapter on the "Nature of Profit", and the fallacy of the socialist to divide the wealth equally.

The third part is on Government. In it the author seeks to show the increasing power and authority of the government and the increasing loss of the freedom of the individual. This is true not only of the state, but also of the church, as he points out: "Unfortunately, we are now facing within Protestantism a powerful move toward uniformity and authoritarianism. It is the old, old story of a hierarchy seeking to increase its power" (p. 109). He follows a like trend in government, writing that because of low interest rates, desertion of the gold standard, and great extravagance coupled with deficit spending, "the government-managed depression was never cured. It lasted all through the Thirties" (p. 118). He points out that government aid is no substitute for individual Christian charity.

He concludes with a chapter on the fact that socialism is a reversal of God's design. This reviewer is of the opinion that there is much of value in the book, but cautions the reader against the subtlety of that religion which gives to man the authority of God.

The book is easily read, and the author clarifies his point with many illustrations drawn from a wide range of sources.

— James D. Carson

A SACRAMENTAL CATECHISM, by Andrew Thomson. The Westminster Fellowship, % the Rev. J. A. Mitchell, The Manse, Middlemarch, Otago, New Zealand. 1957 reprint of 1832. pp. 48,

pocket size, paper cover. Price 1 shilling; 10 shillings per dozen; one pound for 25 copies.

One of the marks of the true Church is the Scriptural observance of the sacraments of Baptism and the Lord's Supper. Our forefathers placed much more emphasis on the importance of the sacraments and their right observance than is at all common at the present day. Any writing which calls Christian people to a more conscientious and intelligent use of the sacraments is to be welcomed. This booklet meets a definite need. It was first published in Scotland in 1807. Thirty editions, totalling 130,000 copies, were issued between 1807 and 1832. The present booklet is a reprint of the 1832 edition. The author was a minister of the Church of Scotland and for more than twenty years was the Editor of **The Christian Instructor** (Edinburgh). He was also musically gifted, and was the composer of the Psalm tune "St. George's Edinburgh" which was set to a portion of Psalm 24.

The author did not intend this catechism to be memorized, as many of the answers are of such length that memorization would be rather difficult. Moreover, most of the answers are not complete in themselves, but must be taken along with the questions to get the meaning. Although the title of the booklet might lead the reader to expect a treatment of both Baptism and the Lord's Supper, as a matter of fact Baptism is not discussed, and the entire booklet deals with the Lord's Supper.

The treatment is eminently Scriptural and also very practical. The need for serious self-examination is strongly stressed. This booklet is heartily recommended. It would be excellent material for an adults' or young people's study class. Also it would be very appropriate for pastors to give a copy of this booklet to persons making a public profession of faith and becoming communicant members.

Money can be sent to New Zealand by international postoffice money order or by an ordinary personal check drawn on an American bank. The reviewer would suggest that a check (payable to order of The Westminster Fellowship) for the approximate amount be sent, with allowance of a little extra for postage, accompanied by a letter requesting that as many copies be sent as the money remitted will pay for. One shilling is approximately 14 cents; one pound is approximately \$2.80.

— J. G. Vos

PELOUBET'S SELECT NOTES FOR 1959 ON THE INTERNATIONAL BIBLE LESSONS FOR CHRISTIAN TEACHING. by Wilbur M. Smith. W. A. Wilde Company, 131 Clarendon St., Boston 16, Mass. 1959, pp. 412. \$2.95.

This is the 85th annual volume of Peloubet's Notes. The author, Dr. Wilbur M. Smith, is well

known. The material is evangelical and true to the plenary inspiration and authority of the Bible. Moreover it is of excellent quality and eminently usable. Sabbath School teachers who complain that they cannot find sufficient material of a type they can use should purchase this book. The lessons are well outlined and they provide a wealth of expository and illustrative material. Concise information on historical backgrounds is given, as well as new light from the field of archaeology. It is not to be expected that thoughtful readers will agree with every interpretation in such a book as this; it should be used as a help, not as an authority. The printing is excellent and the appearance is attractive. For a book of over 400 pages the price (\$2.95) is very moderate. It would be a splendid thing for churches to provide a copy of this book to every teacher of a class of pupils of teen-age or older. The expense would be justified as a wise investment in more effective teaching.

— J. G. Vos

**WHAT ARCHAEOLOGY SAYS ABOUT THE BIBLE**, by Albert N. Williams. Association Press, 291 Broadway, New York 7, N. Y. 1957, pp. 125, pocket size, paper cover. 50 cents.

The book is interesting and well-written. However, it should have been named "What Some Archaeologists Say about the Bible," for the viewpoint is that of theological liberalism, and the book contains many statements that are incompatible with acceptance of the Bible as the infallible Word of God. The following statement is an example:

"As a piece of literature, the Bible is not infallible. True, the Divine Spirit that is made evident in the Bible is utterly infallible and omniscient, but the text of the Bible is simply a text, written by men and women who were human, and who were subject to human error about human matters" (p. 13). Over against this cool denial of the Bible's infallibility, the reviewer would place the statement of Jesus Christ that "the Scripture cannot be broken" (John 10:35), that of the apostle Paul that "all Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine" (2 Tim. 3:16; how can it be "profitable for doctrine" if it is permeated by "human error"?), and that of the apostle Peter, who said that the Scripture "came not in old time by the will of man; but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost" (2 Peter 1:21). If I have to judge the Bible and decide what statements in it are the Word of God and what statements are mere "human error", then my real authority is not the Bible but my own reason.

As an example of "the human and fallible qualities" of the text of the Bible, the book cites the problem of the age of Jehoiachin when he became king — in 2 Kings 24:8 it is stated that he became king at the age of 18 years, while in 2

Chron. 36:9 it is said that he became king at the age of 8 years. The author says that this problem shows that the Bible is "contradictory and puzzling." Of course we are quite ready to admit that the verse in Kings and the one in Chronicles cannot both be correct; Jehoiachin cannot have been both 8 and also 18 years of age when he was crowned king of Judah. Most scholars hold that the correct figure is the one given in Kings (18 years) and that the 8 years in Chronicles is a textual corruption, that is, an error that has crept in at some point in the process of copying manuscripts by hand. No one who is at all informed will deny that there are such textual errors in the Bible, that is, that the scribes who did the copying were not miraculously preserved from making any errors. But to admit that there are some textual errors in the Bible is very different from stating, as this author does, that **the original writers** of the Bible "were subject to human error." It has never been proved that the original autographs — the documents as originally written by the actual authors — contained any errors. The fact that the Bible writers "were human" does not rule out the idea that the Holy Spirit supernaturally guided them so that what they wrote was exactly what God intended to have written and so that they were kept from error. The author says that while the words of the Bible may involve human error, the ideas of the Bible are infallible and divine. But how can we ever gain any knowledge of the ideas of the Bible except through the words? Take away the words, and you have nothing left but blank paper. Where is there a Bible idea that is not expressed in specific words of the Bible? And how can we get infallible ideas from fallible (and sometimes erroneous) words?

The author holds the radical view that only one tribe of the Hebrews (the "Joseph tribe") actually sojourned in Egypt, and that "when Moses led his people into the wilderness and thence back into Canaan, it was only a few hundred Hebrews who were involved, and not the hundreds of thousands that are suggested in the opening verses of Numbers" (p. 45).

The author adheres to the "higher critical" view of the Old Testament, holding that the first writing of any part of the Bible occurred between 900 and 800 B. C., or several centuries after the time of Moses. He holds the "late dating" of the Exodus (1290 B. C. instead of 1440 B. C.). Throughout the book he assumes that miracles never happened and that everything must be explained naturalistically. Thus, for example, he states that the people of Israel broke camp and left the Mount Sinai region because "the pastures under Sinai apparently failed" (p. 58). There is no mention of the Theophany — the pillar of cloud and fire — by which God led the people and controlled their startings and stoppings. Similarly on page 55 the author states that the

hundreds of thousands of Israelites described in the Book of Numbers "simply could not have existed in that barren region." According to the Bible, of course, they were miraculously fed with manna from heaven.

There are many interesting things in this book, but it cannot be recommended because the viewpoint of the author is not that of faith in the truthfulness of the Bible. Many people today are over-optimistic about the effectiveness of archaeology in convincing unbelievers that the Bible is true. We should realize that archaeology is a tool, and what is done with it depends on the theological and philosophical viewpoint of the man who handles it. Archaeology serves to help Christians understand the Bible better, but it does not convert unbelievers. The latter will view all archaeological evidence through the tinted lenses of their own skeptical, naturalistic philosophy. They cannot possibly avoid interpreting the evidence in terms of their own basic pre-suppositions.

— J. G. Vos

**BUNYAN'S PILGRIM'S PROGRESS FOR DEVOTIONAL READING**, Simplified by Clara E. Murray. Baker Book House, Grand Rapids 6, Michigan. 1958, pp. 119, pocket size, hardbound. \$1.50.

The Pilgrim's Progress, by John Bunyan, is one of the classics of Christendom. It is a large book, but well worth reading in its complete form. The present little volume is a greatly abridged and simplified selection of some of the best loved parts of Bunyan's immortal allegory. While it will not take the place of the complete work, it is in handy form for carrying in pocket or handbag, and should prove helpful to many. Those who have never read Bunyan, and read this little book, may feel stirred to obtain and read the complete work.

— J. G. Vos

**A FAMILY TREASURY OF INSPIRATION AND FAITH**, by Herbert V. Prochnow. W. A. Wilde Company, 131 Clarendon St., Boston 16, Mass. 1958, pp. 121. \$2.00.

This book is a collection of religious quotations, sayings of famous men, selections of poetry, brief anecdotes illustrating religious or moral truth, and the like. Most of the items are quite brief; sometimes there are four or five on a single page, while at other places a single item may take a page or two. The author or source is stated in each case, and there is a good index of subjects at the end of the book.

While most of the items are taken from the writings or sayings of eminent Christians, there are some from rather doubtful sources. For instance, there is on page 28 a commendation of Jesus Christ by the Unitarian Channing. We question the propriety of this, for Channing of

course did not believe in the deity of our Lord. Others open to challenge are Tolstoy, Napoleon, G. Bromley Oxnam, Goethe, Plato, Henry Sloane Coffin, Albert Schweitzer, Swedenborg, John Foster Dulles, Ralph W. Sockman, Alexis Carrel, Harry Emerson Fosdick. Quotations from these and other liberals, modernists, humanists and philosophers are interspersed among quotations from the Bible and from evangelical Christians like Clarence Edward Macartney, Charles Wesley, Phillips Brooks, Christina Rossetti, Martin Luther, Albert Barnes, William Cowper and Henry Francis Lyte.

There is much that is excellent in this little book, but it needs to be handled with some discrimination.

— J. G. Vos

**STORIES OF CHRISTMAS CAROLS**, by Ernest K. Emurian. W. A. Wilde Company, 131 Clarendon St., Boston 16, Mass. pp. 139. \$2.00.

Being committed to the position that only the inspired Psalms — the Biblical Psalms — are appointed for singing in the worship of God, the reviewer must confess that he has but little enthusiasm for Christmas carols. Those who desire to learn more about Christmas carols, their origin and history, will find this an interesting and informative book. Many interesting facts are presented. The author clearly desires to honor Christ, and he writes with a warm evangelical faith and fervor.

— J. G. Vos

**MINISTER'S LIBRARY HANDBOOK**, by Jay J. Smith. W. A. Wilde Company, 131 Clarendon St., Boston 16, Mass. 1958, pp. 150. \$2.50.

This little volume brings out the importance of books for effective work in the ministry. It is pointed out that most ministers spend far more money on automobiles than on books; the car is regarded as a necessity, the books as luxuries. While the printing of books is at an all-time high, many Americans do not read even one book a year. The importance of books as tools of scholarship for an effective ministry is forcefully brought out. The volume also contains a great deal of practical information on how and where to obtain the right kinds of books. For instance, there are two pages listing British booksellers, with those specializing in religious and theological works marked by asterisks. There is a page listing search dealers who will help obtain difficult-to-find books. There are several pages listing publishers of general and religious books, with detailed addresses given. The fact that the exact postal addresses are given is specially commendable; nothing is more frustrating than to read a review of a book and find only the name of the publisher but no address or only an incomplete address, such as "Moody Press," or "Moody Press, Chicago." A letter so addressed will be returned by the post office as undeliverable, yet many book reviewers

seem to think that everybody lives near a bookstore through which any book can be ordered. There are many ministers who live 100 to 200 miles from a good bookstore.

Two pages list publishers of paperback books; one page lists firms publishing Bibles. Several university presses are listed. The information is very valuable and remarkably complete. The reviewer noted one apparent error: on page 102 the Van Kampen Press is listed. We understand that this firm has gone out of business.

It is a pleasure to recommend this volume heartily.

— J. G. Vos

**BIBLE DOCTRINE FOR LEADERS IN CHRISTIAN EDUCATION.** Unit 3 of Basic Leadership Training Course published by the Committee on Christian Education of The Bible Presbyterian Church, 3712 Riviera Road, Columbia 5, S. C. No date, but apparently published in 1958; pp. 32 (including considerable blank space for note-writing); paper cover. No price stated.

This little help to leadership training contains twelve doctrinal studies in outline form, with references to literature for supplementary reading. The titles of the lessons are: (1) The Scriptures; (2) God; (3) The Trinity; (4) The Decrees of God; (5) Man's Fall and Sin; (6) Christ the Mediator; (7) The Plan of Salvation; (8) The Law of God; (9) Religious Worship and the Sabbath; (10) The Church; (11) The Word and the Sacraments; (12) The Last Things. There is a good bibliography listing standard Reformed works. Each lesson provides, besides an outline of the subject matter, a series of thought-provoking questions for individual or group study. This booklet is heartily recommended.

— J. G. Vos

**SUNDAY SCHOOL IDEAS**, by Flora E. Breck. W. A. Wilde Company, 131 Clarendon St., Boston 16, Mass. 1958, pp. 90, paper cover. Price not stated, but probably not expensive.

This is a book packed with practical ideas for Sabbath School work and especially for teachers of children's classes. It provides good material on teaching children, how to tell a story to children, and how to do many things that will help to arouse and sustain interest. The word "Ideas" in the title is significant, for there are a good many people engaged in Sabbath School work from a sense of duty or responsibility who seem to be singularly lacking in ideas and who have gotten badly into a rut by doing the same things in the same way without any variation over a period of years. This book will stimulate the imagination and lead to numerous ways of making Christian truth interesting and effective in the teaching process.

— J. G. Vos

**THE BANNER OF TRUTH** (12th issue). Published by the Banner of Truth Trust, 78B Chiltern Street, London, W.1, England. Residents of U.S.A. may place subscriptions with The Bible Truth Depot, Swengel, Pennsylvania, at \$1.25 for six issues.

This magazine is a little gem which appears at irregular intervals. We have called attention to its value before in these columns. The present issue contains 30 pages, and presents the following contents: Britain's Sole Preservative, by John Brown; Reflections on Revivals, by the Editor, Mr. Iain Murray, B.A.; Flowers from a Puritan's Garden, by Thomas Manton; Observations on Error, by John Flavel; the Reformed Conflict, by the Editor; and a descriptive listing of three volumes of standard works recently reprinted by the Banner of Truth Trust. It is a pleasure to commend the Banner of Truth Trust and its publications to our readers heartily.

— J. G. Vos

**ARCHAEOLOGY AND THE PRE-CHRISTIAN CENTURIES**, by J. A. Thompson. Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., Grand Rapids 3, Mich. 1958, pp. 139. \$1.50.

This is another volume of Eerdmans' excellent Pathway Series. A previous volume of the series, by the same author, is entitled **Archaeology and the Old Testament**, and another of the series, entitled **Out of the Earth: Archaeology and the New Testament**, deals with the New Testament field. Both of these earlier volumes have been reviewed in Blue Banner Faith and Life. The present volume bridges the gap between the two. It deals chiefly with the period between the end of the Old Testament and the beginning of the New, although this is not exclusively true, as it does present the bearing of archaeology on the Babylonian and Persian periods of Jewish history, which are represented by the books of Ezekiel, Daniel, Ezra, Nehemiah and Esther in the Bible.

The bearing of archaeological findings on the Greek and Maccabean periods is presented, followed by a discussion of the religious community of Qumran (where the Dead Sea Scrolls were discovered), and finally the beginning of the Roman period and the reign of Herod the Great.

As this book deals with historical periods concerning which many Bible readers know but little, the reading of it is sure to be richly rewarding for most readers. It is interestingly written and well printed, and will be found most helpful in filling in the content, in the reader's mind, of the background of the New Testament. There are several excellent maps and photographs, a comparative chronological table, and indexes of subjects, persons and Scripture references.

— J. G. Vos

## *Blue Banner Question Box*

Readers are invited to submit Biblical, doctrinal and practical questions for answer in this department. Names of correspondents will not be published, but anonymous communications will be disregarded.

### Question:

What was the Auburn Affirmation and what connection, if any, does it have with religious conditions of the present day?

### Answer:

The Auburn Affirmation was a document prepared and signed by a group of ministers of the Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A. at Auburn, New York, in 1924. It was later circulated and was signed by almost thirteen hundred ministers of that denomination. Only ministers were invited to sign it. The Auburn Affirmation is rightly regarded as one of the principal landmarks of twentieth century American church history. The influence of the movement which inspired the Affirmation has grown wider and more powerful through the 35 years that have passed since it was issued.

The background of the Auburn Affirmation was the Fundamentalist-Modernist controversy in the Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A. This is the large "Northern" Presbyterian Church which recently merged with the United Presbyterian Church of North America to form the United Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A. For many years theological liberalism had been infiltrating the Northern Presbyterian Church. In 1893 a minister of the denomination, the Rev. Charles Augustus Briggs, was suspended from the ministry by the General Assembly of the denomination after being found guilty of heresy in that he denied the infallibility of the Bible. He also denied that Moses was the writer of the first five books of the Bible, and that Isaiah was the writer of all of the book of Isaiah, and certain other doctrines of orthodox Christianity. Briggs had first been tried by the New York Presbytery, which acquitted him. The case was then carried up to the General Assembly, which found Briggs guilty and suspended him. A few years later he left the Presbyterian Church and became a clergyman of the Protestant Episcopal Church.

At the time of the Briggs trial orthodox Christianity was still dominant in the Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A., as is shown by the fact that it was possible to deal with this heretical minister in accordance with the creed and constitution of the church. But the victory gained in 1893 was only temporary. In spite of the outcome of the Briggs case, liberalism continued to gain ground in the denomination. By the early nineteen-twen-

ties the New York Presbytery was accused of ordaining to the ministry young men who were not sound in the faith and who had not given satisfactory answers to some of the questions asked them. Liberalism was becoming bold. In 1923 the General Assembly faced this situation and issued a declaration enumerating five cardinal doctrines which were declared to be indispensable as requirements for ordination to the ministry in the denomination. These five doctrines were: (1) The inerrancy of the Bible; (2) the Virgin Birth of Christ; (3) the supernatural miracles of Christ; (4) the substitutionary atonement of Christ; (5) the bodily resurrection of Christ. The General Assembly directed that presbyteries must not grant ordination to candidates who did not affirm their faith in these five cardinal doctrines.

The Auburn Affirmation, coming a few months later, was the liberal party's reaction to the declaration issued by the General Assembly of 1923. It proved to be a revelation of hitherto unsuspected strength of the movement toward liberal theology in the denomination. When nearly thirteen hundred ministers signed the Auburn Affirmation, it became clear to everyone that theological liberalism was very strong indeed in the Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A.

The Auburn Affirmation took a very strong stand against the inerrancy of Scripture. It stated that "The doctrine of inerrancy intended to enhance the authority of the Scriptures, in fact impairs their supreme authority for faith and life, and weakens the testimony of the Church to the power of God unto salvation through Jesus Christ." That is to say, the doctrine of Biblical inerrancy — that there are no errors in the Bible — is a **harmful** doctrine which **weakens** the Church's witness. Over against this claim of the Auburn Affirmation, the Westminster Confession of Faith clearly asserts the doctrine of the inerrancy of the Bible. It speaks of "the entire perfection thereof" (i.e., of the Bible; I.5), says that God Himself is "the author thereof" (I.4), and that by saving faith "a Christian believeth to be true whatsoever is revealed in the Word, for the authority of God Himself speaking therein" (XIV.2). Thus the statement of the Affirmation on inerrancy is a contradiction of the Westminster Confession of Faith.

With regard to the other four cardinal doctrines, all of which are unquestionably truths of the Bible and taught with unmistakable clarity by the historic Presbyterian standards, the Auburn

Affirmation adopted the position that these doctrines are merely non-essential theories about the Incarnation, the Atonement, the Resurrection, etc. It was stated that some of the signers themselves accepted these "theories" but that other "theories" ought to be regarded as permissible: ". . . the General Assembly attempts to commit our Church to certain theories concerning the inspiration of the Bible, and the Incarnation, the Atonement, the Resurrection. . . . Some of us regard the particular theories contained in the deliverances of the General Assembly of 1923 as satisfactory explanations of these facts and doctrines. But we are united in believing that these are not the only theories allowed by the Scriptures and our standards as explanations of these facts and doctrines, and that all who hold to these facts and doctrines, whatever theories they may employ to explain them, are worthy of all confidence and fellowship."

Thus four cardinal doctrines of the Bible and of historic Presbyterianism — doctrines which both the Bible and the Westminster Standards certainly treat as truths — are declared to be no more than optional, non-essential theories. If a man says that he believes in the Incarnation, the Church must not insist that he accept the doctrine of the **Virgin Birth**. If a man says that he believes in the Atonement, the Church must not insist on the doctrine of the **substitutionary** atonement. If a man says that he believes in the resurrection of Christ, the Church must not insist on the truth of the **bodily** resurrection of Christ. It must be borne in mind that the question at issue was whether men could be ordained to the office of the ministry who denied these truths; it was not a question of what should be required for the ordinary membership of the church.

By the Auburn Affirmation the liberal party in the denomination claimed the right to deny or explain away the five cardinal doctrines mentioned above and still continue in good standing as ministers of the denomination. It was a bold challenge in a denomination which had previously maintained a steadfast testimony for these truths of historic Christianity. The signers of the Auburn Affirmation were certainly attacking the church's faith when they declared the inerrancy of Scripture to be harmful and the other points to be merely optional theories about certain "facts and doctrines." Would the orthodox element in the denomination rise to the challenge and deal with the Affirmationists according to the discipline of the church? In 1893 the General Assembly suspended Dr. Briggs from the ministry for promoting views essentially similar to those held by the Auburn Affirmationists. Would the Affirmationists be dealt with as Briggs was dealt with? Certainly loyalty to truth and duty required that the signers be disciplined for violating their own solemn ordination vows. Briggs was only one man; here were well over a thousand like Briggs. What would the denomination do about this situation?

In one or two presbyteries a sporadic attempt was made to deal with the Affirmationists in accordance with the discipline of the church. This attempt failed miserably and completely. It was found to be simply impossible to enforce the constitution of the church against the Affirmationists. Those who attempted to do so themselves suffered reproach.

Not only were the signers of the Auburn Affirmation not disciplined — they were even honored by being placed in important key positions of leadership. By 1935, four of the eight ministers on the denomination's Permanent Judicial Commission were signers of the Auburn Affirmation. In the same year there were 22 Affirmationists connected with the Board of National Missions. The situation in other boards and agencies of the denomination was similar. All through the organizational structure of the denomination, Auburn Affirmationists were honored and exalted. And today the position taken in the Auburn Affirmation has become the dominant position in the denomination. There are indeed many orthodox ministers and members in the denomination, but they do not control its policies nor its institutions, nor is it possible for them to bear a full, open and consistent testimony against the toleration of unbelief and heresy in the ministry and organizations of the church.

Many members of the Presbyterian Church have never even heard of the Auburn Affirmation. When it is mentioned they look blankly uncomprehending; obviously the term means nothing to them. Others seem to feel that the signing of the Auburn Affirmation was so long ago that it is no longer of any importance, and can safely be forgotten. Of course the mere passing of time does not cancel a wrong that has been done, though it may cause people to forget the wrong. The situation is not that the Auburn Affirmation was an isolated event back in the nineteen twenties. Rather, it was the raising of a banner by a party or movement which has increased in numbers and in power until today it controls the church in unchallenged dominance. Many of the signers are now dead, but the tolerance of liberalism which they advocated lives on and, indeed, is much more influential today than it was in 1924. Moral guilt is not canceled by the passing of time nor by human forgetfulness. The Auburn Affirmation has never been condemned or repudiated by the denomination nor have its signers been disciplined. The moral guilt involved in this situation remains and will remain until the wrongdoing is repented of and the record cleared before God and men.

In view of all this, it is deeply to be regretted that the United Presbyterian Church saw fit to merge with the Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A., thus becoming identified with a body which tolerates unbelief in cardinal truths of the Christian

Faith, and sharing corporate responsibility for the present situation.

We are commanded in Scripture to “withdraw ourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly” (2 Thess. 3:6). Certainly this and similar commands of Scripture (such as 2 John 10, 11) require that we do some serious, conscientious thinking as to whether it is right to have fellowship with denominations which in their corporate capacity are not loyal to the truth of God's Holy Word. To question the rightfulness of such fellowship will be called narrow and intolerant by some, and reproached as mere bigotry by others. But God calls His people to be faithful witnesses for His Truth. This cannot be done without a consistent testimony against unbelief, nor can it be done without suffering reproach. Are we willing to be called “intolerant” for Christ's sake?

— J. G. Vos

**Question:**

What should be the relation of church discipline to church attendance? What is the Biblical standard? If one is unable to attend one's own church should one be expected and required to attend a Reformation Church?

**Answer:**

Church discipline can and should deal with any serious scandal in the life of church members. Scandal requiring discipline is defined in the Reformed Presbyterian Testimony (XXXI.2) as “something in a professor's carriage, which either in itself or from its circumstances, may tempt others to sin, expose the Church to just reproach, or mar the spiritual comfort of the saints.” The Book of Discipline (I.5) says: “Offenses requiring discipline are of three kinds; **heresy**, which consists in holding errors contrary to the Scriptures and condemned in the subordinate standards; **immorality**; and **contempt** for the established order of the church.”

The Biblical rule on church attendance is found in Hebrews 10:25: “Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; . . .”. In this sentence, the word **ourselves** is emphatic. The implication is that it is a Christian's duty to attend regularly that particular congregation of Christ's Church of which he is personally a member. This does not mean that a Christian should never visit any other congregation or denomination, but that it should be his regular and ordinary practice to assemble with the congregation in which he holds membership. There may, of course, be providential circumstances which render this impossible. The text merely states the ideal, which is also the rule for ordinary cases. It certainly implies: (1) That non-attendance at church is sinful; (2) that habitual or frequent “church trotting” is an evil not to be indulged in.

The Reformed Presbyterian Testimony (XXX.

4) states that “It is the duty of a Christian. . . without prejudice (to) join in that communion which is most pure, and in which he may prove most useful in the service of Christ.” This certainly implies the active, practical support of one's own denomination and congregation by personal attendance upon its services and by financial contributions. What is the value of membership in a pure and faithful church if we place our attendance and contributions elsewhere?

Continued, wilful non-attendance at the services of one's own church, after warnings and exhortations have passed unheeded, renders a member liable to the censures of church discipline. Such conduct certainly falls within the definition of scandal given in the Testimony. Any valid extenuating circumstances ought to be taken into consideration, of course. Surely it is scandalous that a person can remain on a communicant membership roll for years without attending services or showing the slightest interest in the church. Such a situation cries out for Scriptural action.

With regard to the final portion of our correspondent's queries, when it is impossible to attend one's own church, and a church holding the Reformed Faith can not be reached, it would seem that Christian duty would require attendance at such a church. We should be careful, however, that we do not participate in any unscriptural features of worship. For example, a Christian who is committed to the principle of singing only the Bible Psalms in divine worship, should not sing other hymns just because he is temporarily attending a church of another denomination while he is away from home.

Church officers should encourage out-of-bounds members to attend churches which are as near as possible to their own faith and practice, and should warn against attending those which are doctrinally unsound or unfaithful to the truth of the Gospel. The present writer does not believe, however, that it is within the province of church officers to “require” members to attend any other church or denomination than their own. Scope must be left for freedom of the individual conscience in such matters, especially in view of the fact that there may be some honest differences of opinion as to what is a “Reformation Church” and what constitutes doctrinal soundness or unsoundness.

It is cause for serious concern that members of a pure and faithful church, once they are beyond reach of its services, often seem to select a church to attend on some other basis than its consistency in witnessing to divine truth. Sometimes the personality of the pastor is the deciding factor; sometimes it may be convenience of location, or popularity in the community. Needless to say, we are not witnessing for the truth if we regard loyalty to Scripture as less important, in influencing our decisions, than matters of person-

ality, convenience or popularity. Church officers, without trespassing on the domain of the individual church member's conscience, can exert a strong persuasive influence in favor of a right decision about such matters, if only they realize the importance of truth.

— J. G. Vos

**Question:**

Where can I learn more about the covenant idea in the New Testament? I believe that there are many aspects of covenant ideas such as election, fulfillment of prophecy, God's monergism, etc. What books or materials can help me follow this line of thought further?

**Answer:**

We would recommend to our correspondent the following books and articles:

**The Teaching of the Epistle to the Hebrews**, by G. Vos. Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., Grand Rapids 3, Michigan, U.S.A. \$2.00.

**The Glorious Body of Christ**, by R. B. Kuiper. Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., Grand Rapids 3, Michigan, U.S.A. \$4.95.

**The Covenant Idea in Scripture**. by Frank D. Frazer. Published in instalments in *Blue Banner Faith and Life*, April, 1953 through September, 1955.

**The Covenant of Grace**, by John Murray. The Tyndale Press, 39 Bedford Square, London, W.C. 1, England. Price 1 shilling sixpence. See review in *Blue Banner Faith and Life*, July-September, 1954, pages 157-8.

**Studies in the Covenant of Grace**, by J. G. Vos, beginning in this issue of *Blue Banner Faith and Life*; originally published in this magazine, 1949-1950, under the title **The Covenant of Grace: Its Meaning and Its Implications for the Church, the Family and the Christian**.

**Studies in the Epistle to the Hebrews**, by J. G. Vos, in *Blue Banner Faith and Life*, July through December, 1950.

**The Westminster Confession of Faith**, Chap. VII, "Of God's Covenant with Man."

**Systematic Theology**, by Louis Berkhof. Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., Grand Rapids 3, Michigan, U.S.A. \$7.50. This treatment of systematic theology is particularly strong in its emphasis of the doctrine of the covenant of grace.

The covenant of grace is rightly regarded as the unifying theme of Scripture. It is the true bond of unity and continuity between the Old Testament and the New. The plan of salvation, the church, sacraments, repentance, faith, justification, sanctification, etc., all fit into the overall pattern of the covenant.

— J. G. Vos

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## *From "Lays of the Kirk and Covenant"*

By Harriet S. Menteth

Since from Herod's couch the slumber  
 Parted at the wise men's word,  
 Kings and rulers without number  
 Band themselves against the Lord!  
 Tolls a death-knell through their riot;  
 Shakes a terror 'neath their scorn;  
 And they seek, with vain disquiet,  
 For the Babe in Bethlehem born!  
 Hating still, in deadliest measure,  
 Who that rising sceptre own;  
 Marring all their pomp and pleasure  
 With the shadow of a throne!  
 True! They kneel with feigned behavior,  
 Myrrh and frankincense will bring;  
 Priest and Prophet own the Savior,  
 But—they crucify the King!  
 Wouldst thou hail an earthly Master,  
 Then the world would love its own!

Grasp thy banner-truth the faster—  
 See that no man take thy crown!  
 Hope thou not, then, earth's alliance;  
 Take thy stand beside the Cross;  
 Fear, lest by unblest compliance,  
 Thou transmute thy gold to dross!  
 Steadfast in thy meek endurance,  
 Prophecy in sackcloth on—  
 Hast thou not the pledged assurance,  
 Kings one day shall kiss the Son?  
 Oft thy foes may triumph o'er thee;  
 Tread thy carcass in the street;  
 Sing aloud the hate they bore thee—  
 Thou shalt stand upon thy feet!  
 Life through all thy veins returning,  
 In the sight of those who doomed—  
 And the Bush, for ever burning,  
 Never—never—be consumed!

## *Eye Hath Not Seen*

By Christina G. Rossetti

Our feet shall tread upon the stars  
 Less bright than we.  
 The everlasting shore shall bound  
 A fairer sea  
 Than that which cold  
 Now glimmers in the sun like gold.

Oh good, oh blest! but who shall say  
 How fair, how fair,  
 Is the light-region where no cloud  
 Darkens the air,  
 Where weary eyes  
 Rest on the green of Paradise?

There cometh not the wind nor rain  
 Nor sun nor snow:  
 The Trees of Knowledge and of Life  
 Bud there and blow,  
 Their leaves and fruit  
 Fed from an undecaying root.

There Angels flying to and fro  
 Are not more white  
 Than Penitents some while ago,  
 Now Saints in light:  
 Once soiled and sad —  
 Cleansed now and crowned, fulfilled and glad.

Now yearning through the perfect rest  
 Perhaps they gaze  
 Earthwards upon their best-beloved  
 In all earth's ways:  
 Longing, but not  
 With pain, as used to be their lot.

The hush of that beatitude  
 Is ages long,  
 Sufficing Virgins, Prophets, Saints,  
 Till the new song  
 Shall be sent up  
 From lips which drained the bitter cup.

If but the thought of Paradise  
 Gives joy on earth,  
 What shall it be to enter there  
 Through second birth?  
 To find once more  
 Our dearest treasures gone before?

To find the Shepherd of the sheep,  
 The Lamb once slain,  
 Who leads His own by living streams —  
 Never again  
 To thirst, or need  
 Aught in green pastures where they feed.

But from the altar comes a cry  
 Awful and strong  
 From martyred Saints: 'How long,' they say,  
 'O Lord, how long,  
 Holy and True,  
 Shall vengeance for our blood be due?'

Then the Lord gives them robes of white  
 And bids them stay  
 In patience till the time be full  
 For the last day —  
 The day of dread  
 When the last sentence shall be said;

When heaven and earth shall flee away,  
 And the great deep  
 Shall render up her dead, and earth  
 Her sons that sleep,  
 And day of grace  
 Be hid for ever from Thy face.

Oh hide us, till Thy wrath be past,  
 Our grief, our shame,  
 With Peter and with Magdalene,  
 And him whose name  
 No record tells  
 Who by Thy promise with Thee dwells.

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## *I Look for the Lord*

By Christina G. Rossetti

Our wealth has wasted all away,  
 Our pleasures have found wings;  
 The night is long until the day;  
 Lord, give us better things —  
 A ray of light in thirsty night  
 And secret water-springs.

Our love is dead, or sleeps, or else  
 Is hidden from our eyes:  
 Our silent love, while no man tells  
 Or if it lives or dies.  
 Oh give us love, O Lord, above  
 In changeless Paradise.

Our house is left us desolate,  
 Even as Thy Word hath said.  
 Before our face the way is great;  
 Around us are the dead.  
 Oh guide us, save us from the grave,  
 As Thou Thy saints hast led.

Lead us where pleasures evermore  
 And wealth indeed are placed,  
 And home on an eternal shore,  
 And love that cannot waste:  
 Where joy Thou art unto the heart,  
 And sweetness to the taste.

## *The Cameronian's Dream*

(Continued from inside front cover)

When the righteous had fallen, and the combat had ended,  
A chariot of fire through the dark cloud descended.  
The drivers were angels on horses of whiteness,  
And its burning wheels turned upon axles of brightness.

A sehaph unfolded its doors bright and shining,  
All dazzling like gold of the seventh refining;  
And the souls that came forth out of great tribulation  
Have mounted the chariot and steeds of salvation.

On the arch of the rainbow the chariot is gliding;  
Through the paths of the thunder the horsemen are riding.  
Glide swiftly, bright spirits, the prize is before ye,  
A crown never fading, a kingdom of glory!

Note: The foregoing poem, written by James Hyslop in 1812, is an imaginative description of the Battle of Ayrsmoss, Scotland, which took place on July 22, 1680. The battle, in which the Covenanter leader and minister Richard Comeron was killed, is described in Chapter XXXVI of *Sketches of the Covenanters*, by J. C. McFeeters, in this issue of "Blue Banner Faith and Life".

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# BLUE BANNER FAITH AND LIFE

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I will heal their backsliding, I will love them freely:  
for mine anger is turned away from him. I will be as  
the dew unto Israel: he shall grow as the lily, and cast  
forth his roots as Lebanon. His branches shall spread,  
and his beauty shall be as the olive tree, and his smell  
as Lebanon.

Hosea 14:4-6

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# ***Our Fathers -- Where Are They?***

By William McComb

Our Fathers, where are they — the faithful and wise?  
They are gone to their mansions prepared in the skies;  
With the ransomed in glory, forever they sing,  
All worthy the Lamb, our Redeemer and King.

Our Fathers, who were they? Men strong in the Lord,  
Who were nurtured and fed with the milk of the Word;  
Who breathed in the freedom their Saviour had given,  
And fearlessly waved their blue banner to heaven.

Our Fathers, how lived they? In fasting and prayer,  
Still grateful for blessing, and willing to share  
Their bread with the hungry, their basket and store,  
Their home with the homeless that came to the door.

Our Fathers, where knelt they? Upon the green sod,  
And poured out their heart to their covenant God;  
And oft in the deep glen, beneath the wild sky,  
The songs of their Zion were wafted on high.

Our Fathers, how died they? They valiantly stood  
The rage of the foeman, and sealed with their blood,  
By faithful contendings, the faith of their sires,  
'Mid tortures, in prisons, on scaffolds, in fires.

Our Fathers, where sleep they? Go search the wild cairn,  
Where the birds of the hill make their nests in the fern;  
Where the dark purple heather, and bonny blue bell  
Deck the mountain and moor, where our forefathers fell.

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## ***The New Jerusalem***

(Author Unknown)

Jerusalem, my happy home,  
When shall I come to thee?  
When shall my sorrows have an end,  
Thy joys when shall I see?

O happy harbor of the saints!  
O sweet and pleasant soil!  
In thee no sorrow may be found,  
No grief, no care, no toil.

There lust and lucre cannot dwell,  
There envy bears no sway;  
There is no hunger, heat nor cold,  
But pleasure every way.

Thy walls are made of precious stones,  
Thy bulwarks diamonds square;  
Thy gates are of right orient pearl,  
Exceeding rich and rare.

Quite through the streets, with silver sound,  
Thy flood of Life doth flow;  
Upon whose banks on every side  
The wood of Life doth grow.

Jerusalem, my happy home,  
Would God I were in thee!  
Would God my woes were at an end,  
Thy joys that I might see!

# BLUE BANNER FAITH AND LIFE

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## *John Calvin, the Reformer of Geneva*

By J. G. Vos

The present year, 1959, is the four-hundredth anniversary of a very important event in the history of the Christian Church: the publication in 1559 of the definitive edition of **The Institutes of the Christian Religion**, by John Calvin, the Reformer of Geneva, Switzerland. Few books in Christian history have had such great influence, and perhaps none except the Bible itself has placed such a wide and deep imprint upon Christian theology. After four centuries Calvin's great book is still being printed, read and studied throughout the Protestant world. It was this book that was the principal theological textbook of the Westminster Divines, who wrote the Westminster Confession of Faith, Catechisms and other standards. This same book was the theological textbook of the Covenanters of Scotland, who stood united in their confession of Calvinism or the Reformed Faith as the teaching of Scripture.

American Covenanters or Reformed Presbyterians of a previous generation showed their regard for the great Reformer by naming their church college "Geneva College." It is named "Geneva," of course, because Geneva was the center from which Reformed Faith spread far and wide in Reformation times. The American Covenanters clearly hoped that their church college would prove to be a center from which that system of truth, which made the Swiss city Geneva famous, would issue forth in the modern world.

Certainly we should not allow this four-hundredth anniversary of the publication of Calvin's **Institutes** to pass without notice. It is fitting at such a time that we should recall to memory our debt of God's servants of past times. With this thought in mind, the present article on the life of John Calvin, which was published in this magazine several years ago in seven instalments, is reproduced here in complete form. It is the writer's hope that this article may encourage those who already love the Reformed Faith, and that it may be of service in helping to remove some unwarranted prejudices from the minds of those who do not. That Calvin made history no one — friend or foe of Calvinism — will venture to deny. That an intelligent attitude toward the doctrines of Calvinism requires some accurate knowledge of the life and work of the great Reformer of Geneva should not need to be argued.

We mark this anniversary year, then, by presenting the following sketch of the life of Calvin.

### 1. Calvin's home and early life

John Calvin the Reformer was by birth a Frenchman. He was born at Noyon, in Picardy, in northern France, some 67 miles from Paris, on the tenth day of July 1509. At the time of Calvin's birth, Martin Luther was 26 years old, and Zwingli about 25. Protestantism had not yet appeared on the scene; several years would pass before Luther would nail his famous 95 Theses to the church door at Wittenberg. Europe was slumbering uneasily in the age-old priestly system of Romanism, namely, salvation by sacraments and human merit.

John Calvin was the second child in a large family; he had four brothers and two half-sisters. His father was a lawyer who held several legal or administrative offices in both church and state. His mother was known as a devout Christian. Calvin's father wished his son to enter the service of the church, and John's early education was directed toward that goal.

In 1521, at the age of 12 years, John Calvin was appointed a chaplain of the cathedral of Noyon, and received the income pertaining to this position, though the actual duties of the position would be carried out by an older man, an ordained priest, who would receive only a fraction of the salary. The fact that Calvin could be appointed to ecclesiastical office at the age of twelve, by a legal fiction, receiving most of the salary while another man performed the duties, gives an interesting sidelight on the corruptions of the church of that day. This arrangement was of course considered perfectly honest and respectable, and was, indeed, an example of a common practice. Yet this kind of corruption was one of the lesser evils of the church which called for reform. The doctrinal errors were far more serious.

Meantime, Calvin was getting his elementary education in the household of a local nobleman named Montmor, along with the sons of the family. Because of an outbreak of the plague at Noyon, they moved to Paris in 1523, and at the age of 14 Calvin first saw that great city. In Paris, Calvin continued his studies, taking up, among other things, logic and philosophy. His great ability as a scholar soon became evident to all. During this period Calvin also made many friends

among well-known people in Paris. The notion that he was an unsociable bookworm or recluse is entirely unfounded; Calvin had numerous friends and he knew how to be friendly himself.

The authorities of the cathedral at Noyon were quite pleased with Calvin's success as a student, and twice prompted him to "better" positions in the church. Calvin was not ordained as a priest, but he preached a number of sermons to the people. But Calvin was not to become a priest of the church. Calvin's father began to feel that the profession of law offered a more promising career than the service of the church. It seems, too, that about this time John took up the study of the Scriptures and began to be critical of some features of Roman Catholic worship. At all events, when his father suggested a change to the study of law, Calvin readily complied, going from Paris to Orleans in 1528 to study law under Pierre Taisan de l'Etoile, the outstanding jurist of the day. At Orleans Calvin made rapid progress in the study of law, and also took up classical studies. He worked so hard at his studies that he probably injured his health.

In 1529 Calvin moved from Orleans to Bourges, where he continued his study of law, this time under a famous Italian scholar. Here he learned Greek and began the study of the New Testament in its original language. It was now twelve years since Luther had nailed his 95 Theses to the Wittenberg church door. The doctrines of Protestantism were now being widely spread through France as well as other countries of Europe. But Calvin was not yet a Protestant, and we may add that he was probably not yet a Christian, for at this time he showed much more interest in classical studies than in the Christian religion.

In 1531 Calvin's father died, which made it necessary for him to leave Bourges and return to Paris. Here he continued his study of Greek and began with Hebrew—at that time a new and rare subject for anyone except Jews. The next year Calvin published his first book, a commentary in Latin on one of the writings of the Roman author Seneca. From this it will be noted that his chief interest was still in classical studies rather than in Christianity.

## 2. Calvin's Conversion

Although Calvin seemed to stand at the open door of a great career as a humanist or classical scholar, God had a different purpose for his life. Calvin was converted to Christ and became an earnest and faithful Christian. Later he wrote of his "sudden conversion", which he attributed directly and entirely to the special grace of God. His life was completely revolutionized; from this time on, Christianity was everything to him.

Although Calvin was himself only a novice as a Christian, his gift of leadership soon became evident, and he became a teacher and counsellor of many. Very soon he became publicly prominent, and an attempt was made by the authorities

to arrest him. Though he was able to escape, his room was raided and his books and papers taken. He went to Noyon, then later returned to Paris. Being now nearly 25 years of age, he would, except for his conversion, probably have been ordained to the priesthood. Facing the question of whether to try to reform the Church of Rome from within or to break wholly with it, he decided in favor of the latter course, and resigned his positions in the church.

About 1534 Calvin was at the city of Poitiers, where he was able to counsel and influence a number of men. It was near Poitiers that Calvin for the first time celebrated the Lord's Supper as a Protestant. This communion service was held in the security of a cave, with a slab of rock as the communion table.

## 3. Calvin's "Institutes of the Christian Religion"

The Protestant religion was spreading in France and the king, Francis I, decided to take steps to check the new movement. John Calvin and his friend William Cop found it necessary to flee from their native country. Calvin found a refuge at Basel, Switzerland, where the Protestant faith was secure. On the journey to Basel Calvin was robbed, and it was only by borrowing the sum of ten crowns from his servant that he was able to reach Basel. The distinguished scholars and theologians who had gathered there gave Calvin a hearty welcome, and soon he was hard at work improving his knowledge of the Hebrew language.

King Francis tried to justify his persecution of the French Protestants on the ground that they were revolutionary fanatics of an extreme type. In February 1535 the king issued a pronouncement in which he made this charge against them. Realizing the terrible pressure on his fellow-Protestants in France, Calvin decided to try to do something to help them. He therefore prepared a book stating their faith, which was published in March 1536 under the title of **Institutes of the Christian Religion**. As an introduction to the book, Calvin wrote a letter to King Francis. This introduction contains some 20 pages in the English translations, and it respectfully urges the king to cast aside all prejudices and investigate for himself the faith of his Protestant subjects. We shall give here a few sentences of Calvin's plea to King Francis, as they appear in Beveridge's translation:

"Justice, then, most invincible Sovereign, entitles me to demand that you will undertake a thorough investigation of this cause, which has hitherto been tossed about in any kind of way, and handled in the most irregular manner, without any order of law, and with passionate heat rather than judicial gravity.

"Let it not be imagined that I am here framing my own private defence, with the view of obtaining a safe return to my native land. Though I cherish towards it the feelings which become me as a man, still, as matters now are,

I can be absent from it without regret. The cause which I plead is the common cause of all the godly, and therefore the very cause of Christ—a cause which, throughout your realm, now lies, as it were, in despair, torn and trampled upon in all kinds of ways, and that more through the tyranny of certain Pharisees than any sanction from yourself. But it matters not to inquire how the thing is done; the fact that it is done cannot be denied. For so far have the wicked prevailed, that the truth of Christ, if not utterly routed and dispersed, lurks as if it were ignobly buried; while the poor Church, either wasted by cruel slaughter or driven into exile, or intimidated and terror-struck, scarcely ventures to breathe. Still her enemies press on with their wonted rage and fury over the ruins which they have made, strenuously assaulting the wall, which is already giving way. Meanwhile, no man comes forth to offer his protection against such furies. Any who would be thought most favorable to the truth, merely talk of pardoning the error and imprudence of ignorant men. For so those modest personages speak; giving the name of **error and imprudence** to that which they know to be the infallible truth of God, and of **ignorant men** to those whose intellect they see that Christ has not despised, seeing he has deigned to intrust them with the mysteries of his heavenly wisdom. Thus all are ashamed of the Gospel.

“Your duty, most serene Prince, is, not to shut either your ears or mind against a cause involving such mighty interests as these: how the glory of God is to be maintained on the earth inviolate, how the truth of God is to preserve its dignity, how the kingdom of Christ is to continue amongst us compact and secure. The cause is worthy of your ear, worthy of your investigation, worthy of your throne.

“The characteristic of a true sovereign is, to acknowledge that, in the administration of his kingdom, he is a minister of God. He who does not make his reign subservient to the divine glory, acts the part not of a king, but a robber. He, moreover, deceives himself who anticipates long prosperity to any kingdom which is not ruled by the sceptre of God, that is, by his divine word. For the heavenly oracle is infallible which has declared, that ‘where there is no vision the people perish’ (Prov. 29:18).

“Let not a contemptuous idea of our insignificance dissuade you from the investigation of this cause. We, indeed, are perfectly conscious how poor and abject we are: in the presence of God we are miserable sinners, and in the sight of men most despised—we are (if you will) the mere dregs and off-scourings of the world, or worse, if worse can be named: so that before God there remains nothing of which we can glory save only his mercy, by which, without any merit of our own, we are admitted to the hope of eternal salvation: and before men not even this much remains, since we can glory in our infirmity, a thing which, is the estimation of men, it is the

greatest ignominy even tacitly to confess. But our doctrine must stand sublime above all the glory of the world, and invincible by all its power, because it is not ours, but that of the living God and his Anointed, whom the Father has appointed King, that he may rule from sea to sea, and from the river even to the ends of the earth; and so rule as to smite the whole earth and its strength of iron and brass, its splendor of gold and silver, with the mere rod of his mouth, and break them in pieces like a potter’s vessel; according to the magnificent predictions of the prophets respecting his kingdom (Dan. 2:34; Isa. 11:4; Psalm 2:9).”

Calvin’s entire address to the French king was in harmony with the paragraphs quoted above. The reader will note the deep conviction, the intense earnestness, and the calm, meek courage of Calvin’s words. At this time Calvin was only twenty-six years of age, but he had, by the grace of God, struck a mighty blow for freedom for the Reformed religion in France, and indeed throughout Europe. The great value and importance of his **Institutes** was soon recognized, and Calvin became the recognized leader and voice of French Protestantism.

This book which was first presented to the king of France in 1536 as a defence of the French Protestants, was destined to be one of the very greatest books of all Christian history. It became the principal theological textbook of a large part of Protestant Europe. Calvin revised and expanded it again and again for twenty-three years, until it reached its final form in 1559. The work was originally written in Latin, and later translated into French by Calvin himself for the benefit of his countrymen. It was soon translated into most of the languages of Europe, such as Italian (1557), Dutch (1560), English (1561), German (1572), Spanish (1597), Bohemian or Czech (translated about 1598, published 1617), Hungarian (1624), Polish (in part only; 1626). Six editions of the English version appeared between 1561 and 1600. This will give an idea of the tremendous demand for the book. At the present day it is still being printed, sold and read throughout a large part of the world. And it will remain a standard work on Christian theology to the end of time.

It was on Calvin’s **Institutes** that our Scottish Covenanter forefathers were nourished up in the words of sound doctrine. From this book they gained a systematic knowledge of the truth of God’s Word, and from its cool courage and profound conviction they learned to stand their ground for Christ before kings and parliaments without cowardly fear and without retreat or compromise. In the deep providence of God, Calvin’s **Institutes** proved the key to a grasp of Scripture, and those who fed on the **Institutes** became, like Apollos of old, “mighty in the Scriptures”. For the very basis of the **Institutes** is the supreme and sole authority of Holy Scripture as the rule for faith and life.

It is a great pity that so many present-day Christians, and even ministers, have never read Calvin's *Institutes*. Perhaps it is no wonder that the modern church is weak and ineffective, when so many of its members and even of its leaders prefer shallow "inspirational" literature to the solid writings of the Reformation. A return to the study of Calvin's writings would put iron in our blood, and granite in our souls. These are no dry-as-dust volumes of musty, mouldy, out-dated theology. They are full of pulsing, vibrating life produced from the anguish of Protestantism's early struggles for its very life. If we want the church of the twentieth century to regain the life, vigor and conviction of the church of the Reformation period, we will have to consider whether it is getting the spiritual vitamins and minerals which the church of that day received. When the church gets over its rejection of doctrine as "too deep", there will be a new zeal and eagerness to know the Truth of God, and a new power and conviction in confessing that Truth before the world. God grant it may soon be so.

#### 4. Calvin's Call to Serve God at Geneva

In 1536 Calvin made a brief visit to Italy, then returned to France, intending to settle his affairs there preparatory to leaving his native land more or less permanently. It was his purpose, at that time, to settle either at Strassburg or at Basel, and to spend his life as a scholar. As there was at the time war going on between Francis I, king of France, and Charles V, emperor of the Holy Roman (German) Empire, it proved impossible for Calvin to reach Strassburg by the direct and ordinary route, so he travelled toward Basel, being accompanied at the same time by his brother Antoine and his half-sister Marie.

In the course of this journey, the party stopped at the Swiss city of Geneva. The intention was merely to stop here briefly and then continue to Basel. But God had purposed differently, and it turned out that Geneva was to be the place of Calvin's activity for most of his life.

The war in which the Reformer Zwingli had lost his life turned out to the advantage of the Church of Rome, and left most of Switzerland in the hands of the Catholics. Three important cities—Zurich, Berne and Basel—however, remained true to the doctrines of the Reformation. To these three Protestant centers there was now added a fourth, Geneva, through a combination of religious and political factors. We shall not enter into the rather complex history back of this revolution at Geneva further than to state that the city had been through a long and difficult struggle for civil freedom from the Duchy of Savoy. In the year 1533 this struggle came to a successful conclusion and the civil and military power of Geneva was in the hands of the people of the city.

This struggle for civil freedom was followed by a religious revolution at Geneva. The Protes-

tant influence came to bear on the city from Berne. The principal promoter of Protestantism at Geneva was William Farel. Like Calvin, Farel was a Frenchman who had been converted to Protestantism and had to leave France on account of persecution. He found a reception in Switzerland where he was able to preach to the French speaking part of the population in their own language. Farel was a bold and determined man, and he preached against errors and abuses of Romanism wherever he went, in the most outspoken terms. In our day of lukewarm compromise and indifference to truth we should realize that the Protestant Reformation was not won by theological fence-straddlers, middle-of-the-roaders and doctrinal indifferentists. It was won by men whom God had raised up to lead His people—men who had a burning conviction and a consuming zeal for the truth, who fought hard and long and hewed to the line their rejection of error. These men were not simply "orthodox" or "sound"—they were filled with a consuming zeal for the truth. They could not tolerate what our Covenanter forefathers, called "a detestable neutrality" in the cause of God and of truth.

Such a valiant-for-the-truth was William Farel. Born in 1489, he was Calvin's senior by twenty years. It is recorded that at one time he came upon a Roman Catholic procession bearing some "sacred" relics, and snatched these relics from the hands of the priest and threw them into a nearby river. On many occasions Farel suffered personal violence, and even his life was endangered. He called the Compromising Erasmus a "Balaam", to which Erasmus replied that Farel was "the most arrogant, abusive, and shameless man" he had ever met. Of course, to compromisers like Erasmus every clear-cut defender of the truth will seem "arrogant". No doubt Elijah seemed arrogant to Ahab, and John the Baptist to Herod.

Farel began his work of reformation at Geneva in 1532, but was soon driven from the city. In the providence of God his life was spared when a gun that was aimed at him burst asunder in the firing. Later Farel returned to Geneva and was more successful. Many of the people became Protestants. The assembly of citizens formally adopted the Protestant faith as the religion of the city. Romanism was officially rejected. All special festivals and days except the Lord's Day were abolished. The Lord's Supper was to be administered three times yearly.

But these reforms soon aroused opposition, and many of the more pleasure-loving of the people became restless and complained at the restraints on their liberty to do as they pleased. The evidence indicates that moral conditions were very low in Geneva at this time, and it seems that the Catholic priests and monks were notoriously evil in their manner of living. Prostitution, gambling and drunkenness were common evils. Those who wanted to enjoy the pleasures of sin

naturally resented the restraints placed upon them by the discipline of Protestant Christianity.

Such was the situation at Geneva when Calvin arrived there in 1536. Taking lodgings at an inn, his intention was to remain there only briefly, and then press on to his destination at Basel. But God's hand, through one of His servants, arrested him. The story of what happened is told by Calvin in the Preface to his Commentary on the Psalms.

A friend named Du Tillet informed Farel that Calvin had arrived in the city. Farel at once called on Calvin and implored him to remain at Geneva and assist in the work of reformation there. Calvin, however, was most unwilling to comply. He declined the proposal, stating that he was unwilling to limit himself to any single locality, and that he desired to live a quiet life of devotion to scholarship. All of Farel's persuasions were without result.

Farel then told Calvin that his devotion to his studies was only an excuse, which God would not accept. He said that the curse of God would descend upon Calvin if he would not engage in the Lord's cause. Calvin in his writings often referred to this scene. He spoke of Farel's statement as a "formidable obstetation". "He says that he was struck with terror, and felt as if the hand of the Almighty had been stretched out from heaven and laid upon him. He gave up his opposition." Thus Calvin became the Reformer of Geneva. He hurried on to Basel, transacted some necessary business there, and returned to Geneva without delay.

At once Calvin began his work as a reformer at Geneva. He began preaching on the Epistles of Paul in the Church of St. Pierre. After about a year the magistrates, with the consent of the people, appointed him officially as preacher. At this time Calvin was twenty-eight years old. Except for a brief interval, he spent the rest of his life at Geneva.

### 5. Calvin Banished from Geneva

The young Calvin — he was about 27 years of age — was full of zeal and enthusiasm for the reformation of religion at Geneva according to the Word of God. With his colleague Farel he started work on the most urgent elements of reformation. But he was soon to learn what every faithful servant of God must learn — that the sacred cause to which he had dedicated his life was regarded with indifference by many professing Christians, and with downright opposition by others. No real work for God makes much progress without meeting opposition. The devil is quite willing to let dead "Christians" and churches alone, but when someone starts a really vital work for God, Satan will stir up opposition and trouble.

Geneva had renounced Roman Catholicism, but very little had been done in a positive way

to set the religious life and the Church in order. Many religious and moral evils persisted, which would have to be faced and dealt with. Calvin and Farel were practical men and they did not try to do everything at once, but wisely proceeded step by step in the work of reformation. They took up the most urgent matters first. Approaching the city council of Geneva, they asked for the adoption of three proposals: (1) That the Lord's Supper be administered each month, and that ungodly persons be excluded from partaking of the sacrament by Scriptural church discipline, including, when all other measures failed, the sentence of excommunication; (2) that a creed or doctrinal statement of 21 articles be accepted and sworn to by the citizens of the city; (3) that a catechism for the instruction of children and youth, prepared by Calvin, be adopted.

These proposals were at first accepted, and began to be put in operation. But soon discontent and opposition began to arise. A party known as the Libertines became influential and bitterly opposed the work of reformation. The Libertines were supported by those citizens who wished to live as they pleased and who resented any interference with what they regarded as their personal liberty. This opposition was partly occasioned by the very strict moral regulations which had been put in force and which involved civil penalties. Dancing and card playing, for example, were punished by the magistrates. Calvin held that these types of recreation were not wrong in themselves, but he felt that they had been so abused that the only proper remedy was to prohibit them altogether.

There was also opposition to some features of the religious worship as reformed by Calvin and Farel. The festival days — Christmas, New Year's Day, Annunciation Day, Ascension Day — had been abolished as religious or holy days. The use of common bread in the Lord's Supper had been introduced, in place of the old practice of using unleavened bread — a practice which was retained in the Swiss city of Bern. Farel had introduced a very simple form of worship in Geneva. But there were those who wished to introduce the liturgy of Bern. Another matter was the use of baptismal fonts, which was retained at Bern but rejected at Geneva.

Some of these matters were clearly more important than others. Calvin was willing to yield on some of the points at issue. He later declared that he would be willing to allow the use of unleavened bread in the Lord's Supper, the use of baptismal fonts, and to have public worship on the "festival days" provided these days were not regarded as holy days — the people must be allowed to go about their ordinary business once the church services were dismissed. But Calvin was strongly opposed to the intervention and dictation of the civil authorities in these religious matters. He was jealous for the authority and jurisdiction of Christ's Church. When it was attempted to impose the Bernese liturgy on Geneva

by State power, Calvin absolutely refused to consent.

Matters came to a head early in 1538 when Calvin and his associates refused to administer the Lord's Supper in the Bernese form, and on Easter of that year refused to administer the sacrament at all, holding that the people were not in a fit state of mind to partake of the Lord's Supper. The civil authorities had prevented any adequate practice of church discipline, but they forbade Calvin and his fellow-pastors (Farel and Viret) to preach. The ministers ignored this ban and preached the Word of God, though refusing, as stated above, to administer the Lord's Supper.

This was a real crisis. The reformers were promptly banished from the city by action of the city council, which was confirmed the next day by a majority vote of the general assembly of the citizens of Geneva. So Calvin and Farel had to leave Geneva. They went first to Bern and later to Zurich where a synod of Swiss pastors was to meet. Calvin explained his position to this synod, stating that he was willing to make concessions on some matters, as explained above, but he positively would not yield on the matter of church discipline, which must be allowed, and which must be under the jurisdiction of lawful church officers, without interference by the State. Calvin also stated that he wished the Lord's Supper to be observed more frequently — at least monthly — and that congregational singing of the Psalms should be practiced in the churches. On this basis the Zurich synod attempted to mediate between the reformers and the people of Geneva, to persuade them to receive their pastors back. But through opposition of some of the leaders at Bern, this plan was frustrated, and the only outcome was a second decree of banishment issued by Geneva.

Calvin and Farel decided to separate, the former going to Strassburg and the latter to Neuchatel. Calvin remained at Strassburg from May, 1538, to September, 1541. Though he was disappointed at the way things had turned out at Geneva, he welcomed the freedom from strife and the opportunity for study. But God's plans for reformation at Geneva involved better days in store for the city. Though the work of reformation there seemed to be all but wrecked, it would rise again, and God's true servants would be vindicated in His own time.

## 6. Calvin Recalled to Geneva

After their banishment from Geneva, Calvin and Farel separated, the former going to Strassburg and the latter to Neuchatel. Calvin remained at Strassburg from May, 1538, to September, 1541. While there, he devoted himself partly to literary work, and partly to preaching and organizing the French church in that city, as well as lecturing on theology. Always a man of wide sympathies and many friends, he attended important

religious meetings and conferences in various cities of Germany. During this period, he became acquainted with the Lutheran leader Melancthon, and a firm friendship was formed which lasted throughout Calvin's life.

During this period, too, some of Calvin's most important writings were produced, including a revised and enlarged edition of his famous **Institutes of the Christian Religion**, his **Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans**, and his **Tract on the Lord's Supper**.

It was at Strassburg, too, that Calvin's marriage took place. In August, 1540, he married Idelette de Bure, the widow of a Belgian named Jean Stordeur, whom Calvin had converted from the Anabaptist heresy. Calvin later referred to his wife as "the excellent companion of my life" and said that she was a "precious help" to him in his labors and frequent troubles. Their happiness was brief, for Idelette died in 1549, to the great grief of Calvin, who never remarried. They had one child, Jacques, born in 1542, who lived only a few days.

Meantime things had been going from bad to worse in Geneva. Wickedness and irreligion flourished without interference. The Roman Catholic hierarchy tried to take advantage of the confusion at Geneva to win the city back to the fold of Rome. Cardinal Sadoletto, bishop of Carpentras in southern France, was the spearhead of this Catholic effort, which might have been successful but for the fact that the authorities of the city of Bern became alarmed, and after consultation with the government of Geneva, called on Calvin to oppose the Catholic attempt. Cardinal Sadoletto had written a letter to the people of Geneva, to which Calvin now replied with a devastating answer, which completely frustrated the Catholic design. Sadoletto dropped the matter immediately and did not take it up again. Calvin's **Letter to Sadoletto** became one of the most famous documents of the Reformation. It has been described as the best defence of the Protestant position that has ever been written. Meantime Calvin was in correspondence with godly people in Geneva, encouraging and advising them. About this time there appeared at Geneva a revised translation of the Bible in French, on which the final revision and correction had been done by Calvin.

Gradually God in His providence was opening up the way for Calvin to return to Geneva. The Libertine party, who had opposed him and secured his banishment, more and more lost power and its members were largely out of office. Calvin's colleague Farel tried to bring about Calvin's recall to Geneva. When the opportunity finally came to return, Calvin was torn between the claims of Strassburg and Geneva, but after considerable hesitation he decided that God wished him to work at Geneva. He arrived there on September 13, 1541, and the people of the city received him with enthusiasm and joy. Farel himself decided to remain at Neuchatel, and Calvin's

other colleague, Viret, went to Lausanne. Calvin was now the unquestioned leader of the church in Geneva.

He found the responsibilities of his position extremely heavy. Every other week he preached daily through the entire week. Three days of each week he taught theology. Once each week he attended the meeting of the consistory, or governing body of the church. Besides all these official duties, he carried on a voluminous correspondence with friends and inquirers all over Europe, and was frequently engaged in time-consuming controversy in the cause of the truth. In a letter to a personal friend he wrote: "I have not time to look out of my house at the blessed sun, and if things continue thus I shall forget what sort of appearance it has. When I have settled my usual business I have so many letters to write, so many questions to answer, that many a night is spent without any offering of sleep being brought to nature." God's work is done by busy people, and Calvin was one of the busiest of God's servants.

### 7. Calvin and Servetus

On no matter connected with the Protestant Reformation, perhaps, has more misinformation gained currency than concerning the relation of Calvin to the trial and execution of Michael Servetus. The ghost of this sad and unfortunate affair is continually reappearing, and is used by many who have no love for the Reformed Faith as if the mere mention of the name of Servetus were sufficient to discredit completely and forever, not only Calvin as a servant of Christ, but Calvinism as Biblical Christianity.

Let it be clearly understood at the outset that we do not justify the execution of Servetus. It cannot be justified on the basis of principles which Calvinists — and Christians generally — of the present day recognize as Biblical. Looking back on the affair after four hundred years have passed, we can only say that the execution of Servetus for blasphemy — of which he was certainly guilty — was unwarranted and wrong. But having said this, we must also say that grievous wrong has been done to the memory of John Calvin, and to the cause of Calvinism, by the careless, inaccurate and even downright false statements which have been circulated concerning his connection with this sad affair. That the execution of Servetus was wrong does not imply that opponents of Calvinism are free to circulate historically false accounts of the matter. Animus against Calvinism does not exempt people from the duty of obeying the commandment, "Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbor."

No doubt many who have dragged up the ghost of Servetus as an argument against Calvinism have repeated those incorrect accounts of the matter without realizing that they were dealing in falsehood. While this may lessen their responsibility it does not eliminate it. The true facts are easily accessible and can be ascertained by any-

one who wants to know them, merely by consulting such a standard reference work as the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*. A Lutheran writer on church history says that the execution of Servetus "is a sad, inefaceable blot on the character of Calvin" (*Sketches from the History of the Church*, by G. E. Hageman, p. 162). A recent Baptist writer, who certainly should know better, says that "John Calvin's Consistory, a bold-faced inquisition, in Vienna condemned Michael Servetus as a heretic to be burned at the stake June 17, 1553; Servetus fled, was apprehended in Geneva, and was burned at the stake October 27, 1553" (Dr. R. V. Clearwaters, in Introduction to *The Doctrine of the Church in These Times*, by Chester E. Tulga, page 8). The statement just quoted is a bundle of historical errors. The true facts are: on June 17, 1553, Servetus was condemned to death, not by "John Calvin's Consistory," but by a French civil court; and this was done, not at "Vienna," but at Vienne, a city in France. On October 26 of the same year Servetus was again sentenced to death, and executed the next day, not by "John Calvin's Consistory," but by the Senate of Geneva, a civil tribunal of which Calvin was not a member.

Michael Servetus, of French and Spanish descent, was born in 1511. His father sent him to study jurisprudence in the city of Toulouse, where in 1528 he first became acquainted with the Bible. His first published writing was entitled *De Trinitatis Erroribus* ("Concerning the Errors of the Trinity"), issued in 1531. Later he studied medicine at Paris, where he first met Calvin in 1536. There is some question as to whether he actually received his degree in medicine; he claimed to have, but the record of his graduation is missing in the university archives at Paris. He lectured on various subjects, including "syrops," geometry and astrology. The medical faculty of Paris brought a suit against him for views expressed in his lectures on astrology. In 1537-8 he was a student at the University of Louvain in Belgium, studying theology and Hebrew. In 1540 he went to the medical school at Montpellier, France, for additional medical education (it is possible that he was awarded a medical degree by that institution).

Among those who heard Servetus' lectures at Paris was Pierre Paulmier, the Roman Catholic archbishop of Vienne (France). The archbishop invited Servetus to come to Vienne as his personal physician, and Servetus accepted the invitation. Formally a Roman Catholic, he privately cherished views which were anything but orthodox. In 1545 or 1546 Servetus commenced a correspondence with John Calvin, sending the latter a manuscript of his theological writings and expressing a wish to visit the city of Geneva. Calvin's reply is lost, but it is evident from a letter of Servetus to Farel, that Calvin warned him that if he were to visit Geneva, it would be at his peril.

The book of Servetus' theological writings, after being rejected by two Swiss publishers, was finally printed secretly at Vienna (Austria) in an edition of one thousand copies, in 1553. Most of

these copies were shipped to Lyons and Frankfurt for sale in those cities.

The publication of this book, proved to be Servetus' downfall. The book was entitled **Christianismi Restitutio** ("The Restoration of Christianity"), and was published semi-anonymously; Servetus' name did not appear on the title page, but his initials, "M.S.V.", appear at the end of the book, and his name "Servetus" appears at one point in the book (p. 199). There was apparently some question, at first, as to the identity of the author, but it was soon proved beyond doubt that the book was by Servetus.

Because of views expressed in this book, the Roman Catholic inquisitor-general at Lyons (France) took up the matter in March, 1553. Servetus was questioned, then in April he was arrested and questioned further. While the proceedings under the inquisitor-general were still in process, Servetus escaped from prison and disappeared. There is some question as to where he went, but eventually he appeared at Geneva. After Servetus' escape, the French civil court at Vienne on June 17, 1553, condemned him to be fined and burned alive. (The Roman Catholic ecclesiastical court at Vienne deferred sentence until December 23, 1553, when Servetus was already dead).

In Geneva, Servetus was recognized while attending a church service. Calvin took the initiative in urging that he be arrested, which was done. Legal proceedings were instituted against him, which lasted from August 14 to October 26, 1553. The charge was blasphemy, and the evidence consisted chiefly of statements in Servetus' book **The Restoration of Christianity**. This book was destructive of the very foundations of Christianity. It was both heretical and blasphemous, and attacked the doctrine of the Trinity which is the basis of historical Christianity. Servetus' views, as expressed in this book, tended strongly toward **pantheism** (the belief that God is all, and all is God). The differences between Roman and Protestantism were not involved; Servetus undermined the very foundation of both.

Servetus was found guilty of blasphemy. "The fifteen condemnatory clauses, prefacing the sentence at Geneva, set forth in detail that he was guilty of heresies, blasphemously expressed, against the foundations of the Christian religion" (**Encyclopaedia Britannica**). He was executed by burning at the stake, at Geneva, on October 27, 1553.

We should realize that the legal process against Servetus was not carried out by the authorities of the Reformed Church at Geneva, as has often been ignorantly alleged or implied. The prosecution was by a civil tribunal, not by the church courts. Dr. Benjamin B. Warfield says: "Servetus was condemned and executed by a tribunal of which Calvin was not a member, with which he possessed little influence, and which re-

jected his petition against the unnecessary cruelty of the penalty inflicted" (**Calvin and Calvinism**, p. 25). Calvin requested that the mode of execution be changed from burning to beheading, but this plea was rejected by the civil authorities of Geneva. Calvin called death by burning an "atrocious." It is true, of course, that Calvin approved of the sentence of death which was passed on Servetus.

What should be remembered, though, is the fact that Calvin was not alone in believing that Servetus deserved to die. It was the unanimous decision of the Swiss state governments and the Swiss churches that blasphemy was punishable by death. Moreover, the general opinion of all Christendom at that time approved the sentence. Even such a mild and gentle Christian as the Lutheran Melancthon declared that the sentence was just. In a later day, the English writer Coleridge said that the execution of Servetus was not "Calvin's guilt especially, but the common opprobrium of all European Christendom" (**Notes on English Divines**, Vol. 1, p. 49).

Yet, in spite of all that can be said in extenuation, we must repeat the statement already made, that the execution of Servetus cannot be justified. "It cannot. . . be denied, that in this instance, Calvin acted contrary to the benignant spirit of the Gospel. It is better to drop a tear over the inconsistency of human nature, and to bewail those infirmities which cannot be justified. He declared that he acted conscientiously, and publicly justified the act" (**Fox's Book of Martyrs**, edited by William Byron Forbush, p. 187).

### 8. Calvin's Accomplishments at Geneva

Those who think of Calvin as a scholar interested only in theological studies fail to realize what a wide variety of interests claimed the Genevan Reformer's attention. Though Calvin was pre-eminently a theologian, he was anything but a recluse. On the contrary, he was an intensely active man of affairs. In addition to theology, he devoted himself to church government, to civil improvement and to the advancement of education.

Calvin established at Geneva the Presbyterian system of church government. This was a practical use of Scriptural principles which was to be copied, to the great benefit of Christ's Church, in a large part of Europe, especially France, Holland and Scotland.

Calvin concerned himself with everything that concerned the welfare of Geneva or the benefit of its people. He was consulted by the civil authorities on all sorts of matters, including law, economics, business and manufacturing. "To him the city owed her trade in cloths and velvets, from which so much wealth accrued to her citizens; sanitary regulations were introduced by him which made Geneva the admiration of all visitors; and in him she reverences the founder of her university" (**Encyclopaedia Britannica**).

The university just mentioned was founded in 1559 as the Academy of Geneva. This institution was one of Calvin's greatest achievements. Almost immediately it became the outstanding international center of theological education of the Reformed Faith. From many countries — France, Holland, Hungary, Italy, Germany, England and Scotland — students came to Geneva to study theology under the great Reformer. Returning to their various countries as preachers of the Gospel, they bore the imprint of Calvin's logical mind and solid Biblical scholarship, thus multiplying his influence many fold even during his lifetime.

Calvin was a tireless worker. In addition to his many other activities, he was a voluminous author. Besides his classic **Institutes of the Christian Religion**, Calvin was the author of many other books. Noteworthy among these are **A Treatise on the Eternal Predestination of God**, written in reply to a Roman Catholic named Albert Pighius, who had attacked Calvin's teachings on this subject. So convincing were Calvin's arguments from Scripture that Pighius gave up his former opposition and accepted the doctrine of predestination as expounded by Calvin. Another of Calvin's writings was **A Defence of the Secret Providence of God by which He Executes His Eternal Decrees**. This was written as a reply to an enemy of the truth whom Calvin does not name. It is a book which is still of value at the present day.

Very important among Calvin's writings are his commentaries on the various books of the Bible. Starting with the Epistle to the Romans in 1540, he produced commentaries on nearly all the books of the Bible. Such is the value of

Calvin's commentaries that they are still being printed and studied after four hundred years. The same is true of Calvin's sermons, many of which were taken down by his students and hearers at Geneva.

Calvin never enjoyed vigorous health, and his intense labors finally wore him out. He died in 1564 at the age of 55 years. The last years of his life were filled with pain and suffering, yet Calvin continued to work with great energy. He preached his last sermon on February 6, 1564, being barely able to continue to the end of it. Several times after this he was carried to church, but never again was he able to preach or take any active part in the service. However, he continued to work whenever he had sufficient strength to do so at all. To a friend who urged him to rest, he replied, "Do you want the Lord to find me idle when He comes?" Wherever Calvinism has been taken seriously, it has produced lives filled with hard, honest work. In this respect Calvin himself set a noble example.

The mortal remains of John Calvin were laid to rest very simply in a cemetery at Geneva. The location of his grave is unknown; no monument of granite or marble marks the spot where the great Reformer's mortal body awaits the resurrection day. Yet there is a monument, for the Reformed Faith throughout the world is his monument. Few men in all Christian history have served the Lord so humbly and faithfully; few have had such a wide and lasting influence. May we serve the Lord in our generation as humbly, honestly and faithfully as Calvin did in his.

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## *Sketches of the Covenanters*

By J. C. McFeeters

Chapter XXXVII.

### **The Cameronians. — A. D. 1681.**

Richard Cameron had fallen in the battle of Ayrsmoss; but the cause had not failed, nor would he be forgotten. "The righteous shall be in everlasting remembrance." His years were brief, but his work was great. He was fresh and hearty, in the very prime of his life when he met death. The sun had only reached the meridian of his sky. While his powers were glowing with divine energy, and his ministry was making the deepest impression, the Lord called him home to glory. The translation from earth to heaven was sudden and sublime. One of the poets has painted his own conception of the event in a brilliant poem, entitled, "The Cameronian's Dream". That noble life, so full of zeal, action, and power, left a lasting imprint on the Church of the Covenanters. So mighty was his influence that the people who stood strictly to the Covenant were henceforth called Cameronians.

The field of Ayrsmoss presented a sad sight that evening. The departing day may have flung over it a glowing sunset, but nothing could relieve that gloom. The light was fading as the dragoons left, taking with them Captain Hackston and a few other bleeding prisoners. Night settled softly upon the moorland; the shout of the captains had given place to the stillness of death. Nine noble defenders of the Covenant lay pulseless in the dewy grass. The friends, soon as safety permitted, came and, gathering the bodies together, solemnly and sadly buried them in one broad grave. The present monument marks the spot where the precious dust awaits the resurrection.

The head and hands of Cameron were cut off and carried in ignoble triumph through the streets of Edinburgh. The head was elevated on the point of a spear and borne in front of the prisoners to the city jail. Cameron's father was

a prisoner there at that time. The head and hands were presented to him, with the sneering question, "Do you know them?" The awful shock quickly gave place to a gush of fatherly affection. The blood, the pallor, even the stare of the lifeless face, seemed to disappear in the heart-kindlings of the aged parent; to him the countenance was sweet as ever, the eyes were beaming, the lips were vocal, the brow was wreathed with holy dignity. A thousand tender scenes of the past must have rushed in upon the soul of the agitated father. He took up the cold pieces, dearer to him than his own flesh and, while tears flowed plentifully, kissed them, saying, "I know them; they are my son's; my own dear son's; the Lord can harm neither me nor mine; good is the will of the Lord."

Cameron lived in the most critical period of the Covenanted cause. His life of service and sacrifice arose into gigantic strength just when the Covenanted Reformation seemed to be ready for burial. The floodtide of Indulgence had almost submerged the testimony of the Covenanters. Many of the ministers had been caught in that Satanic snare. The remainder were overawed, or disabled with disease and old age. Yet there was a host of brave men and honorable women, thousands in number, who without a leader faced the increasing fierceness of the persecution of the king's wrath. These were called the Society People, and Cameron during his public ministry was their standard-bearer.

Cameron and the Society People, afterward known as the Cameronians, have been severely criticised for their exclusiveness. They refused to hold fellowship with the Indulged ministers who had assented to the king's supremacy over the Church, and likewise with the Field-ministers, who had become mute on the Covenanted testimony. They are often represented as having been stern, censorious, and uncharitable in the extreme. A glance at Cameron's commission will show how baseless is the charge.

Richard Cameron received ordination in Holland, four months after the battle of Bothwell Bridge. The ordination service was very solemn and touching. The presbytery felt that they were commissioning a servant of God to do a work that would cost his life. While the ministers rested their hands on Cameron's head in the act of ordination, he was told by one of them, that the head whereon their hands were laid would one day be severed from his body and set up before the sun and moon for public view. Such was the vision of blood that moved before his eyes during eight months of his ministry. At that same time he received also the exhortation: "Go, Richard; the public Standard of the Gospel is fallen in Scotland; go home and lift the fallen Standard, and display it publicly before the world. But before you put your hand to it, go to as many of the Field-ministers as you can find, and give them your hearty invitation to go with you."

True to his commission Cameron went. He sought out the Field-ministers. They now numbered about sixty. These were keeping close to their hiding-places; their voices scarcely went beyond the mouth of their caves; they counted their blood more valuable than their testimony for Christ and His Covenant. Twenty years of unabating hardships had unnerved them; the late avalanche of the king's wrath had overwhelmed them; they were mostly mute in witnessing for Christ, as the rocks behind which they were hiding.

Of the sixty ministers Cameron found only two who were willing to stand with him and hold up the Banner of the Covenant before the eyes of the nation. One of these, Thomas Douglas, quickly disappeared, leaving Cameron and Cargill alone to lead the Covenanted people of God in the fight that was growing harder every day. Those two dauntless ministers of Christ accepted the responsibility, knowing too well the price to be paid was their own blood. And they have been censured for their exclusiveness.

Twenty years previous, the Covenanted ministers numbered one thousand. More than half of these had violated the Covenant by a resolution in 1650, to open the offices of public trust to men without moral qualification. Will the minority be censured for not following them? In 1662, the ministerial brotherhood was again rent in twain by the king's decree requiring them to submit, or quit the manse. Four hundred refused to comply. Will they be censured for withdrawing from their brethren who remained? In later years the Indulgences followed, one after another, capturing all except sixty. Will the sixty be censured for not following the others in submitting to the king's supremacy over the Church? And now all but two suspend the public testimony for Christ's crown. Will the two be censured for separating from the sixty, and holding forth the Banner of Christ?

Cameron and Cargill, with the Society people, stood on a basis separated from their brethren who had stepped off the basis, and had left them to struggle alone against mighty odds and fierce enemies, for the Covenanted Reformation to which all were bound by a solemn oath. These men, with the Society people at their back, stood by their Covenant and the oath of God; the others had departed. Censure the Cameronians for exclusiveness? Rather, be sincere and censure them for not slipping, and stumbling, and falling away, like their brethren from Covenant attainments. These worthies stood on the heights from which the others had departed, and waving the old battle-worn colors of the Covenant appealed unto them to come up and occupy the ground where they had formerly stood.

The Cameronians maintained a high position; but it was not chimerical or theoretical; it was practical and Scriptural; here was solid ground, a

rock-foundation. On it were no sidings, no off-sets, no bogs. The truths they held were clear, clean-cut, adamant, foundational, and unchangeable. Their oath bound them to defend the sovereignty of Christ, the kingdom of God, and the Reformed religion.

The banner still floats up there in the care of a few successors. Under the Lord of hosts, the Captain of the Covenant, they continue to this day without a thought of retreating, and trailing their colors in the dust. They are confident that Churches and nations will yet reach the heights of Covenant doctrine and fidelity under Jesus Christ. The bane of the Churches to-day is the slanting ground, adown which an evil influence is steadily drawing the people lower and lower. But in the last days the Holy Spirit will be poured out upon all flesh; then shall the world have a spiritual resurrection, and a glorious ascension to Covenant grounds, through the Lord Jesus Christ, "to whom be dominion and majesty for ever and ever." "The mountain of the Lord's house shall be established

in the top of the mountains; and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow unto it."

#### Points for the Class.

1. Describe Ayrsmoss on the night after the battle?
2. What did the enemy do with Cameron's body?
3. How did Cameron's life and death impress the Covenanters?
4. Why were the Cameronians called extremists?
5. Were they justifiable in separating from others?
6. Who joined Cameron in carrying out his commission?
7. What is the true position of Covenanters?
8. What is their mission in the world?

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## *In Jerusalem Again*

By the Rev. John C. Rankin

An occasion of profound and decisive significance in the public life of Christ was His second official visit to the holy city of the Jews. From the moment of His baptism, or in other words, His inauguration, He became a public figure and entered upon His official career as the Christ. In His character as the promised Deliverer it was both His privilege and His duty to present His claims again and again to the people as represented in their rulers.

Consequently, at the end of His first summer in the North, on a certain day in autumn, still alone and unattended, He was found in Jerusalem in attendance at one of the feasts. John the Evangelist gives the story as one of two contributions to this part of Jesus' ministry (John 5). Another miracle was performed, that of the healing of the impotent man at the pool of Bethesda. The Jews heard about it from the man himself and the immediate result was a head-on collision between the Lord and these Jerusalem authorities.

They took offense and challenged Jesus' rights and claims on two counts. One of these was that in healing the man and sending him upon his way He had broken the Sabbath. The greater offense, however, arose in connection with the debate which followed. This was that Jesus, in speaking of God the Father and of Himself in relation to the Father, in effect made Himself equal with God.

What must be understood in this connection is the absolute conflict of view as between Jesus and the Jews regarding the Christ and His king-

dom. From the outset and all the way through Jesus was completely at odds with His contemporaries as to what the Messiah was to be and should be. The conflict began in His contest with the devil himself; and then at Nazareth and now again for the second time in Jerusalem it appears upon the plane of human thought and life in which Satan also had a hand. On the other hand, it was, as Jesus told the Jews, "My Father worketh hitherto and I work." How true it is that we may never really understand the life of Christ apart from the deep, underlying facts and factors involved.

As for the miracle, Jesus, of course, could not allow Himself to be bound in any way by their rules. Indeed, He was bound to proceed in complete disregard of all such unscriptural and pseudo-religious regulations. This He did; and, contrary to their ideas, the man was healed. Thus, in their view, He violated the law of the Sabbath.

It was not God's law however which was violated, but their own; that is to say, the tradition of the elders which they put on the same level as that which God had given to Moses. Thus, in their view, Jesus had not only broken the law but had exposed Himself to the Mosaic penalty prescribed for such violation, which was that the offender should be put to death.

Impossible as it was that Jesus should conform to their view concerning the Sabbath, it was even more impossible, if that could be, that the Christ Himself should conform to their ideas

about the Christ — His coming, appearance, character and life. Jesus was simply not the kind of Christ they wanted and expected and the only kind they would or could accept.

Moreover a deep instinctive antipathy was awakened in them for Him personally. This was because He was pure and they were vile, He was righteous and they were wicked, so that His very presence and every word and work was in the nature of a rebuke. They hated Him for the same reason that Cain hated Abel; that is, because his own works were evil and his brother's righteous. Jesus had aversion for them too, we may be sure. But on their part it was an unholy hate, on His a holy aversion which, however, was wholly under the control of love, the love of God in which He came, God's love for sinner-men.

In addition to this mutual antipathy and the mutual antagonism which arose on the particular points at issue, the conflict was essentially a strife between religions. The one was man's religion, the other God's; the one was law, the other love and law; the one was works, the other grace; the one was false, the other true. One of these was the Judaism of the day, a radical perversion of the Jewish faith. The other was that pure Jewish faith itself which in essence was always Christian.

In this phase of the conflict which we are considering Jesus, as always, was the aggressor. He it was who took the initiative. He threw down the gauntlet, the gage of battle. Their challenging Him was but the reflex of His challenge to them. He healed on the Sabbath day and He uttered and expounded the truth as it was in Him. "To this end was he born and for this cause came he into the world, that he should bear witness unto the truth" (John 18:37).

The fifth chapter of John is one of the greatest chapters in the Gospel story, and records a most important epoch in the life of Christ. It was a turning point which cast its shadow down through all of the remaining days and years and introduced a large element of determination into all that followed. It was fraught with meaning for all the years to come. The situation arising from it could not have been more serious. It meant that the opposition was now fully alerted and aroused, and would be settled, aggressive and unrelenting to the end.

Jesus, of course, was not then or ever under any illusion as to the actual situation and the eventual outcome. The end result stood ever

clearly to His view. Now at this stage and from this day His life would be much more complicated and involved. "The plot thickens," so to speak; the tempo quickens and the tension mounts until the time when by wicked hands He would be taken, crucified and slain.

In any study of the life of Christ we should ever remember that He was fully prepared for persecution, suffering and death. Ultimately it was **this** end that He was born and for this cause that He came into the world to suffer for us and to die for our sins "the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God."

He came to bear witness to the truth. But sinners as such do not want the truth. They would so much rather repose in lies and take refuge in Satan's snares. For Satan flatters, but God's truth is the kind which hurts. It convinces of sin and misery. It is aimed and directed to the destruction of all our personal pride, self-adulation, self-exaltation and self-confidence. When the truth is borne home to our hearts by God's Word and Spirit we are pierced in heart and wounded to the quick. "The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and a contrite heart God will not despise" (Psalm 51:17). The one and only true religion, the historic Christian faith, has always been and is, as has been said, "the religion of the broken heart" (Dr. J. Gresham Machen, **Christianity and Liberalism**, p. 65). But unless a man is born again and learns to see himself as he is and Christ as **He** is and all things as they are, he cannot but be mortally offended by the presentation of the Gospel truth.

These unsaved ones of Jesus' day were so offended; and they were in full possession of the seats of the mighty, and, together with their following, were in the vast majority. In their view Jesus was not only a Sabbath-breaker but also a blasphemer and had to die. Part of their duty under God was, in their estimation, to persecute and hound Him to the death. However in the Saviour's view, so right and true, all that came throughout the whole course of His earthly life was but the outworking in time of the eternal will and plan of God for the salvation of men. Thus an air of calm was ever apparent in His attitude on all occasions. The wrath of men and their deadliest hate had no terrors for Him.

Note: The foregoing study is part of a series by Mr. Rankin on the life of Christ. The series will be continued, D. V., in future issues of this magazine. Editor.

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## *The Puritan Principle of Worship*

By the Rev. William Young, Ph.D.

### Editor's Note:

The following article is the first instalment of an original study by Dr. William Young on

the subject of the Biblical teaching about how we ought to worship God. This is a scholarly article which deals with its subject in a very

painstaking and thorough manner. We are happy to be able to publish this material in **Blue Banner Faith and Life**. The instalments will be continued, D. V., in successive issues of the magazine until the entire article has been published. This material should be of great value to many of our readers, especially ministers, elders, seminary students and college students, as it will show how substantial is the Scriptural ground of that view of purity of divine worship to which we adhere. If some of our readers find this material a bit difficult, we hope they will bear in mind that **Blue Banner Faith and Life** is not intended exclusively as a provision of "milk for babes" but also as a supply of "strong meat" or solid food for those who are more mature in Christian knowledge. We seek to provide a variety of materials in every issue, so that all classes of readers will find something in the magazine suited to their capacity and their needs, from which they can derive spiritual and intellectual profit.

As this is a scholarly article, we make no apology for the inclusion in it of Latin and French quotations (which are also in all cases translated into English). We regret that in the printing of French quotations, it is not possible to provide the proper French accent marks. The limitations of the machine on which the type is set for printing the magazine make it impossible to provide the accents. We trust that even without the proper accents the French quotations will be intelligible to those of our readers who can read French. Also where square brackets would ordinarily be used to indicate something inserted in a quotation by the writer of the article, we are using ordinary parentheses, with material added by the writer of the article identified by Dr. Young's initials, W. Y. This device will serve to make clear what is the quotation from any source, and what is a comment or explanatory phrase inserted by Dr. Young. — J. G. Vos, Editor.

Expressed more precisely, the subject of the present study might be formulated as "The Regulative Principle of Reformed Worship in the Puritan Writers and its Application to the Element of Sung Praise in Worship." The less cumbersome title "The Puritan Principle of Worship" or, if one prefers, "The Principle of Puritan Worship" will be assumed to cover the material referred to by the lengthier title.

The central significance of the principle of worship in Puritanism has been made clear in the opening chapter on "The Nature of English Puritanism" in Horton Davies' standard work on "The Worship of the English Puritans." (Dacre Press, Westminster, 1948). The importance of the regulative principle of worship for the origin and essential character of the Puritan movement appears in the definition of Puritanism with which Davies opens the chapter: "Puritanism is most accurately defined as the outlook that characterized the radical Protestant party in Queen Elizabeth's day, who regarded the Reformation as incomplete and wished to model English church worship and government according to the Word of God." (p. 1). He supports this definition by a reference to the "Ecclesia Restaurata, or History of the Reformation" by Heylyn, an opponent of the Puritans. Under "Anno Reg. 7" Heylyn writes: "This year the **Zuinglian**, or **Calvinian** Faction began to be first known by the name of **Puritans**, which name hath ever since been appropriated to them because of their pretending to a greater Purity in the Service of God, than was **held forth** unto them (as they gave it out) in the **Common-Prayer Book**; and to a greater opposition to the Rites and Usages of the Church of Rome than was agreeable to the Constitution of the Church of **England**" (ed. 1661, p. 172).

While Horton Davies' definition includes Church Government with Worship as part of the

basic issue, Heylyn's statement is restricted to the controversy concerning Worship. The Worship and the Government of the Church are both subject to the regulative principle in the Reformed conception. Yet the application of the regulative principle may be said to enjoy a certain primacy with respect to Worship rather than to Church Government. Worship is central in the life of the Church. The Church exists to worship God, not to function as an organization. Church Government also appears to have numerous features to which the regulative principle does not apply in the way in which it does apply to the modes of worship. Judicial procedure in a Church trial, for example, must include numerous circumstances of considerable weight which are not prescribed in Scripture, if the requirements of justice are to be observed. Nothing analogous to this necessity appears, so strikingly at least, in connection with worship.

On the other hand, due weight ought to be ascribed to the consideration that the regulative principle of Reformed Worship provides a norm for the practice of worship paralleled by the Scripture norm for the constitution of the Church as an organized institution. Though the organization of the Church may not be an end in itself or even so directly related to the final end, The Glory of God, as is the Worship of the Church, yet the form of Church Government in the sense of the offices that are to be found in the Church, the qualifications for and functions of church officers, the nature of an offence and the essential procedure for dealing with offenses, is entirely prescribed in the Word of God. The striking difference between the extent to which Worship is prescribed in Scripture and that to which Church Government is may prove to be only superficial and apparent. Church Government has a larger number of types of attendant circumstances that

are inseparable from its exercise, but no part of its essential structure, whereas Worship is simpler and has relatively few types of attendant circumstances accompanying it. In principle, however, both Worship and Church Government in their essential structure and procedure are entirely prescribed in Holy Scripture according to the regulative principle as understood by Reformed Theologians and especially by the Puritans.

Whatever may be the last word as to the ideal relationship of Worship and Church Government to the regulative principle, in actual historical fact, Puritanism began with the application of the principle to worship and later became increasingly concerned with the application of it to questions relating to the form of Church Government and the relations between the Church and the State. While on the latter issues, Puritans divided into diverging camps, Presbyterians and Independents, those who would remain in the State Church and Separatists\* all were of one mind as to the application of the regulative principle to the Worship of the Church. The regulative principle of Reformed Worship may then be regarded as in a historical sense, the originating and also the unifying principle of Puritanism. An adequate understanding of this principle is a necessary condition of a proper comprehension of the significance of the Puritan movement in the past and of its relevance to our present problems.

The Puritan principle of Worship was no invention of the Puritans. On the contrary, it is the principle regulative of Worship formulated by Calvin and adopted by all the Reformed Churches, as will appear from a consideration of passages in the writings of Reformed writers and the Reformed creeds.

The Reformed view of the principle regulative of the external worship of God stands out by way of contrast with the Lutheran view. Lutherans have held that what is not forbidden in the Word of God may be allowed in the Worship of God. Ceremonies in worship are thus regarded as to a large extent things indifferent (Adiaphora), i.e. things neither commanded nor forbidden in the Scriptures. The Augsburg Confession treats of Ecclesiastical Rites in Part I, Article XV: "Concerning Ecclesiastical rites (made by men — W. Y.), they teach that those rites are to be observed which may be observed without sin, and are profitable for tranquility and good order in the Church; such as are set holidays, feasts, and such like. Yet concerning such things, men are to be admonished that consciences are not to be burdened as if such service were necessary to

salvation." (Schaff, *The Creeds of the Evangelical Protestant Churches*, p. 16). The Article goes on to condemn human traditions, instituted to propitiate God, to merit grace, and to make satisfaction for sins as opposed to the Gospel and the doctrine of faith. Likewise in Part II, Article V, which treats "Of the Distinction of Meats and Traditions": "Yet most of the traditions are observed among us which tend unto this end, that things may be done orderly in the Church; as, namely, the order of Lessons in the Mass and the chiefest holidays. But, in the mean time, men are admonished that such a service doth not justify before God, and that it is not to be supposed there is sin in such things, if they be left undone, without scandal. This liberty in human rites and ceremonies was not unknown to the Fathers." (Schaff, *Op. cit.* p. 48). Cf. The Formula of Concord, Art. X "Of Ecclesiastical Ceremonies": For the better taking away of this controversy we believe, teach, and confess, with unanimous consent, that ceremonies and ecclesiastical rites (such as in the Word of God are neither commanded nor forbidden, but have only been instituted for the sake of order and seemliness) are of themselves neither divine worship, nor even any part of divine worship. For it is written (Matt. XV 9): 'In vain they do worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men.'" (Schaff, *op. cit.*, pp. 161 f.)

The 34th of the 39 articles of the Church of England follows the Lutheran line: "It is not necessary that Traditions and Ceremonies be in all places one, or utterly like; for at all times they have been divers. and may be changed according to the diversity of countries, times, and men's manners, so that nothing be ordained against God's Word." (Schaff, *op. cit.* p. 508).

As opposed to the Lutheran view that there is a substantial area of Adiaphora in the service of Worship, the Reformed view has uniformly been that only that which is prescribed by the Word of God may be introduced into the Worship of God. Calvin formulated this regulative principle with clarity and applied it with great consistency in the Reformation at Geneva. It is implicit in his celebrated definition of pure and genuine religion as "confidence in God coupled with serious fear—fear, which both includes in it willing reverence, and brings along with it such legitimate worship as is prescribed by the law." (Inst. I, II, 3. Beveridge Trans.). The pertinent expression in the definitive Latin edition (1559) reads "et secum trahit legitimum cultum qualis in Lege praescribitur." The French text of 1560 accentuates the Divine origin of acceptable wor-

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\*In a narrow sense of the terms "Separatist" and "Puritan", the Separatists may be opposed to the "Puritans." Horton Davies, however, says of the term "Puritan", "Whilst the term is strictly applicable only to the ecclesiastical party who urged this concern in Elizabeth's day and renewed it in the days of James I, it may be extended, in a wider sense, to the semi-Separatists such as John Robinson, who would never allow himself to deny that the Church of England was a true Church" (*The Worship of the English Puritans*, p. 11).

ship: "et tire avec soy un service tel qu'il appartient, et tel que Dieu mesmes l'ordonne en sa Loy" (ed. published by Jean-Daniel Benoit, Vrin. 1957). In his account of superstition, Calvin proceeds from the regulative principle: "In this way, the vain pretext which many employ to clothe their superstition is overthrown. They deem it enough that they have some kind of zeal for religion, how preposterous soever it may be not observing that true religion must be conformable to the will of God as its unerring standard; (Lat. 'sed non animadvertunt, veram religionem ad Dei nutum, ceu ad perpetuam regulam, debere conformari.' Fr. 'Mais ils ne notent pas que la vraye religion doit estre du tout conforme a la volonte de Dieu, comme une reigle qui ne fleschit poin'.)) that he can never deny himself, and is no spectre or phantom, to be metamorphosed at each individual's caprice. It is easy to see how superstition, with its false glosses, mocks God, while it tries to please him. Usually fastening merely on things on which he has declared he sets no value, it either contemptuously overlooks or even undisguisedly rejects, the things which he expressly enjoins, or in which we are assured that he takes pleasure. Those, therefore, who set up a fictitious worship, merely worship and adore their own delirious fancies; indeed, they would never dare so to trifle with God, had they not previously fashioned him after their own childish conceits . . . It remains, therefore, to conclude with Lactantius (*Instit. Div. lib. I, 2, 6*) 'No religion is genuine that is not in accordance with truth.'" (*Inst. I, IV, 3*). The corruption of pure religion by the introduction of worship invented by man is for Calvin a mark of the vanity and blindness of fallen human nature. *Inst. I, V 13* unfolds this thought in detail: "Hence we must hold, that whosoever adulterates pure religion (and this must be the case with all who cling to their own views) make a departure from the one God. No doubt, they will allege that they have a different intention; but it is of little consequence what they intend or persuade themselves to believe, since the Holy Spirit pronounces all to be apostates who, in the blindness of their minds, substitute demons in the place of God. For this reason Paul declares that the Ephesians were 'without God' (*Eph. II, 12*), until they had learned from the gospel what it is to worship the true God. Nor must this be restricted to one people only, since in another place, he declares in general, that all men 'became vain in their imaginations,' after the majesty of the Creator was manifested to them in the structure of the world. . . But if the most distinguished wandered in darkness, what shall we say of the refuse? No wonder, therefore, that all worship of man's device is repudiated by the Holy Spirit as degenerate. (Lat. 'Quare nihil mirum si cultus omnes hominum arbitrio excogitatos tanquam degeneres repudiet Spiritus sanctus.' Fr. 'Il ne se faut donc esmerveiller si le sant Esprit a reiette tout service de Dieu controupe a la poste des hommes comme bastar et corrompu.')

Any opinion which man can form in heavenly mysteries though it may not beget a long train of errors, is still the parent of error. And though

nothing worse should happen, even this is no light sin—to worship an unknown God at random. Of this sin, however, we hear from our Saviour's own mouth (*John IV 22*), that all are guilty who have not been taught out of the law who the God is whom they ought to worship."

In arguing against Idolatry and Image worship, Calvin also appeals to the regulative principle. Referring to Psalm CXV, 4 and CXXXV, 15, the Reformer inquires: "Whence had idols their origin, but from the will of man?" He argues: "It is, moreover, to be observed, that by the mode of expression which is employed, every form of superstition is denounced. Being works of men, they have no authority from God (*Isa. II 8, 13; VII 57; Hos. XIV 4; Mic. V 13*); and, therefore, it must be regarded as a fixed principle, that all modes of worship devised by man are detestable." (*Inst. I, XI, 4*). Lat. 'Ut hoc fixum sit, detestabiles esse omnes cultus quos a seipsis homines excogitant.' Fr. afin que nous ayons une reigle infallible que tous les services divins que les hommes se forgent sont detestables'). cf. also *I, X., 13*.

Again in distinguishing true religion from superstition, Calvin observes that the latter "seems to take its name from its not being contented with the measure which reason prescribes, but accumulate a superfluous mass of vanities." (*Inst. I, XII, 1*) "Religion" in Calvin's opinion "is used in opposition to vagrant licence—the greater part of mankind rashly taking up whatever first comes in their way, whereas piety, that it may stand with a firm step, confines itself within due bounds." These due bounds are determined by the law of God. "But God, in vindicating his own right, first proclaims that he is a jealous God, and will be a stern avenger if he is confounded with any false god; and thereafter defines what due worship is, in order that the human race may be kept in obedience. Both of these he embraces in his Law when he first binds the faithful in allegiance to him as their only Lawgiver, and then prescribes a rule for worshiping him in accordance with his will." (*Ibid.*) The Law, according to Calvin, among other uses "is designed as a bridle to curb men, and prevent them from turning aside to spurious worship." Cf. *I, XII, 3*. "He has been pleased to prescribe in his Law what is lawful and right, and thus astrict men to a certain rule, lest any should allow themselves to devise a worship of their own."

In discussing the sufficiency of the Moral Law as a rule of conduct, Calvin again refers to the regulative principle of worship. (*II, VIII, 5*) "The Lord, in delivering a perfect rule of righteousness, has reduced it in all its parts to his mere will, and in this way has shown that there is nothing more acceptable to him than obedience. There is the more necessity for attending to this, because the human mind, in its wantonness, is ever and anon inventing different modes of worship as a means of gaining his favour. This irreligious affection of religion being innate in the human mind, has betrayed itself in every age, and is still doing

so, men always longing to devise some method of procuring righteousness without any sanction from the Word of God. . . . God foreseeing that the Israelites would not rest, but after receiving the Law, would, unless sternly prohibited, give birth to new kinds of righteousness, declares that the Law comprehended a perfect righteousness. . . . How do we act? We are certainly under the same obligation as they were; for there cannot be a doubt that the claim of absolute perfection which God made for his Law is perpetually in force. Not contented with it, however, we labour prodigiously in feigning and coining an endless variety of good works, one after another. The best cure for this vice would be a constant and deep-seated conviction that the Law was given from heaven to teach us a perfect righteousness; that the only righteousness so taught is that which the divine will expressly enjoins; and that it is, therefore, vain to attempt, by new forms of worship, to gain the favour of God, whose true worship consists in obedience alone; or rather, that to go a wandering after good works which are not prescribed by

the Law of God, is an intolerable violation of true and divine righteousness."

Calvin also finds the regulative principle of worship established by the second commandment of the decalogue. He expounds the commandment thus: "As in the first commandment the Lord declares that he is one, and that beside him no gods must be either worshipped or imagined, so he here more plainly declares what his nature is, and what the kind of worship with which he is to be honoured, in order that we may not presume to form any carnal idea of him. The purport of the commandment, therefore, is that he will not have his legitimate worship profaned by superstitious rites. Wherefore, in general, he calls us entirely away from the carnal frivolous observances which our stupid minds are wont to devise after forming some gross idea of the divine nature, while at the same time, he instructs us in the worship that is legitimate, namely, spiritual worship of his own appointment." (*Institutes* II, VIII, 17).

(To be continued)

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## *Religious Terms Defined*

**INFINITY OF GOD.** That quality of God by which He is absolutely perfect and boundless, without any limits, both in His being and in all His attributes.

**INSPIRATION OF SCRIPTURE.** An activity of God the Holy Spirit by which the writers of the books of the Bible were so influenced that the product of their writing is truly the Word of God.

**INTERCESSION OF CHRIST.** The heavenly ministry of Christ as the High Priest and Advocate of His people, whereby He pleads the merits of His own shed blood and perfect righteousness for each and every one of the elect, for whom He died and to whom He has given His Holy Spirit.

**JUDAIZERS.** A party of Jewish Christians in the Early Church, who regarded Christianity as a branch of Judaism, and taught that salvation is partly based on the work of Jesus Christ and partly on man's obedience to the requirements of God's law. (Paul's Epistle to the Galatians was written to refute the errors of Judaizing teachers who had confused and misled the Galatian Christians.)

**JUSTIFICATION.** "Justification is an act of God's free grace, wherein he pardoneth all our sins, and accepteth us as righteous in his sight, only for the righteousness of Christ imputed to us, and received by faith alone." (S. Cat. Q. 33).

**KEYS OF THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN.** The authority of church government and discipline

committed by Christ, the Head of the Church, to the lawful officers of His Church. (Matt. 16:19; 18:17,18. Westminster Confession of Faith, XXX. 1,2).

**LEGALISM.** The false notion that salvation, or a righteous standing before God, is attainable, in whole or in part, by human works of obedience to the law of God. (All legalists lack a proper conviction of sin; consequently they vainly imagine that their external and mechanical compliance with the commandments of God is the righteousness which God requires of man. Legalism was the blight of the Pharisees, as it is the terrible error of modern Judiasm.)

**LENT.** The period of 40 days ending with Easter, observed by Roman Catholics and some Protestants as a special period of self-denial and humiliation. (The observance of Lent is a mere human custom based on ecclesiastical tradition; there is no warrant for it in Scripture).

**LEVITY.** Excessive lightness of spirit, or frivolity, which is inconsistent with Christian soberness, seriousness and earnestness, and which is a base counterfeit of true Christian happiness and cheerfulness. (Those who try to drown the voice of conscience by constant levity and jesting may be laughing themselves to hell).

**LIBERTY, CHRISTIAN.** The freedom of a Christian from the guilt of sin, the condemning wrath of God, the curse of the moral law, and the bondage of sin and Satan, as well as his future deliverance from all evil of every kind. (Westminster Confession of Faith, XX.1).

**LIBERTY OF CONSCIENCE.** The freedom of the human conscience from all doctrines and commandments of men which are in any respect contrary to the Word of God, and the freedom of the conscience from all requirements in matters of faith or worship which are in addition to the Word of God. (Westminster Confession of Faith XX.2).

**LOT.** "A mutual agreement to determine an uncertain event, no other way determinable, by an appeal to the providence of God, on casting or

throwing something" (Buck's Theological Dictionary).

**MARTYR.** (1) A witness. (2) A person who suffers death rather than renounce or compromise his religious faith.

**MATERIALISM.** The false doctrine that nothing exists except material substance and energy. (Materialism denies the existence of God and of the human soul, and the reality of life after death).

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## *Some Noteworthy Quotations*

**IT WILL ALWAYS** be evident to persons of correct judgment, that the idea of Deity impressed on the mind of man is indelible. That all have by nature an innate persuasion of the Divine existence, a persuasion inseparable from their very constitution, we have abundant evidence in the contumacy of the wicked, whose furious struggles to extricate themselves from the fear of God are unavailing.

— John Calvin

**I AGREE NOT** with Cicero, that errors in process of time become obsolete, and that religion is increased and ameliorated daily.

— John Calvin

**PRIDE AND VANITY** are discovered, when miserable men, in seeking after God, rise not, as they ought, above their own level, but judge of Him according to their carnal stupidity, and leave the proper path of investigation in pursuit of speculations as vain as they are curious. Their conceptions of him are formed, not according to the representations He gives of Himself, but by the inventions of their own presumptuous imaginations. This gulf being opened, whatever course they take, they must be rushing forwards to destruction. None of their subsequent attempts for the worship or service of God can be considered as rendered to Him; because they worship not Him, but a figment of their own brains in His stead.

— John Calvin

**IN DISQUISITIONS** concerning the motions of the stars, in fixing their situations, measuring their distances, and distinguishing their peculiar properties, there is need of skill, exactness, and industry; and the providence of God being more clearly revealed by these discoveries, the mind ought to rise to a sublimer elevation for the contemplation of His glory.

— John Calvin

**IT MUST BE MAINTAINED,** that whoever adulterates the pure religion (which must necessar-

ily be the case of all who are influenced by their own imagination), he is guilty of a departure from the one God.

— John Calvin

**IT IS NOT SURPRISING** if the Holy Spirit rejects, as spurious, every form of worship which is of human contrivance; because, in the mysteries of heaven, an opinion acquired by human means, though it may not always produce an immense mass of errors, yet always produces some.

— John Calvin

**LIBERALISM** and the religion of the historic Christian Church are not two varieties of the same faith, but two distinct religions, proceeding from altogether separate roots. One is redemptive, while the other is non-redemptive; the one is the antithesis of the other; they can never be reconciled.

— J. Gresham Machen

**THE ISSUE** that is drawn between the Reformed thought of the sixteenth and the Kantian thought of the nineteenth century is not between a sovereign and an ethical God; it is between God and man. And the movement from the one to the other is a veritable revolution by which God is dethroned and man is elevated to His place as the center of the universe.

— Benjamin B. Warfield

**IN A WORD** the sixteenth century conceived man as the creation of God, existing for God and serving His ends; men now are prone to think of God as, if not exactly the creation of man, yet as existing for man and serving man's ends.

— Benjamin B. Warfield

**THE ERROR OF ANTI-CALVINISM** has always been, and continues to be, that it does not recognize the specific character and unique value of the Divine person.

— Benjamin B. Warfield

HE IS ASSUREDLY MAD who does not ascribe to God a far greater pre-eminence above himself than he allows to the human race above the beasts.

— Augustine, quoted by Calvin, quoted in B. B. Warfield, *Critical Reviews*, page 251.

THE "PROBLEM OF GOD" is to be solved for the twentieth century as for all that have preceded it, not by deifying man and abasing God in his presence, but by recognizing God to be indeed God and man to be the creation of His hands, whose chief end is to glorify God and to enjoy Him forever. And this is . . . just Calvinism.

— Benjamin B. Warfield

MEN ARE NEVER duly touched and impressed with a conviction of their insignificance, until they have contrasted themselves with the majesty of God.

— John Calvin

IT IS EVIDENT that man never attains to a true self-knowledge until he has previously contemplated the face of God, and come down after such contemplation to look into himself.

— John Calvin

OUR WISDOM, in so far as it ought to be deemed true and solid wisdom, consists almost entirely of two parts: the knowledge of God and of ourselves. But as these are connected together by many ties, it is not easy to determine which of the two precedes, and gives birth to the other. For, in the first place, no man can survey himself

without forthwith turning his thoughts towards the God in whom he lives and moves; because it is perfectly obvious, that the endowments which we possess cannot possibly be from ourselves; nay, that our very being is nothing else than subsistence in God alone.

— John Calvin

SO LONG AS we do not look beyond the earth, we are quite pleased with our own righteousness, wisdom, and virtue; we address ourselves in the most flattering terms, and seem only less than demigods. But should we once begin to raise our thoughts to God, and reflect what kind of Being He is, and how absolute the perfections of that righteousness, and wisdom, and virtue, to which, as a standard, we are bound to be conformed, what formerly delighted us by its false show of righteousness, will become polluted with the greatest iniquity; what strangely imposed upon us under the name of wisdom, will disgust by its extreme folly; and what presented the appearance of virtuous energy, will be condemned as the most miserable impotence. So far are those qualities in us, which seem most perfect, from corresponding to the divine purity.

— John Calvin

THE LAST DEVICE of the adversary, when he cannot make us look elsewhere, is to turn our eyes from our Saviour to our faith, and thus to discourage us if it is weak, to fill us with pride if it is strong; and either way to weaken us. For power does not come from the faith, but from the Saviour by faith. It is not looking at our look, it is "looking unto Jesus."

— Theodore Monod

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## *The Reformed Faith We Profess*

By J. G. Vos

The Editor has been requested to publish some material expounding the Reformed Faith in simple language for the average church member or inquirer who may be confused as to exactly what the Reformed Faith is and just how it differs from other interpretations of Christianity. We are happy to comply with this request, and hope that the material to be presented may prove helpful. It is planned to publish an instalment in each issue of *Blue Banner Faith and Life*, D. V., for an indefinite period. The purpose of these articles is not argument nor even the establishment of Scriptural proof for the various doctrines, but simple exposition. The aim is to tell what the various teachings of the Reformed Faith are, in simple, non-technical language, and to show as pointedly and clearly as possible how they differ from other views which are widely held at the present day. At the end of each instalment the reader

will be referred to literature in which the case for the Reformed doctrines is argued and in which the Scriptural proof is marshalled and displayed. The first requirement for an intelligent profession of any religious doctrine is to have a clear understanding of what the doctrine is. There is no use going into arguments and proofs until it is perfectly clear just what the doctrine is that requires argument or proof. It is evident that there is considerable confusion at the present day about the Reformed or Calvinistic system of doctrine. Some assert that they accept this system, only to betray the fact, a little later, that they do not have a correct understanding of what it is. Others say that they are opposed to Calvinism, yet soon indicate by what they say that they do not have a correct understanding of what Calvinism is — they are really opposing a man of straw, a caricature of the Reformed Faith which is very dif-

ferent from the real Calvinism set forth in the classic creeds and confessions of Reformed Christianity. This sort of situation has been called "an atmosphere of low visibility," and it is very unfavorable for growth in knowledge of divinely revealed truth. Vagueness and confusion are the enemies of Christian knowledge; precision and clear definition are necessary steppingstones to intelligent conviction of truth. It takes more than clear thinking to make a man a Christian, certainly, but this does not imply that clear thinking is unnecessary, far less that it is useless. It is to be hoped that all readers of this magazine are far from the perverse but not uncommon notion that in religion ignorance is a virtue and logical thinking is the enemy of piety. This perverse notion is reflected in the attitude which disdainfully brushes aside all effort at precise statement of Christian truth as "theological hair-splitting." What is need-

ed today is not less theology, but much more of it; not less doctrinal knowledge, but a great deal more of it; not less straight thinking in matters of religion, but vastly more of it. Surely one of the most neglected commandments of Scripture is "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God. . .with all thy mind" (Matt. 22:37; Mark 12:30). Surely the human mind can be employed in no nobler activity than in seeking an accurate and consistent understanding of the truth God has revealed to mankind.

We shall take up the main doctrines of Christianity one by one, beginning with what the Reformed Faith holds concerning the Bible, and going on in later articles to its teachings concerning God, man, salvation, etc. The plan will be to state the Reformed doctrine first, then to show how it differs from its main present-day rivals.

## CHAPTER I

### The Reformed View of the Bible

We need a clearer and fuller knowledge of God and His will than we can get from nature, for nature cannot show us the way of salvation. God has met this need by giving us the Holy Bible, which is His Word and which tells us all we need to know concerning God, ourselves, the way of salvation and our duty. The Bible is our source of religious truth and our guidebook for daily life. Its statements are to be believed and its commands are to be obeyed, because they are the Word of God.

The Bible consists of two parts, the Old Testament containing 39 books originally written in Hebrew, and the New Testament containing 27 books originally written in Greek. Although written by many different human writers in different circumstances and with varying literary style, the Bible is in a deeper sense one book, for God is the real author of the Bible as a whole. The unity of the Bible is deeper than its obvious human diversity. All the parts fit together perfectly to form one harmonious whole, which in its complete form is the revelation of God to mankind.

The original writers of the Bible were inspired by God so that they were kept from writing any errors, and what they wrote was exactly what God intended for them to write. This does not mean that their human traits or talents were canceled or disregarded; it means, rather, that God used their human traits and abilities, working in and through their personalities in such a way that the product of their writing was not merely the word of man, but also truly the Word of God, exactly what God intended it to be and free from all errors of any kind. This kind of inspiration is called **verbal inspiration**, for it means that the actual words of the original writing of the Bible, were exactly what God wanted them to be. It is also called **plenary (or full) inspiration** because it means that the Bible as originally

written was fully inspired by God — not merely the ideas but the actual words; not merely the statements about religion, but all the statements of the Bible.

We no longer have the manuscripts of the Bible books that were written by the original writers. These original writings by the hand of Moses, Paul, etc., have all perished. What we have today are copies, which in turn were made from other copies, and so on back to the original **autographs**, as the actual original manuscripts are called. These copies which exist today contain slight variations which are the result of errors of scribes in copying the manuscripts in past times. Most of these variations in manuscripts are trivial and unimportant, such as differences in the spelling of a word, although some of them are of greater importance. Nearly all of them can be weeded out, however, by Christian scholars who examine each variation carefully in the light of all the available evidence. We can say with great confidence that the Bible in Hebrew and Greek, as it exists today, is practically identical with what Moses, Paul and the other sacred writers wrote when, under the direct inspiration of God, they took pen in hand and wrote on parchment or papyrus.

The ordinary Christian cannot read Hebrew or Greek, therefore the Bible must be translated into various languages of the world so that not only learned scholars but all people can read the Word of God for themselves. This work of translation has been going on since before the time of Christ (when the first translation of the Old Testament from Hebrew into Greek was made), and it is still going on today. Tremendous progress in Scripture translation has been made in the last hundred years. This work of translation involves two tasks: first, translating the Bible into languages where it was never known before; and second, making improved, more accurate transla-

tions into languages which have long had the Bible. Bible translation is a specialized task which calls for thorough scholarship and devoted effort. The men who have engaged in this task have been for the most part very competent and careful workers. But they have not been specially inspired by God as the original Hebrew and Greek writers were. While the blessing of God and His special care and providence have rested upon the work of Bible translation, still the translators were not inspired or prevented by the direct power of God from making any mistakes. Therefore we recognize that there may be mistakes in translation of the Bible, and we hold that any translation is subject to criticism and correction on the basis of further study of the Hebrew or Greek. The Hebrew and Greek text of the Bible is **infallible** or **inerrant**, which means that it cannot contain any errors. In the strict sense this is true only of the Bible in the original Hebrew and Greek. But for all practical purposes it is correct to say that the Bible as we have it in English or any other modern language is verbally inspired, inerrant and infallible. It is truly the Word of God, it contains no errors of any kind (except for the possibility of errors of copyists and translators, as explained above), and when rightly understood it will always guide the reader aright.

The Bible is God's final message to mankind during world history. Only when the Judgment Day dawns at the end of history can we expect to receive a new revelation from God. The Bible as a completed book is fully and permanently sufficient for its intended purpose, and is never to be supplemented by material from any other source, such as human reason, science or alleged new revelations. The Spirit of God inspired the original writers of the Bible, but no one is inspired in that way today. The reader of the Bible, however, needs the help of the Holy Spirit to understand and believe the Bible. This help of the Holy Spirit is called **illumination**, and without it no one can get the real benefit of the truth which the Bible presents.

Some parts of the Bible are clearer than others, but taken as a whole the Bible is a clear and understandable book, so that with the illumination of the Holy Spirit the ordinary reader can grasp its teachings and receive its benefits. The Bible is a self-interpreting book, in that one part explains or clarifies another part, so that a key to the understanding of the more difficult parts may be found in the simpler parts. As the Bible alone is the Word of God, and as it is a self-interpreting book, it is wrong to interpret the Bible in terms of any idea or principle derived from some other source, such as tradition, reason, science or philosophy.

The Bible serves a double function in Christianity. First, it is the source and standard of religious truth and duty. In this function it answers the questions: (1) What is true? and (2) What is right? The systematic exposition of these

answers forms the subject matter of Christian theology and Christian ethics.

In the second place, the Bible is a means of grace in the Christian life. It is used by the Holy Spirit in making people Christians and in making Christians wise and holy. In this function the Bible is medicine and food for the soul. It is as necessary for the Christian life as vitamins and foodstuffs are to the bodily life. No one can live a healthy Christian life without using it regularly.

#### The Roman Catholic View of the Bible

The Roman Catholic view of the Bible differs considerably from the Reformed view of the Bible, even though the two have some features in common. Romanism teaches that the original writings of the Bible in Hebrew and Greek were inspired and are the infallible Word of God. The official Bible of the Roman Catholic Church, however, is the standard Latin translation of Jerome, called the Vulgate. Catholic translations of the Bible into modern languages are made mostly from the Latin Vulgate.

The Roman Catholic Church, while it regards the Bible as the inspired and infallible Word of God, does not regard the Bible as its supreme authority in religion, for it regards the Church as a higher authority than the Bible, and it also recognizes **church tradition** as having authority alongside the Bible. Such a dogma as the "Assumption of Mary", for example, is based on tradition rather than on the Bible. Because of its view that the Church is a higher authority than the Bible, Romanism denies that the Bible is a self-interpreting book, and holds that the Church's official interpretation of it must be accepted by the faithful.

In former times the Roman Catholic Church often objected to ordinary people reading the Bible in other languages than Latin, but (in the United States, at least) this attitude has changed, and the Roman Catholic Church now encourages its people to read the Bible in English, with the proviso that it be a Catholic translation approved by the Church. At present the Roman Catholic Church in America is issuing a new English translation of the Bible (the Confraternity Version) which is replacing the old Douay-Rheims version made nearly 400 years ago.

The Roman Catholic Church includes in the Bible the books called **Apocrypha**, which Protestants do not recognize as part of the inspired Word of God. Some of the books of the Apocrypha have some value as ordinary human historical sources, while others are worth little or nothing. We believe that the books of the Apocrypha have no claim to inspiration nor to a place in the Bible.

#### The Liberal View of the Bible

Modern religious Liberalism has diverged widely from the Reformed view of the Bible. Liber-

alism denies the verbal or plenary inspiration of the Bible, while holding that many of the ideas in the Bible are from God. Liberalism denies the inerrancy or infallibility of the Bible by holding that the Bible contains many contradictions and errors. It is held that the Bible not only contains scientific and historical errors, but also that in the matter of religious teaching one part of the Bible may contradict another part. Thus the Bible is not regarded as having a single, harmonious, consistent message from cover to cover; instead, it is regarded as a combination of conflicting ideas and viewpoints, including many outright falsehoods or errors. This, of course, destroys the idea that God is the real author of the Bible as a whole. In other words, Liberalism makes much of the diversity in the Bible, while at the same time denying the reality of underlying unity.

Liberalism also denies the genuineness of many parts of the Bible. Thus, for example, it is claimed that the Five Books of Moses were written by various writers, at different times, for different reasons, and finally combined into their present form by some unknown editor. It is denied that Daniel wrote the Book of Daniel, and that Isaiah wrote the entire book of Isaiah.

Liberalism does not regard the Bible as the real source of religious authority. The Bible is thought of as a help in religion, but the real authority is the human personality — either man's reason or man's feelings and conscience. Thus Liberalism, by its attitude toward the Bible, dethrones God and enthrones man as the authority in religion.

#### **The Neo-Orthodox View of the Bible**

Since the First World War another view of the Bible has become prominent, called the "Barthian" view, after Karl Barth, the Swiss scholar

who has been its chief promoter. This view of the Bible shares some features of the Liberal view. It denies the genuineness of many parts of the Bible, denies the verbal inspiration and infallibility of the Bible, and holds that the Bible contains both errors and contradictions. Barthianism or Neo-orthodoxy denies that the Bible itself, as a written book, is the Word of God. It becomes the Word of God when it grips the reader and comes home to him in vital personal experience. Thus the Bible is regarded as a fallible book which may be the vehicle of the Word of God when it becomes personally real to the reader. This seems more religious and less hostile than the Liberal view, but it really destroys the Bible as our infallible authority for faith and life. Many unsophisticated Christians have been deceived by Neo-orthodoxy's seeming reverence for the Bible and its religious seriousness into thinking that it must indeed be what it claims to be, namely a "return to the Bible" or a "rediscovery of the Bible." But the Bible which it has "rediscovered" is not the infallible Scripture of the apostles, prophets and historic Christian Church. It is a Bible marred by human error, a Bible which is not in itself actually the Word of God. The talk about the "rediscovery" or "recovery" of the Bible is rather baffling to Christians who were not aware that the Bible had ever been lost.

#### **References for Study of this Subject:**

**Thy Word is Truth**, by Edward J. Young. Published by Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., Grand Rapids 3, Mich. \$3.50.

**The Inspiration of the Scriptures**, by Loraine Boettner, in volume entitled **Studies in Theology**. Eerdmans (address above), \$3.50.

**Christianity and Liberalism**, by J. Gresham Machen. Eerdmans (address above), \$2.50.

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## ***The "Imprecatory" Psalms***

By J. G. Vos

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Of the hundred and fifty Psalms in the Psalter, six are commonly classed as "imprecatory" Psalms. These are the 55th, 59th, 69th, 79th, 109th and 137th. The 137th is not ascribed to a particular author; the scene pictured in it is "by the rivers of Babylon". The 79th is ascribed to Asaph, and the remaining four to David.

It must be admitted that the designation "imprecatory" is open to objection on the ground that

as applied to these Psalms it is not merely descriptive of the content of the Psalms but also commonly conveys a certain impression of reproach, a certain element of disapproval on the part of the person using the term. These Psalms are indeed imprecatory, if this term be understood in its proper sense of invoking a judgment, calamity or curse, and the objection is not to the term itself so much as to the manner of its use by many persons, as if to designate a Psalm as "imprecatory" were almost the same as calling it "wicked" or "immoral". Though various other designations, such as "Psalms of Justice", have been suggested, these are not satisfactory because they fail to designate that which differentiates these Psalms from the other parts of the Psalter. Con-

sequently in the present article we shall avail ourselves of the common designation of "Imprecatory Psalms".

Certain expressions in these Psalms have caused a great deal of abuse to be heaped upon them, some persons even going so far as to say that they breathe a savage spirit and are totally unfit for Christian devotional use. The Imprecatory Psalms contain prayers for the destruction of certain persons. A prayer implies a sincere desire for the thing prayed for. Objectors to the Imprecatory Psalms assert that a desire for the destruction of another is immoral, and therefore that the Psalms which express such a desire are immoral and their use in worship improper and sinful.

The ethical problem of the Imprecatory Psalms may be formulated with respect to these Psalms regarded as compositions or prayers of the Psalmists, or it may be formulated with respect to these Psalms regarded in relation to the Christian of the new dispensation. In the former case we shall ask the question: How can it be right to wish or pray for the destruction or doom of others as is done in the Imprecatory Psalms? In the latter case the question will be: Is it right for a Christian to use the Imprecatory Psalms in the worship of God, and if so, in what sense can he make the language of these Psalms his own? It will be perceived that these two formulations do not represent two distinct problems but rather two aspects of what is basically one problem, and also that the second aspect of the problem is subordinate to the first. Whether it is right for a Christian to use these Psalms in the worship of God depends upon whether it can be right to wish or pray for the destruction or doom of others. The question concerning the legitimacy of the practical use of these Psalms is thus inseparable from, and subordinate to, the question concerning the ethical principles involved in the Psalms themselves. The major portion of the present article will be devoted to the consideration of this prior ethical question, after which an answer to the question concerning the legitimacy of the use of these Psalms will be attempted.

A number of unsatisfactory, or only partially satisfactory, solutions of the problem have been proposed. Perhaps the most prevalent of these today — in America, at least — is the purported solution associated with the system of Scripture interpretation known as Modern Dispensationalism (*Scofield Reference Bible*, p. 599; Hull, *Two Thousand Hours in the Psalms*, p. 523). According to this scheme of interpretation, the Psalter belongs primarily to the dispensation of law, not to the dispensation of grace. Any connection which it may have with the dispensation of grace or the so-called "Church age" is therefore purely prophetic. Some of the Psalms contain prophecies of the coming of the Messiah, but it is held that their ethical concepts belong to the dispensation of law and cannot be transferred or ap-

plied to the dispensation of grace. This eliminates the ethical problem of the Imprecatory Psalms by maintaining that while it was right for the Old Testament saints, living under the dispensation of law, to invoke divine judgment upon their enemies, still it would be wrong for Christian people, living under the dispensation of grace, to do the same.

This dispensational treatment of the Imprecatory Psalms must be rejected for two reasons. First, because it is based upon a false and unwarranted scheme of Scripture interpretation; there is no evidence in the Bible itself for the system, so popular today, of dividing history into seven distinct dispensations during each of which man is tested by God with respect to some specific principle; the whole dispensational scheme, as set forth, for example, in the Scofield notes, is not something derived from the Bible itself but something imposed on the Bible from outside sources. Second, because the attempted solution of the problem of the Imprecatory Psalms virtually makes Scripture contradict Scripture. According to this interpretation, a thing which was right for David is wrong for us today since the moral law as such is held to be applicable only to the dispensation of law, while during the dispensation of grace it gives way to a different principle. Thus one part of Scripture is set over against another part of Scripture in such a way that the different parts virtually contradict each other. A considerable portion of the Psalter is vitiated for Christian devotional use by the claim that it belongs to the dispensation of law, and is therefore dominated by an entirely different principle from that under which the Christian believer lives, although Scofield himself does not draw this inference.

Another unsatisfactory solution of the problem of the Imprecatory Psalms that has been suggested is the assertion that these Psalms do not express a desire for the doom of the wicked, but merely predict that doom. They do not seek the destruction or condemnation of any man, it is said, but merely predict, in graphic terms, the ruin which is sure to overtake the impenitent sinner, according to the principle that "whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap" (Gal. 6:7). In support of this contention it has been urged that the Hebrew language, unlike the Greek, does not have a special mood to express the optative. While it is of course true that Hebrew differs from Greek in this respect, it by no means follows that it is impossible to express a wish in the Hebrew language; we may be quite confident that there is no human speech in which a wish or prayer cannot be expressed. This explanation breaks down when the actual words of the Imprecatory Psalms are examined, since, while it is possible that some expressions in these Psalms are to be understood as predictions of fact rather than as prayers, it is nevertheless certain that most of the expressions must be regard-

ed as prayers and that many of them are prayers in form and definitely addressed to God. Psalm 55:9 may be cited as an example: "Destroy, O Lord, and divide their tongue; for I have seen violence and strife in the city". Psalm 59 throughout is definitely a prayer to God, beginning with the words "Deliver me from mine enemies, O my God", and ending with the words "Unto thee, O my strength, will I sing praises: for God is my high tower, the God of my mercy". Six times in seventeen verses the Psalmist definitely addresses God. The same thing is true to a greater or less extent of the other Imprecatory Psalms. We are forced to conclude that the Imprecatory Psalms are prayers for the doom of the wicked, and not merely predictions of that doom. The suggested explanation must therefore be rejected as contrary to the language used in the Psalms themselves.

A third suggested explanation of the Imprecatory Psalms asserts that the imprecations contained in them are to be understood only in a spiritual or figurative sense. According to this explanation, when David, for example prays for the destruction of his enemies, we are to understand that his spiritual enemies are meant, and not human beings in the flesh. This amounts to an attempt to find an easy way out of the difficulty by boldly explaining away the statements of Scripture. It is perfectly obvious that the wicked persons whose doom is prayed for in the Imprecatory Psalms are not temptations, sinful tendencies in human nature, nor even demonic powers. They are human beings, who may, indeed, have been under the influence of demonic powers, but who were none the less human. In Psalm 109:6 the person whose doom is sought is clearly human and distinguished from demonic powers: "Set thou a wicked man over him: and let Satan stand at his right hand". The same Psalm continues: "Let his days be few; and let another take his office. Let his children be fatherless, and his wife a widow" (Psalm 109:8, 9). Part of this is quoted in Acts 1:20 and there stated to have been prophetic of, and fulfilled in, Judas Iscariot. While it is no doubt true that the reference of the Imprecatory Psalms cannot be limited to the particular persons concerning whom these prayers were first offered to God, still the fact remains that these Psalms do, as is clearly indicated by the way in which the New Testament interprets Psalm 109 of Judas Iscariot, refer to particular human persons, known or unknown to us, and that therefore their meaning cannot be spiritualized to make them refer to purely spiritual or non-human powers or persons.

A fourth suggested explanation proceeds chiefly from those who do not accept the divine inspiration and authority of the Psalter, and asserts, in effect, that the Imprecatory Psalms are to be taken in their plain and obvious meaning, that they refer to definite persons living at the time when the Psalms were composed, but that they proceed not from divine inspiration but sim-

ply from personal vindictiveness on the part of David and the other writers. In other words, David prayed for the doom of his enemies; in doing so, David did wrong, at least as judged by Christian standards. There is really no problem involved, for the knot is cut in this fashion: to pray for the doom of another is sinful; David prayed for the doom of others; therefore David sinned. We should simply recognize that this was the sin of David, and although we may condone the sin on the ground that ethical standards were lower in David's time than now, still we in this Christian age ought to cultivate a milder and kindlier spirit.

This purported explanation is open to two serious objections. First it is contrary to the doctrine of the inspiration of the Scriptures. In addition to all the evidence that might be cited to show that "all Scripture is given by inspiration of God" (2 Tim. 3:16), attention may be called here to 2 Samuel 23:1, 2 where divine inspiration is definitely claimed for the Psalms of David: "Now these are the last words of David. David the son of Jesse saith, and the man who was raised on high saith, the anointed of the God of Jacob, and the sweet Psalmist of Israel: the Spirit of Jehovah spake by me, and his word was upon my tongue". Any attempted solution of the ethical problem of the Imprecatory Psalms which regards these Psalms as merely human compositions must be rejected as contrary to a fundamental doctrine of the Christian faith, as well as to the claim made by the Scripture itself for the inspiration of the Psalter. Second, this explanation is contrary to the known history of David, who wrote four of the six Psalms commonly classified as imprecatory. Everything that is known of David shows that he was not a person of a vengeful or vindictive character. At En-ge-di (1 Sam. 24:1-15) and again at Ziph (1 Sam. 26:1-25) David had Saul in his power and could easily have taken his life, but refused to do so. When Shimei came out and cursed David, and Abishai wished to cross over and take off his head David replied, "What have I to do with you ye sons of Zeruiah? . . . Let him alone, and let him curse; for Jehovah hath bidden him" (2 Sam. 16:10, 11). Again, we find David inquiring: "Is there not yet any of the house of Saul, that I may show the kindness of God unto him?" (2 Sam. 9:3). Some might see an element of personal vindictiveness in David's dying charge to Solomon to execute the death penalty on Joab and Shimei (1 Kings 2:5, 6, 8, 9), but the fact that David refrained from putting these men to death during his own lifetime indicates rather that it was not personal vindictiveness but concern for public justice that motivated his instructions to Solomon. While David was of course not without sin, yet there is nothing in his recorded history that in any way corresponds to such an interpretation of the Imprecatory Psalms, and there is much recorded of his relations to his enemies which shows that he was not a vindictive person but a man of a mild and even a forbearing spirit. The explanation which would ascribe the expres-

sions of the Imprecatory Psalms to a desire on the part of the Psalmist for personal revenge must therefore be rejected as contrary to the Biblical data.

A fifth suggested explanation of the Imprecatory Psalms regards them as outbursts of the moral feeling of humanity called forth by unusually brutal or inhuman crimes. When some extraordinarily brutal or atrocious crime has been committed, there is a universal demand that the guilty persons be punished, and this demand is not a demand for personal vengeance but a kind of indignation springing from the outraged moral sense of humanity. In the same way, it is alleged, the Imprecatory Psalms are not prayers for personal revenge upon adversaries, but cries to the all-just God to judge and condemn the wicked. It must be admitted that this explanation is less unsatisfactory than the others which have been enumerated. It is true that the Imprecatory Psalms are not prayers for personal revenge. It is also true that they are prayers to the all-just God to judge and condemn the wicked. But it is not true that the Imprecatory Psalms proceed wholly, or even primarily, from the outraged moral feeling of humanity. To assert that they do, is to overlook their divine inspiration and authority and to regard them as merely human compositions, the product of human religious experience and moral life. And it must be added that the Imprecatory Psalms contain some petitions which can hardly be justified simply on the basis of the outraged moral feeling of humanity, such, for example, as Psalm 109:12 ("Neither let there be any to have pity on his fatherless children") and Psalm 137:9 ("Happy shall he be, that taketh and dasheth thy little ones against the rock"). If these words are simply the expression of an outraged sense of justice, shocked by violent crimes, it is difficult to see how they can be reconciled with Deuteronomy 24:16, which commands that "the fathers shall not be put to death for the children, neither shall the children be put to death for the fathers: every man shall be put to death for his own sin". The outraged moral feeling of humanity may cry out and demand the death of the person who has broken the law, but the prayer for the destruction of his infant children cannot be justified simply on the basis of the moral feeling of mankind. This explanation, while it recognizes certain essential features of the Imprecatory Psalms, cannot be regarded as satisfactory or adequate because it fails to recognize the divine character of the Imprecatory Psalms and to justify all of the expressions used in them.

Turning, then, from the various solutions of the ethical problem of the Imprecatory Psalms which have been suggested, the following is proposed as a solution of the problem along a different line, namely, by a criticism of the presuppositions on which the usual objections to the Imprecatory Psalms are based. The problem, viewed with respect to the principles involved in the Psalms themselves, was defined

thus: How can it be right to wish or pray for the doom or destruction of others as is done in the Imprecatory Psalms? Subordinately to this, the question was raised: Is it right for a Christian to use the Imprecatory Psalms in the worship of God, and if so, in what sense can he make the language of these Psalms his own? The usual objections to the Imprecatory Psalms assert that it is not right to wish or pray for the doom or destruction of another, and that therefore a Christian cannot consistently use these Psalms in the worship of God, nor make their language his own except perhaps in a figurative sense far removed from their original and proper meaning. The fundamental objection, or major premise of the argument, then, is that it is immoral to wish or pray for the doom or destruction of another. This objection is, perhaps often unconsciously, founded upon two presuppositions. The first is, that the welfare of man is the chief end of man; and the second, that man has rights which even God is bound to respect.

If the first presupposition, that the welfare of man is the chief end of man, be granted, then it follows necessarily that it is wrong to wish or pray for the doom or destruction of any human being. In that case, we should only pray for the present good and eternal salvation of every member of the human race, regardless of how wicked a particular person may be, or how great an offence and occasion of stumbling to the people of God. I John 5:16, however, states that "there is a sin unto death: not concerning this do I say that he should make request", and the **Westminster Larger Catechism**, Q. 183, states that prayer is to be made "for all sorts of men living, or that shall live hereafter; but not for the dead, nor for those that are known to have sinned the sin unto death". In other words, there may exist cases in which the glory of God and the welfare of man conflict, and in such cases it is wrong to seek the welfare of the particular persons involved.

This presupposition, that the welfare of man is the chief end of man, is essentially humanistic, is contrary to theism, and overlooks the fact that man is not self-existent but a created being who is therefore dependent on God and who does not exist for himself but for God's glory. If man is the creature of God, then it follows that the chief end of man is to glorify God. Only by denying that man is the creature of God can it be successfully maintained that the chief end of man is the welfare of man. No doubt many of those who object to the Imprecatory Psalms, and who are influenced by the presupposition under discussion, do really believe in God in the theistic sense, but have been greatly influenced by the present-day non-theistic view of life, and in particular by the substitution of the theory of evolution for the Biblical doctrine of the creation of man; and this influence may often have been so great as to render the viewpoint of such persons practically (though not theoretically) atheis-

tic. This non-theistic view of life is exceedingly common and popular today and has penetrated the preaching and church life, as well as the newspaper and magazine theology, of our time far more than is commonly realized. The proposition that the chief end of man is the welfare of man is unchallenged in many circles, and it is this point of view that is at the bottom of most, if not all, of the objections to the Imprecatory Psalms. Our answer to these objections, then, must in the first place be a challenge to the legitimacy of this presupposition. The chief end of man is to glorify God, not to seek the welfare of man. These two are of course not mutually exclusive; the glory of God includes the welfare of man in general, but Scripture teaches that particular cases may, and do, exist where the two conflict, and in such cases the believer must seek the glory of God and not the welfare of man which is in conflict with the glory of God.

The second presupposition underlying the objections to the Imprecatory Psalms is that man has rights which even God is bound to respect. This presupposition tacitly, perhaps unconsciously, regards the moral law as something which exists independently of God himself, something to which God as well as man is subject. It is of course quite true that God will never act contrary to the moral law, but this is simply because the moral law is an expression of the nature or character of God, and God cannot deny himself (2 Tim. 2:13). Whatever God does is in harmony with the moral law, simply because God does it, for God cannot act contrary to his own nature of which the moral law is an expression; but this is a very different matter from the notion that the moral law is something above and beyond, which exists independently even of God himself, and which God is bound to obey in the same sense that man is bound to obey it. The very idea of obligation to obey the moral law implies a higher power to whom man is responsible. In the nature of the case there can be no higher power to whom God can be responsible. None can stay his hand, or say unto him, What doest thou? It follows that many things which would be wrong for man to do, are right when done by God. A man who throws a bomb in a crowded street and kills a number of people may be guilty of murder, but when God in his providential government sends an earthquake and destroys thousands or tens of thousands of people he is wholly righteous in doing so. It is wrong for man to put the children to death for the sins of the fathers, yet God visits the iniquity of the fathers upon the children to the third and fourth generation of those that hate him, and it is worthy of note that this truth is affirmed in the very Decalogue which is the summary of the moral law given by God to man as a rule of life (Ex. 20:5; Deut. 5:9).

Man is a created being and therefore possesses no rights except those conferred on him by God his Creator. On the subject of human rights, there is much confusion of thought at the

present time. Many hold that in creating man, God somehow limited himself, and was thereupon under obligation to respect certain rights possessed by man. Some maintain that life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness are inalienable rights which not only man, but even God, is bound to respect. According to this view, not only would it have been wrong for David to slay his enemies by his own hand, but it would also have been wrong for God to bring this about in answer to David's prayers as recorded in the Imprecatory Psalms. Against such notions, the sovereignty of God must be affirmed. God and man are not equals, nor are they both responsible to some higher power or principle. God is the Creator, and man is the creature. Man is responsible to God, but God is not responsible to man. Man, therefore, has no rights whatever except those conferred on him by God; that is to say, man has no rights at all on the absolute sense, no rights to which appeal can be made in a controversy between man and God.

Futhermore, man as sinful, by the Fall, has forfeited even those rights conferred by God at his creation. Since the Fall, man is in the position of an outlaw and a rebel against God's authority, possessing no legal status whatever and debarred from claiming rights of any kind. Man is not merely a creature, but a sinner, and is therefore totally devoid of rights which God must respect. In other words, whatever of good man may ever attain can come from no other source than the free, sovereign and unmerited grace of God.

It is true, of course, that by the common grace of God even sinful man has rights which other men are bound to respect, that is to say, civil rights which have validity within human society; but sinful man has no rights which God is bound to respect. Therefore while it would be wrong for man, acting on his own initiative and independently of commands from God, to plan, wish or pray for the destruction of the wicked, these would not be wrong if done by God himself or by man in obedience to specific commands of God. But such is precisely the character of the Imprecatory Psalms, for these Psalms were given by divine inspiration and were therefore not simply the personal desires or petitions of men, but prayers offered under the direct influence of the Holy Spirit of God.

It is necessary to insist that evil and evil men exist only by the providential permission of God and not by any right of their own which they can claim before God. Satan's entire domain is a kingdom of usurpation. Sinful man does not have the right to a breath of air to inhale, a drop of water to drink, or a particle of food to eat, in God's world. He has, indeed, a civil right to these things, by God's common grace, which right must be respected by his fellow men. But life and the things which make it possible come ultimately not from man but from God, and sinful man has no right to these things

which he can plead before God. It follows, then, that God may at any time, and in perfect harmony with his righteous nature, take away the life of sinful man, either by means of the forces and laws of nature, or by his commands addressed to men, as for example when the children of Israel were commanded to exterminate the inhabitants of Canaan. But if it is right for God to destroy evil and evil men in his universe, or to command his servants to effect that destruction, then it was also right for him to inspire the Psalmist to pray for that same work of destruction, and it was moreover right for the Psalmists to offer such prayers. It has already been shown from the history of David's life that the destruction of evil men which is prayed for in the Imprecatory Psalms was not motivated by a desire for personal revenge. It was, on the contrary, a judicial vindication of the name of God for which David prayed. This is shown, for example, by Psalm 59:13, where David prays: "Consume them in wrath, consume them, that they may not be; and let them know that God ruleth in Jacob unto the ends of the earth".

Ultimately, then, it was right for the Psalmists to pray for the destruction of the wicked because they were praying for God to do something which it was in harmony with God's nature for him to do, because the act of God which was prayed for conflicted with no actual rights of men, and because the prayers themselves were uttered by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit and therefore must have been right prayers and could not have been immoral. The total destruction of evil, including the judicial destruction of evil men, is the prerogative of the sovereign God, and it is right not only to pray for the accomplishment of this destruction, but even to assist in effecting it when commanded to do so by God himself.

Scripture teaches that the wages of sin is death (Rom. 6:23), and since every man has sinned, every man is deserving of death, both physical and eternal. Even infants have sinned in Adam, who represented them in the Covenant of Works, and are therefore deserving of eternal death, though they are without actual transgressions. The Westminster Shorter Catechism defines murder as "the taking away of our own life, or the life of our neighbor unjustly, or whatever tendeth thereunto" (Q. 69). When life is taken away justly, then, it is not murder but execution. Man, of course, does not possess the right to take away the life of his fellow man for every cause. But every man stands before the judgment bar, not only of his fellow men, but of God. Before that divine tribunal he stands guilty, a rebel, an outlaw, wholly without rights. Because he is guilty, he deserves to die. It is appointed unto men once to die (Heb. 9:27), and in the end God brings about the death of every human being. Whether this is done by natural causes or in some other way is immaterial, so far as the question of God's righteous-

ness is concerned. Ordinarily, man's death occurs as the result of natural causes, such as disease, accident or old age. At other times, man's death may be caused by murder, that is, by unjust violence on the part of man. Even though man is unjust in committing the murder, God is righteous in permitting it to be committed, for though the person murdered had a civil right to life which should have been respected by his fellow men, he had no moral right to life which he could plead against God. In still other cases, man's death may be caused by lawful violence on the part of man, according to the provision of Genesis 9:6, and in such cases it is not murder but execution. The extermination of the Canaanites by the children of Israel, for example, was not murder but execution, because the persons killed had forfeited all right to life, and because the Israelites were not engaged in an ordinary war of conquest but in a divine program in which they were acting by the specially revealed commands of God for the administration of divine justice (compare Gen. 15:16).

The destruction of the wicked which is prayed for in the Imprecatory Psalms, then, is not murder but execution. These Psalms do not seek the unjust destruction of the life of man; on the contrary they are in essence an appeal to the justice of God and a prayer for that justice to execute sentence upon the wicked. The whole question of the morality of such prayers hinges upon the question of the compatibility of the thing prayed for with the nature of God; and since the prayers were inspired by the Holy Spirit, there need be no doubts on this point. The Imprecatory Psalms, considered as prayers of David and the other Psalmists, must be regarded as free from suspicion of immorality. God is both sovereign and righteous; he possesses the unquestionable right to destroy all evil in his universe; if it is right for God to plan and effect this destruction, then it is also right for the saints to pray for the same.

There remains to be considered the subordinate question whether it is right for Christians to use the Imprecatory Psalms in the worship of God, and if so, in what sense they can make the language of these Psalms their own. It must of course be recognized that inspiration and special revelation ceased with the completion of the documents which form the New Testament. Since that time, the saints have enjoyed illumination by the Spirit of God, but not inspiration or special revelation. It must also be recognized that only by special divine revelation could it be known with absolute certainty that a particular person was a reprobate. Beyond doubt many of those who are very wicked persons today will later in their lives be transformed by the grace of God and become saints. God has not revealed who the elect are. It is possible that a person may know concerning himself that he has committed the sin unto death. It is also possible that Christian may

in certain exceptional cases be able to judge with high decree of probability whether a particular person has or has not committed that unpardonable sin. But man can never attain infallible knowledge except by divine revelation. The Biblical account of the transformation of Saul the persecutor, breathing out threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord (Acts 9:1), into Paul the apostle, who could say "to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain" (Phil. 1:21), should serve as a warning against all positive assertions that even the wickedest opponents and persecutors of Christianity in our own day are certainly reprobates. While the Psalmists in composing the Imprecatory Psalms undoubtedly had particular persons in mind, and while the apostle Peter speaking by the Holy Spirit quoted a portion of Psalm 109 and declared that it referred to Judas Iscariot (Acts 1:16, 20), still it remains true that in no way except by divine revelation could absolute certainty about the reprobation of a particular person be attained. Consequently if the Imprecatory Psalms are regarded as prayers for the ETERNAL doom of wicked persons, no Christian could apply these Psalms to any particular person, or pray other prayers of the nature of the Imprecatory Psalms and offer such petitions to God for the eternal doom of particular persons. To do so would be presumptuous for it would involve a claim to infallibility or special revelation. It is not necessary to state that it would be sinful to pray for the eternal doom of an elect person, even in the case of an elect person who is still living in sin and in rebellion against God. Such prayers can be offered only with reference to the reprobate, never with reference to the elect.

We are, however, by no means warranted in assuming that the Imprecatory Psalms are necessarily prayers for the ETERNAL doom of the wicked. They may also be regarded as prayers for severe temporal judgments upon the enemies of God. In the case of temporal judgments involving the physical death of wicked persons the eternal doom of those persons would inevitably follow, for the opportunity for repentance would be cut off forever. In such cases the Imprecatory Psalms, even if regarded as prayers for eternal doom, would be applicable

because such persons would be the objects of divine reprobation. But the Christian could not offer such petitions to God for the physical death of particular persons, because he does not know which wicked persons, in the secret counsel of God, are reprobates and which are included in the election of grace.

The Christian can, indeed, pray for severe temporal judgments upon the enemies of God, but in doing so he must leave to God the application of such petitions to particular persons because only God can discern between wicked persons who are the objects of reprobation and wicked persons who are included in the election of grace.

It may be concluded, then, that the Christian can use the Imprecatory Psalms in the worship of God, and can offer them as prayers to God, for temporal judgments short of death upon those enemies of God who in the divine secret counsel are elect persons, and for judgments including physical death and issuing in eternal death upon those enemies of God who in his secret and unrevealed counsel are reprobates. Even the prayer for the death of the wicked person who is a reprobate is not only not immoral but is in itself righteous and is, in fact, included in the pattern of prayer commonly called "The Lord's Prayer" which teaches us to pray: "Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done on earth, as it is in heaven" (Matt. 6:10). God's kingdom cannot come without Satan's kingdom being destroyed. God's will cannot be done in earth without the destruction of evil. Evil cannot be destroyed without the destruction of men who are permanently identified with it. Instead of being influenced by the sickly sentimentalism of the present day, Christian people should realize that the glory of God demands the destruction of evil. Instead of being insistent upon the assumed, but really non-existent, rights of men, they should focus their attention upon the rights of God. Instead of being ashamed of the Imprecatory Psalms, and attempting to apologize for them and explain them away, Christian people should glory in them and not hesitate to use them in the public and private exercises of the worship of God.

(The End)

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## *Studies in the Covenant of Grace*

### LESSON 14

#### The Covenant of Grace and the Permanence of the Church

"The purest Churches under heaven are subject both to mixture and error; and some have so degenerated, as to become no Churches of Christ, but synagogues of Satan. Nevertheless, there shall be always a Church on earth, to worship God

according to His will." — The Westminster Confession of Faith, XXV. 5.

"The Church visible, standing in an external relation to Christ in the visible dispensation of the

covenant of grace, comprehends all adults who profess faith in Christ, and give obedience to his law, together with all their children . . . . No association of men on earth is infallible, and there is no certainty that any one particular Church, in any particular place, shall always remain pure. But God has engaged to preserve a visible Church of Christ somewhere upon the earth, until the end of time." — Reformed Presbyterian Testimony, XXI 2, 7.

#### Scripture References:

Gen. 17:7; 22:17, 18; 26:4. God's covenant established with Abraham and his seed forever.

Deut. 4:37; 10:15; 30:6. Isa. 59:21. God has promised that the covenant blessings shall be continued to His people, from one generation to another, forever.

Rom. 9:7, 8. Gal. 3:29. Believers are the true seed of Abraham, regardless of Jewish or Gentile descent.

Matt. 16:18. The powers of evil cannot destroy the Church.

Eph. 3:21. The Church will exist to all eternity.

#### Questions:

##### 1. When and where did the visible Church originate?

The visible Church originated in the Garden of Eden when God entered into covenant with Adam and Eve. Though Adam broke the Covenant of Works, God immediately announced the Covenant of Grace (Gen. 3:15), so that Adam and Eve were restored to a covenant relationship to God. The visible Church is essentially a body of people in religious communion with God by virtue of a covenant established by God Himself, and such a body of people has existed since the time of Adam and Eve. The often-heard assertion that the Church originated on the day of Pentecost is wrong. It confuses the form of the Church with the essence of the Church. The New Testament form of the Church came into being at Pentecost, it is true, but the Church itself had existed since Eden.

##### 2. What is the relation between the Old Testament Israel and the Church?

The relation between the two is one of continuity and spiritual identity. Both are forms of the visible body of the covenant people of God on earth. The Old Testament Israel is the form of this body of covenant people during the period from Abraham to Christ. The New Testament Church is the form of the same body from Christ to the end of the world (and, in its glorified form, the Church will continue to all eternity).

##### 3. How is this truth denied by modern dispensationalism?

As pointed out in the previous lesson, the system of Bible interpretation called "modern dis-

pensationalism" draws a very sharp distinction between Israel and the Church, asserting that these two are distinct and cannot be identified. Dispensationalism teaches that God has TWO covenant peoples on earth today, an earthly people (Israel) and a heavenly people (the Church). It denies the continuity and spiritual identity of the New Testament Church with the Old Testament Israel. We believe that this system is erroneous and that there are good reasons for holding the continuity and spiritual identity of the Christian Church with the Old Testament Israel.

##### 4. How do God's covenant promises guarantee the permanence of the Church?

The promises are part of the Covenant of Grace, and the Covenant of Grace is God's way of accomplishing His eternal counsel or plan for the redemption of His elect. Many Bible promises guarantee the permanence of the Church to the end of time and to all eternity (see the Scripture references at the beginning of this lesson). These promises are anchored to the eternal, unchangeable counsel of God, and they are therefore absolutely reliable. The gates of hell shall not prevail against the Church.

##### 5. How do we know that these promises concern the Church rather than the natural descendants of Abraham?

If it is true that the Christian Church is spiritually identical and continuous with the Old Testament Israel, it would follow from this that promises made to Israel in the Old Testament belong with equal propriety, in their true meaning, to the Christian Church. Moreover the New Testament plainly teaches that the real descendants of Abraham, in God's reckoning, are not necessarily his natural posterity, but those who have the faith that he had (Rom. 9:7, 8; Gal. 3:29). Since believers are the real seed of Abraham, the covenant promises are made to them, regardless of whether they are Jews or Gentiles by physical descent. On the other hand many a physical descendant of Abraham, because of unbelief, is an alien to the covenant promises (Rom. 11:20; Heb. 4:2). Think of Esau, Hophni, Phinehas, Saul, Jeroboam the son of Nebat, Judas Iscariot—all of these were of the "seed of Abraham" in the sense of physical descent, but they were not of the true "seed of Abraham" in the spiritual sense, for they lacked the faith of Abraham, and were strangers to the promises of the Covenant of Grace. The Church is the true Israel of God today, and the promises to Israel belong to the Church. These guarantee the permanence of the Church on earth.

##### 6. Is it possible for particular churches to become apostate?

Yes. Note the statements of the Confession of Faith and R. P. Testimony cited at the beginning of this lesson. By becoming "apostate" is meant departing so seriously from the Christian faith "as to become no Churches of Christ, but syna-

gogues of Satan", that is, false churches. A church may retain the name "Christian" and the outward forms of Christian worship and yet substitute an essentially false message for the Gospel of Jesus Christ (Gal. 1:6, 7). Churches become apostate when they tolerate denial of basic truths of Christianity on the part of their ministers and members, and when such heresy is officially shielded and protected by the government of the denomination, so that those who try to purify the church are censured, silenced or cast out of the denomination. The mere existence of some heresy or form of unbelief in a denomination does not render it apostate. It must be a heresy that is destructive of Christianity, and this heresy must be officially shielded and protected by the government of the Church. When that situation exists, reformation is no longer possible and the church has become apostate.

#### **7. Why can the visible Church as a whole not become apostate?**

Because of the covenant promises of God, which guarantee the continuance of a true visible Church of Christ on earth to the end. We should recall the history of Israel in the Old Testament. Even when the majority became apostate, as in the days of Ahab and Jezebel, there was always a remnant that remained faithful to their covenant God. That remnant was the true Israel, just as Noah and his family constituted the true Church at the time of the flood. The visible Church goes through periods of declension and periods of revival. The Bible even speaks of a great "falling away" or apostasy. But there will always remain a true Christian Church.

#### **8. What grounds do we have for optimism concerning the future of the Church?**

We have the best of grounds for optimism concerning the future of the Church, but our grounds for optimism do not consist of statistical reports nor of the status quo of the Church today. Statistical reports, even when they report many thousands of new members added to various denominations, mean very little. For one thing, large numbers of these people may be merely "joining a church" without being born again or truly converted to Christ. Again, the statistics seldom report how many members ceased to attend and support the churches during the year, and they never report how many ought to have been suspended because of scandal or unfaithfulness, but were not.

Nor is our optimism based on the present condition of the churches, for in general the picture is a very dismal one today. In most of the large denominations it is a picture of modernism, unbelief, formalism, ritualism, preaching of salvation by character, and of gross lukewarmness. Even the small denominations which are more pure and faithful are having a desperately hard struggle to hold their own, not to mention the difficulty of growth in membership.

Our optimism is rather based on the infallible covenant promises of God, by which we are enabled to take the long view and walk by faith in spite of present conditions. The future is as bright as the promises of God. Bible history and Church history help us to take the long view. The covenant people of God have been very low many times before, but God kept His covenant promises and revived them in due time. The present is a time of the ebb tide in spiritual things, but the tide will turn. Even if it does not turn before Christ's Second Coming, it will turn then and the Church will shine and reign in glory to all eternity.

### **LESSON 15**

#### **The Covenant of Grace and the Church's Obligations to its Own Membership**

"Unto this catholic visible Church Christ hath given the ministry, oracles, and ordinances of God, for the gathering and perfecting of the saints, in this life, to the end of the world; and doth by His own presence and Spirit, according to His promise, make them effectual thereunto." — The Westminster Confession of Faith, XXV. 3.

"The end of church fellowship is to exhibit a system of sound principles, to maintain the ordinances of Gospel worship in their purity, to promote holiness, and to prepare the saints for heaven." — The Reformed Presbyterian Testimony, XXII. 3.

#### **Scripture References:**

John 21:15-17. The duty of feeding Christ's sheep and lambs.

Acts 20:28. 1 Pet. 5:2. The duty to feed the Church.

Heb. 13:17. The Church's obligation to watch over the members' souls.

1 Tim. 3:5. The minister's duty to take care of the Church.

1 Tim. 5:20, 21. The duty of impartial church discipline.

#### **Questions:**

**1. In what two spheres does the Church have an obligation to serve?**

(a) The sphere of its own membership. (b) The sphere of those outside of its own membership. It is not correct to say, as some people do, that the Church exists solely to carry on missionary work and evangelism. The Church has a responsibility for those who are already saints, as well as for reaching the unsaved people of the world.

**2. Why is it important that these two functions be kept in balance?**

Both the internal and the external function of the Church are God-given responsibilities, and both are extremely important. If either is slighted or neglected, the results will be serious. A church which pays no attention to the indoctrination and spiritual nurture of its members, and has no message other than an evangelistic message for the unsaved, will cease to be a genuine church and will become merely a rescue mission or Gospel hall. On the other hand, a church that does not carry on or support missions and evangelism will soon stagnate and become self-centered and spiritually sleepy. The internal and external functions of the Church are both included in Christ's "Great Commission". The Church should pay due attention to both, and keep a proper balance between them.

**3. Which is primary, the internal function of the Church or the external function?**

Clearly the internal function of the Church is primary. A man's first duty is to provide for his own house; a church's first responsibility is to provide for the spiritual welfare of its own membership. Really the discharge of the external obligation of the Church depends wholly on the prior adequate discharge of the internal obligation. If the Church itself is not kept sound and strong, it will soon cease to be an effective missionary agency. On the other hand, the proper discharge of the missionary obligation helps to keep the Church itself spiritually alert. But the internal function is the primary one.

**4. How does the doctrine of the Covenant**

**of Grace stress the obligation of the Church to its own membership?**

The doctrine of the Covenant of Grace draws a sharp line of distinction between the Church (the covenant people of God) and the world (those outside the covenant). It emphasizes the primary obligation of the Church to minister to those within the covenant since they are in a special relationship to God. Those within the covenant are to be prepared for heaven, and this task has been committed by Christ to the visible Church.

**5. What are the duties of the Church to its own membership?**

The duties of the Church to its own membership are (a) preaching and teaching them the Word of God; (b) pastoral care; (c) administration of the sacraments; (d) Christian fellowship of the communion of saints; (e) the proper use of church discipline.

**6. How should the Church discharge its responsibility to the children in its membership?**

(See Lesson 10 of this series, in "Blue Banner Faith and Life", January-March 1959, pp. 39-42, especially Q. 8 on pp. 41, 42).

The Church's obligation to its children is the same as its obligation to communicant members, with the following exceptions: (a) the children are not to be admitted to the Lord's Supper; (b) they are to be urged and commanded to make a public profession of faith.

Our standards expressly state that baptized children of the Church are subject to the admonition and judicial discipline of the Church.

## LESSON 16

### The Covenant of Grace and the Importance of Church Ordinances: 1. Choosing the Right Church

"It is the duty of a Christian to pray for the reformation of every part of Christ's Church, to inquire what part adheres most closely to the Scripture plan; and without prejudice join in that communion which is most pure, and in which he may prove most useful in the service of Christ."

"When any Church imposes sinful terms of communion — when the constitution is anti-scriptural — when the administration is corrupt, and attempts at its reformation have proved ineffectual, it is the duty of Christians to separate from it; and if the majority should violate the terms upon which the Church members were united, it is lawful for the minority to testify against the defection, and to walk by the rule of their former attainments." — The Reformed Presbyterian Testimony, XXI. 4, 5.

**Scripture References:**

Jude 3. It is our duty earnestly to contend

for the faith which was once delivered to the saints.

1 John 4:1-6. The Christian must discriminate between true and false doctrines and religious teachers.

2 John 10, 11. It is sinful to maintain religious fellowship with those who depart from the truth.

2 Thess. 3:6. 1 Tim. 6:3-5. It is a Christian duty to withdraw from those who deviate from the truth.

**Questions:**

**1. How does the doctrine of the Covenant of Grace stress the importance of Church ordinances?**

God has chosen the elect to eternal life and the means thereto. These means are chiefly the visible Church and its ordinances, out of which there is no ordinary possibility of salvation (Con-

fession of Faith, XXV. 2). Therefore the Church and its ordinances have a most important function in the working out of the Covenant of Grace. The Reformed theology is opposed to every tendency that minimizes or belittles the importance of the visible Church.

**2. Does it make any difference what denomination we are members of?**

Indeed it does. In the church situation as it exists today the choice of a denomination may mean the choice between biblical Christianity and a counterfeit system of religion. Even where the difference is not so extreme, it is our duty to join the church that maintains the fullest testimony for the truth of God. In every case our church membership determines our real testimony for or against the truth of God.

**3. What texts of Scripture deal with the question of a choice between various denominations?**

No text of the Bible deals with this matter directly, for the question of denominationalism had not yet arisen when the Bible was written. We will not find a ready-made formula for choosing between different denominations. Yet there are texts of Scripture from which we can learn the PRINCIPLES that should determine our decision. All those passages of the Bible that speak of witnessing for the truth, and withdrawing from error, and avoiding teachers of false doctrines, have a bearing on the question of a choice between denominations.

**4. How is the question of denomination often wrongly faced and decided?**

It is often wrongly faced and decided on a basis of convenience, emotional preference, family relationship, etc. These are all to be kept strictly subordinate to the real question, the question of TRUTH versus ERROR. We are to choose the church whose creed we believe to be closest to the truth of the Bible, not the church whose minister has the most pleasing personality.

**5. What is the denominational picture in America today?**

Besides a multitude of independent congregations of varying character, there exist in America today four main types of denominations, namely: (a) Out-and-out modernist denominations, that are virtually Unitarian in their faith; (b) Sleeping denominations managed by an unchallenged modernist leadership in their key positions; (c) Evangelical denominations of varying degree of purity and faithfulness; (d) Churches that witness consistently to the Reformed Faith, in its fullness and purity. Of this fourth category, there exist in the United States several denominations, most of which are quite small. We believe that our Covenanters or Reformed Presbyterian Church, though certainly far from perfection, maintains the fullest and most consistent testimony to the truth.

**6. Should Christian people separate from modernist-dominated denominations?**

They certainly should. Failure to do so is one of the major sins of Christians today. Note the following statement of the Reformed Presbyterian Testimony: "There may be associations of men called Churches, which are founded upon Antichristian principles, and some Churches have degenerated into synagogues of Satan. Such are not to be considered as branches of the true Christian Church" (XXI.6). Note also Section 5, as quoted at the beginning of this lesson.

**7. If a denomination is not modernistic, is it all right for Christians to be members of it?**

Not necessarily. Modernism is extremely unbelievable, but there are many less serious errors which are still false and wrong. Many Christian people hold these errors as truth, but that does not make them true, nor make it right to join a church that maintains them. We are to witness, not only against modernism, but against all kinds of error. It is not enough to find a church that is against modernism. We are to decide which denomination "adheres most closely to the Scripture plan" and then become members of it. It is better, no doubt, to be a member of an evangelical Arminian church than to be a member of a modernistic or Unitarian church; but to support Arminian error is wrong, too. We should not support any form of error.

**8. Must we look for a perfect church to join?**

No, for such does not exist on earth, but only in heaven. It is our duty to seek the purest and most Scriptural church, and then join it. Perfect orthodoxy, like perfect holiness, is found only above. We are not to expect absolute perfection, but we are to seek, join and support the church that is nearest to the truth revealed in the Bible.

**9. How can the present tendency of people to forsake a strict and faithful church and join a more popular one be overcome?**

(a) Not by "letting down the bars" of the strict and faithful church. (b) Not by harsh criticism or stern denunciation of those who decide to forsake the strict church. (c) But certainly something can be done to check this deplorable tendency by a PERMANENT program of sound indoctrination in the Bible principles of truth. It cannot be done by "inspiration"; what is needed is more INFORMATION. It cannot be accomplished by vague preaching on "high ideals" or "the challenge of our time"; what is needed is SYSTEMATIC and CONTINUED preaching of the great truths of the Reformed Faith. (d) Much could also be accomplished, no doubt, by a return to the Scriptural exercise of church discipline so that membership in the church would mean something and it would be evident to all that there is a difference between

faithful and unfaithful churches. This does not mean that the judicial discipline of the Church should be invoked for trifling matters, but it does mean that serious breaches of members' pro-

fession and vows should not be complacently winked at. We should be more concerned about TRUTH and RIGHT than about "how to win friends and influence people".

## LESSON 17

### The Covenant of Grace and the Importance of Church Ordinances: 2. Loyalty to the Church

"The Christian Church, as a society of rational beings, must have explicit terms of communion, to which every member gives his assent. It is not to be expected that all men shall think alike about every object of thought; but Christians cannot co-operate, unless they are of one mind about the general principles of Christianity. Terms of Christian communion should embrace nothing but what is Divine truth, and reject nothing for which the Church has faithfully contended." — The Reformed Presbyterian Testimony, XXII.4.

#### Scripture References:

Amos 3:3. Phil. 1:27; 2:2; 3:16. The duty of unity in church fellowship and loyalty to the truth.

Matt. 15:9. Loyalty to the Church is a duty only in so far as the Church itself is loyal to the truth of God.

Acts 2:42. The early Christians' example of loyalty to the Church.

#### Questions:

**1. What two wrong tendencies exist today with respect to the question of loyalty to the Church?**

(a) In some Fundamentalist circles, there exists a minimizing of the importance of the visible Church that almost amounts to a contempt for the Church and its ordinances. This tendency is abetted by modern dispensationalism which virtually limits the Church on earth to the period between Pentecost and Christ's Second Coming. The idea of many Christians seems to be that the Church is only a means to an end, or a tool for the accomplishment of certain purposes; that it serves a useful purpose, but is not indispensable; and that almost all Christian fellowship and activity can exist equally well without the visible Church as such. This is all wrong. The visible Church is not only a means, but an end in itself.

(b) In Modernist circles, there is a demand for an absolute and excessive loyalty to the Church as an institution, to its human leaders and their man-made program. One large denomination has officially declared that to refuse to obey the mandate of its highest court is a sin of the same kind as a refusal to partake of the Lord's Supper. Thus the word of man is put on a par with the Word of God. The great evil in

all this is, that the churches which demand this totalitarian loyalty of their members have themselves grievously departed from loyalty to the Word of God, so that it becomes a choice between loyalty to the Church and loyalty to God.

#### 2. Is loyalty to the Church good or bad?

This depends wholly on the character and doctrines of the Church. To be loyal to a church which is untrue to the Bible is certainly bad. On the other hand, when a person has conscientiously joined a church which he believes to be true to the Bible, then loyalty to such a church is certainly a Christian duty. Someone once said, "My country, right or wrong!" There exists in some circles a similar attitude toward the Church: "My denomination, right or wrong!" — that is, "I will be loyal and obedient to my denomination no matter whither it leads me, regardless of any higher loyalty to the Word of God". Someone amended the slogan concerning "My country" by saying: "My country right or wrong. If right, to be kept right; if wrong, to be set right!" We should imitate this in our attitude to the Church. We should say: "My denomination, right or wrong! If right, to be kept right; if wrong, to be set right!"

#### 3. What is a Christian's duty with respect to a church which is untrue to the Bible?

If he is not a member, it is his duty to remain separate from such a church. If he is already a member, it is his duty to make every possible effort to bring about such reform as will bring the church into harmony with the teachings of God's Word. This does not refer to every minor detail of faith and life, for complete mutual agreement on every point is not possible on earth; see R.P. Testimony XXII. 4 as cited at the head of this lesson. It concerns radical departures from the teachings of the Bible. Duty requires, in such a case, that the matter be pressed to the final court of appeal (Synod or General Assembly, as the case may be). The Christian who is a member of a church which is untrue to the Bible may never rest complacently until his church is brought into harmony with the Word of God.

#### 4. What is a Christian's duty with respect to a church which cannot be reformed so as to be true to the Bible?

When serious and persistent efforts at reformation have proved to be finally ineffectual, it is a Christian's duty to separate from such a

church. See R.P. Testimony, XXI, Section 5 and also Error 4. No Christian has a right, before God, to remain complacently in the membership of a denomination that is "corrupt or declining". As the Testimony rightly affirms, separation from such a church is a Christian duty. The only condition that can justify continued membership is the continuance of an active, positive attempt at reformation. When it finally becomes clear that reformation cannot be effected, it is the Christian's duty to separate from the denomination.

**5. What is the Christian's duty with respect to the further reformation of a church that is already essentially pure and Scriptural?**

The "status quo" is never good enough; we may never rest satisfied with it. Reformation of the Church is not an act, but a continuous process. Our Covenanter forefathers in Scotland realized this when they called for a "Second Reformation" following the success of the "First Reformation". The church which rests on past attainments and seeks no progress for the future will become a stagnant church. The Christian must always seek the FURTHER and MORE COMPLETE reformation of his church along Scriptural lines. "It is the duty of a Christian to pray for the reformation of every part of

Christ's Church" (Reformed Presbyterian Testimony, XXI.4). If it is the duty of a Christian to pray for the reformation of EVERY part of Christ's Church, this must include HIS OWN denomination as well as others, and it certainly implies working for it as well as praying for it. There is no point on earth at which the progressive reformation of the Church can be halted with the decree "Thus far but no farther". Like the sanctification of the individual, the reformation of the Church is to be continued progressively until the end of its stay in this world.

**6. How does the doctrine of the Covenant of Grace tend to strengthen loyalty to the Church?**

The Bible teaches that the visible Church is a divine institution which is the appointed sphere within which the benefits of the Covenant of Grace are bestowed on the elect of God. Because of its character as a divine institution and the God-ordained sphere of saving power in the Covenant of Grace, the visible Church is most important, and the doctrine of the Covenant of Grace emphasizes its importance. It shows the great importance of holding membership in a pure and Scriptural church, and the importance of loyalty to the Church because it is a divine institution.

## LESSON 18

### The Covenant of Grace and the Importance of Church Ordinances: 3. The Preaching of the Word

"The Spirit of God maketh the reading, but especially the preaching of the Word, an effectual means of enlightening, convincing, and humbling sinners; of driving them out of themselves, and drawing them unto Christ; of conforming them to his image, and subduing them to his will; of strengthening them against temptations and corruptions; of building them up in grace, and establishing their hearts in holiness and comfort through faith unto salvation." — The Larger Catechism, 155.

**Scripture References:**

Psalms 19:7; 119:50, 130. The Word a means of grace in the conversion of sinners.

2 Tim. 3:15-17. James 1:21. 1 Pet. 2:2. The Word used by God as a means to the salvation of sinners.

1 Tim. 5:17. 2 Tim. 4:2. Tit. 1:9. The importance of preaching the Word.

**Questions:**

**1. What wrong attitudes toward the preaching of the Word should be avoided?**

(a) We should avoid underrating it, as the mystics do, who belittle the importance of preaching and the Bible, and depend more on their so-

called "inner light", their feelings, inner impulses, "hunches", "guidance", and so forth.

(b) We should avoid overrating it, as some do who assert that the Word possesses an inherent power, apart from the work of the Holy Spirit.

**2. What is the true function of the preaching of the Word in the salvation of the elect?**

The preaching of the Word is an appointed means, honored and used by the Holy Spirit to the salvation of the elect, and in all ordinary cases, it is the indispensable means. The exceptions are infants, the insane, and the mentally deficient. Of course some are brought to salvation by reading the Word in printed form, who have not heard the Word preached. But none are saved apart from THE WORD, with the exceptions noted above.

**3. How does the doctrine of the Covenant of Grace emphasize the importance of the preaching of the Word?**

It shows that the preaching of the Word is a covenant ordinance, for the accomplishment of the covenanted salvation of the elect. It is the God-ordained means by which the covenant institution, the Church, is built up, both in numbers and in character.

**4. What does the doctrine of the Covenant**

**of Grace imply concerning our duty in connection with the preaching of the Word?**

(a) Regular attendance upon preaching. (b) Bringing up our children in the habit of attendance upon preaching from their infancy. (c) Reverent attention during preaching. (d) Recognition of the official character of preaching by an ordained minister, in distinction from voluntary exhorting by an unordained person.

**5. What wrong tendencies are noticeable at the present time with respect to the preaching of the Word?**

(a) In some churches, the encroachments of ritual upon the time for the sermon; likewise, the frequent observance of special days (Mother's Day, Father's Day, Red Cross Day, etc.), which makes it impossible to do justice to the great truths of the Bible. (b) The tendency to supplant preaching by motion pictures, or other "entertaining" features, in some denominations. (c) The frequent turning over the time of the preaching service to young people's groups and

representatives or promoters of various organizations and causes (often worthy enough in themselves, but not a proper substitute for the regular preaching of the Word of God).

**6. What kind of preaching is most needed today?**

Doctrinal preaching, because many church members, especially in the young people's and young adults' age groups, are grossly ignorant of the great truths of the Reformed Faith. Doctrinal preaching is needed, not for a few weeks or a year, but PERMANENTLY, year after year, until the end of the world. After all, Christianity is first of all a body of truth. Not all sermons need be formally doctrinal, of course. But the crying need of the hour is not for more "inspiration", but for more INFORMATION. People's capacity to receive doctrinal instruction has become so weakened that ministers must go back to the A.B.C.'s and lay "line upon line" and "Precept upon precept" patiently, being careful not to dispense too heavy doses at one time.

## LESSON 19

### The Covenant of Grace and the Importance of Church Ordinances: 4. The Sacraments

"Sacraments are holy signs and seals of the covenant of grace, immediately instituted by God, to represent Christ and His benefits: and to confirm our interest in Him; as also, to put a visible difference between those that belong unto the Church, and the rest of the world; and solemnly to engage them to the service of God in Christ, according to His Word." — The Westminster Confession of Faith, XXVII. 1.

**Scripture References:**

Rom. 4:11. Gen. 17:7, 10. Matt. 28:19. 1 Cor. 11:23. The sacraments are signs and seals of the Covenant of Grace.

Ex. 12:48. Gen. 34:14. 1 Cor. 10:16, 21. The sacraments are intended to put a visible difference between the covenant people of God and the rest of the world.

**Questions:**

**1. What is the relation of the sacraments to the Covenant of Grace?**

They are signs and seals of the Covenant of Grace. Under the Old Testament circumcision and the passover were the sacraments that constituted special signs and seals of the covenant relationship to God. Under the New Testament Baptism and the Lord's Supper have taken the place of the Old Testament sacraments. The essential meaning is still the same as under the Old Testament. The Covenant is one and the same; only the administration of it has changed to the New Testament form.

**2. What is meant by saying that the sacraments are church ordinances?**

Because they are signs and seals of the Covenant of Grace, the sacraments are church ordinances, committed for their administration to the visible Church, for the visible Church is the institution and sphere of the covenant. Therefore the sacraments are to be administered only by lawful ministers of the Church, who are the Church's organs and Christ's servants in this administration.

**3. What should we think about private administration of the sacraments?**

Private administration of the sacraments is NEVER proper. The sacraments are church ordinances, not a private privilege of individuals. They should NEVER be administered privately, nor otherwise than in the congregation of believers. Not only is private administration of the sacraments wrong — administration in any other assembly than the congregation of believers under lawful officers is improper. For example, it is improper to administer Baptism in a private home with only family and relatives present; even though they may all be believers, still it is not a church congregation. Similarly, it is improper to administer the Lord's Supper in a missionary convention, or in a gathering of the students and professors of a Christian college. The sacraments pertain to the Church itself, not to any and every gathering of Christian people. (In exceptional cases, such as illness, or the baptism of a person serving a prison sentence, a service may properly be held, and the sacraments administered, with only the minister and elders and a few other members present, but it should never be done by a minister alone).

**4. Is it proper to administer Baptism and**

### the Lord's Supper apart from the preaching of the Word?

Certainly not. In the Roman Catholic system, sacraments have virtually usurped the place of preaching. The Reformed theology teaches, in harmony with the Bible, that preaching is central and more important than sacraments (1 Cor. 1:17, 18). The divorcement between the Word and the sacraments, and the frequent administration of the sacraments apart from the preaching of the Word, became prevalent in the middle ages, and was one of the corruptions of the Church of Rome that called for reformation.

The Reformers of the Calvinistic Reformation rightly regarded the pulpit as more central in Christian worship than the communion table, and assigned it the place of prominence in church sanctuaries. But today in some Protestant denominations we see the tendency to administer the sacraments apart from the preaching of the Word reappearing and gaining ground. But the Reformers were right. We should follow in their train, and insist that the sacraments be never administered apart from the preaching of the Word. The sacraments do not work automatically, or "ex opere operato" as Rome wrongly teaches; their efficacy is dependent on FAITH, and faith is dependent on THE PREACHING OF THE WORD.

### 5. How do the sacraments mark the distinction between the covenant people of God and the World?

As administered in some churches, the sacraments cannot mark any such distinction, for children are baptized regardless of whether or not the parents are church members in good standing and all who wish to partake are admitted to the

Lord's Supper with no questions asked. This breaks down the line of demarcation between the Church and the world.

But where the sacraments are properly limited to the covenant people, that is, to those in good standing as members of the visible Church and (in the case of Baptism) to their infant children, they serve as a badge or emblem of membership in the covenant society of the people of God. ONLY those who make a credible profession of faith in Christ and obedience to Him, and their infant children, are to be baptized; ONLY those who profess personal faith in Christ and obedience to Him, and who have been examined as to their knowledge and their purpose to live godly in Christ Jesus, are to be admitted to the Lord's Supper. (Concerning the question of open, close and restricted communion, see "Blue Banner Faith and Life", 1949, pp. 31-33).

### 6. What form of covenant-breaking is common among Christian people today?

Neglect of the sacraments of Baptism and the Lord's Supper. Under the Old Testament, neglect of the signs and seals of the covenant was pronounced covenant-breaking by God (Gen. 17:14; Num. 9:13). We may rightly infer that neglect of Baptism and the Lord's Supper is also regarded by God as covenant-breaking, a very heinous sin. Those who believe that Infant Baptism is Scriptural, and yet carelessly neglect or long postpone the Baptism of their children, are guilty of this sin; and so are those who remain absent from the Lord's Supper without necessary reasons. But God is gracious and ready to forgive even such careless disregard of the signs and seals of the Covenant of Grace when the guilty person repents and confesses his sin.

## LESSON 20

### The Covenant of Grace and the Importance of Church Ordinances: 5. Church Discipline

"Church censures are necessary, for the reclaiming and gaining of offending brethren, for deterring of others from the like offences, for purging out of the leaven which might infect the whole lump, for vindicating the honour of Christ, and the holy profession of the Gospel and for preventing the wrath of God, which might justly fall upon the Church, if they should suffer His covenant and the seals thereof to be profaned by notorious and obstinate offenders."

"For the better attaining of these ends, the officers of the Church are to proceed by admonition; suspension from the sacrament of the Lord's Supper for a season; and by excommunication from the Church; according to the nature of the crime, and demerit of the person." — The Westminster Confession of Faith, XXX. 3, 4.

#### Scripture References:

1 Cor. 5:1-13. The Church at Corinth di-

rected to exclude an ungodly person from membership.

1 Tim. 5:20, 21. Church discipline to be exercised according to righteousness and without partiality.

Matt. 18:17. A person who refuses to submit to the lawful discipline of the Church is to be regarded as a non-Christian.

1 Cor. 5:5. 1 Tim. 1:20. An excommunicated person is delivered unto Satan.

Tit. 3:10, 11. A heretic (or factious person), after due admonition, is to be excluded from the Church.

#### Questions:

1. What is the relation of the Covenant of Grace to church discipline?

The Covenant of Grace requires that there be a clear distinction and separation between the covenant people of God and the general population of the world. It requires that the covenant institution, the church, be kept pure and holy, and not profaned by those who propagate false doctrines or live scandalous lives. This can be accomplished only by church discipline, that is, by the official, authoritative administration of church censures according to the appointment of Christ.

## 2. What are the ends of church discipline?

(a) Medicinal, to bring about, if possible, the reformation of the offending member. (b) Surgical. Where the reformation of the offending member proves finally to be impossible, he must be excluded from the membership of the Church, in order that the whole body may not be affected by his sin.

## 3. What is the present status of church discipline in most denominations of the Presbyterian and Reformed family?

In most Presbyterian and Reformed denominations church discipline has almost ceased to exist except in the most flagrant cases of gross immorality. Many church members today regard church discipline as merely a relic of the past, a peculiar, narrow-minded custom of a bigoted past when the churches were terribly strict. Many church members of today will not tolerate any suggestion of church discipline, but will ask for their certificates and leave their denomination if there is a likelihood of it.

## 4. Can there be a real spiritual revival without a return to Scriptural church discipline?

Certainly there cannot. Note the solemn assertion of the Reformed Presbyterian Testimony (XXXI, 3, 4):

"The Lord Jesus Christ hath instituted Church DISCIPLINE, in order to remove scandals, and prevent their unhappy effects; and no Church can, without the faithful and spiritual application of it, hope for his countenance and blessing.

"The impartial and prudent exercise of Church discipline is useful for vindicating the honor of Jesus Christ, maintaining the dignity of his ordinances, preserving the purity of the Church, averting the judgments of God, and for

the benefit of the offender himself, that by the administration of this ordinance of Christ, through grace, he may be humbled and recovered."

## 5. Whose duty is it to safeguard the soundness and purity of the Church?

Too often the tendency is to leave all such matters to the Session, that is, the minister and elders. While the pastor and elders have a special official responsibility for guarding the soundness and purity of the Church, they are not solely responsible for it. Every member of the Church has a responsibility. Members should admonish one another as occasion may require (Col. 3:16; Rom. 15:14; 2 Thess. 3:6, 14, 15; Gal. 6:1; Matt. 13:15, 16). The shirking of this responsibility, in the spirit of "Am I my brother's keeper?" is the cause of much corruption in the Church. It is made even worse when those who should admonish some wayward church member, not only fail to do so, but gossip about him to others instead.

## 6. Should church members report serious scandals to the Church Session?

Certainly they should. If it is the solemn duty of the Session to adjudicate such matters, it is also the solemn duty of other members to bear witness as occasion may require. One reason for the almost complete breakdown of church discipline today is the extreme unwillingness of most church members to testify before the Session of their congregation. This is a great evil and is very unfair to the pastor and elders. The members have elected the pastor and elders and have promised to support them in the lawful discharge of their duties. The "know-nothing", "do-nothing", "don't-ask-me" attitude makes it difficult or impossible for a church Session to act according to righteousness.

## 7. Are the baptized children of the Church who have not yet made a public profession of faith, subject to the censures of church discipline?

Yes. The Book of Discipline of the Reformed Presbyterian Church, I, 8, states: "The authority and discipline of the church extends to all members, irrespective of rank and station in life. Children who are baptized members, whether or not they have made their own profession of faith, are under the care of the church and subject to its discipline" (p. 281).

## LESSON 21

### The Covenant of Grace and the Importance of Church Ordinances: 6. Church Government

"The Lord Jesus, as King and Head of His Church, hath therein appointed a government, in the hand of Church officers, distinct from the civil magistrate." — The Westminster Confession of Faith, XXX, 1.

"For the better government, and further edification of the Church, there ought to be such

assemblies as are commonly called synods or councils." — The Westminster Confession of Faith, XXXI, 1.

"The government of the Church is Presbyterian: Ministers or teaching Elders are the highest officers, and among these there is a perfect parity of power: with teaching Elders are

associated, in the exercise of ecclesiastical government, other Elders who only rule. These ministers and ruling Elders meet in courts, congregational sessions, presbyteries, and synods, in regular subordination, the one to the other: to these courts Christ has given the power of governing the Church and ordaining officers, and this power is entirely ministerial and subordinate to his law. The deacon has no power except about the temporalities of the Church." — The Reformed Presbyterian Testimony, XXIII. 3.

#### Scripture References:

Isa. 9:6, 7. Luke 1:32, 33. Christ is King forever over His covenant people, which implies a government in the Church under Christ, distinct from the civil magistrate.

1 Tim. 5:17. 1 Thess. 5:12. Acts 20:17, 28. Heb. 13:7, 17, 24. 1 Cor. 12:28. Christ has appointed a government of the Church by elders.

1 Tim. 4:14. The elders are to govern the Church jointly, as a court or "presbytery".

Acts 15:2, 6, 22, 23. A court governing a particular part of the Church is subject to the jurisdiction of a court governing several such parts or governing the whole Church.

#### Questions:

##### 1. What is the relation of the doctrine of the Covenant of Grace to the subject of church government?

The doctrine of the Covenant of Grace requires that the visible Church maintain its own orthodoxy, integrity and holiness over against the world. As all the saints are included in one and the same Covenant of Grace, it implies a responsibility of each congregation for the purity of the other congregations and of the Church as a whole. Therefore no congregation can rightly stand aloof from other congregations and their concerns. For the proper discharge of the obligation to other congregations, there must be a church government having jurisdiction over all the congregations.

Ideally, this would be a government having jurisdiction over all Christian congregations in a particular country, or all in the world. But the rise of denominationalism has prevented this, and the nearest approach that is possible at the present time is a government having jurisdiction over all the congregations of a particular denomination.

The Church is an organism, not merely a collection of individual congregations and members. It has a unified corporate life. This involves the necessity for a church government having jurisdiction over the whole body.

##### 2. What is the prevalent attitude toward the question of church government today?

The prevalent attitude today in American Protestantism is that the Bible does not require any specific form of church government, that church government is a matter of expediency or human preference, and that any form is proper if the majority of the church favors it.

There is also observable today a tremendous swing toward independentism — the idea that there is to be no authoritative church government having jurisdiction over more than a single congregation. Where this conception prevails, all responsibility for the condition of other congregations and for the Church as a whole is renounced.

##### 3. In contrast to these attitudes, what do we believe concerning church government?

(a) We believe that the Bible requires authoritative church government having jurisdiction over all the congregations of a denomination. (b) We believe that the FORM of church government is important, and that it has been appointed in the Bible and not left to human prudence to determine. (c) Of the various historical forms of church government, we believe that the PRESBYTERIAN form, or government by elders in a series of graded courts, has the sanction of the Scriptures.

##### 4. What are the essential elements of the Presbyterian form of church government?

(a) The Church is to be governed by elders, of which there are two kinds: elders which only rule (called "ruling elders"), and elders which both rule and preach (called "preaching elders", "pastors", or "ministers").

(b) The elders are to govern the Church in a series of graded courts, as follows: Session or Consistory, having jurisdiction over a single congregation; Presbytery or Classis, having jurisdiction over a number of congregations; Synod, having jurisdiction over a number of presbyteries or classes; General Synod or General Assembly, having jurisdiction over the entire denomination.

(c) All the officers of a particular congregation, including the pastor, are to be elected by the members of that congregation, but they receive their commission and authority from Christ, the Head of the Church.

(d) Ruling power in the Church is always to be exercised by a group of elders acting jointly, never by a single individual (minister or ruling elder) acting alone.

Of course we do not profess to find every detail of the Presbyterian system of church government in the Bible. But we believe that the framework or essential structure of the system, as outlined above, is set forth in the Bible, especially in the example of the apostolic Church and in the teaching of the New Testament Epistles.

##### 5. What attitude should we, as members

of the covenant society, have toward the government of the Church?

We should regard the government of the Church seriously, recognize its great importance, strive to keep it soundly Scriptural and to prevent all wrong tendencies, and support church officers in the lawful discharge of their duties. In addition, those who have been chosen to church office should regard their office as a sacred trust, for which they must give answer to God.

## 6. What is the nature of the office of deacon?

The deacon is not a ruling or governing officer, but an administrative one. His province is the temporal side of the Church's affairs, including the business administration of the Church, collection and handling of offerings, and, in cases of need, ministering in the name of the Church to the relief of members. The deacons, like the elders, are to act jointly in a board, and the board of deacons is responsible to the Session and congregation for its acts.

## LESSON 22

### The Covenant of Grace and the Church's Obligations of the World: 1. Evangelism

"The Gospel is the Revelation, which God has given to man, of the plan of salvation by a Redeemer; this is glad tidings worthy of all acceptance by sinners.

"Preaching the Gospel consists in the offer of salvation through Christ to sinners, accompanied with such an explanation of the various parts of God's word as may tend to persuade men to receive Christ as a Saviour, and to live and walk in him.

"The Gospel offer is not a declaration to any individual sinner, that his particular name is in the book of life; it is not immediately founded upon the decree of election, but upon the commandment of God, authorizing the minister of the Gospel to offer Christ and all his benefits to sinners, as such, however aggravated their crimes may have been, accompanied with information that every one who accepts the offer shall be saved.

"Preaching the Gospel does not consist in promising salvation to all who hear it, or in affirming that Christ has redeemed each of them; but in a free and full offer of a Saviour to every individual, declaring that he who believeth shall be saved, and he who believeth not shall be damned; there is no inconsistency between the doctrine of particular redemption and the unlimited Gospel offer." — The Reformed Presbyterian Testimony, XI. 1, 2, 3, 4.

#### Scripture References:

Rom. 1:15-17. The preaching of the Gospel is God's appointed way of saving the elect, both Jews and Gentiles.

2 Cor. 5:18-20. The Gospel message announces Christ's redemption, and urges sinners to be reconciled to God.

Isa. 55:3. Those who accept the Gospel are brought into a covenant relation to God.

Acts 2:38-40. The Gospel promises free salvation to all who repent and believe on Christ.

John 10:15, 26-28. Preaching the Gospel does

not mean proclaiming that Christ has redeemed every individual human being. The Gospel is to be offered freely to all, but only the elect, for whom Christ, died, will accept the offer.

#### Questions:

#### 1. What is the literal meaning of the word "evangelism"?

The Greek word "evangel" means "good news" or "good message". Thus "evangelism" means literally "good message teaching". "Evangelization" means the carrying on of a program or work of evangelism. The words "evangelistic" and "evangelical" are sometimes confused. "Evangelistic" means "pertaining to evangelism, or preaching the Gospel to the unsaved"; in America, at least, the term "evangelical" is used to describe the character and content of a person's faith. A person is "evangelical" if he believes in salvation by free grace through the substitutionary atonement of Christ; a person is "evangelistic" if he is concerned about the proclamation of the Gospel to the unsaved.

#### 2. How is the term "evangelism" sometimes misused?

In recent years, members of "liberal" churches have applied the term "evangelism" to various forms of activity which are quite foreign to the true meaning of the term. (a) It is applied to church membership campaigns in which almost the whole stress is laid on joining some church, while little or nothing is said about sin, repentance, and salvation by the blood of Christ. (b) By a strange abuse of words, "evangelism" is being applied to certain foreign missionary activities which certainly are not preaching of the Gospel, but at best only adjuncts or by-products of the Gospel. Thus we read of "agricultural evangelism", "industrial evangelism", and the like. The idea is, apparently, that these various lines of activity are intended to influence people for good. There may be such a thing as evangelism accompanied by agricultural or industrial training. But evangelism is evangelism; it is not a quality of human activities, but the proclama-

tion of a definite message about God and the way of His salvation.

### **3. Is evangelism the sole purpose and task of the Church?**

No. The Church has a double obligation in its service to God. It has an obligation to its own membership and it has an obligation to the world, or the general public. These two must be kept in balance. If either of them is disregarded or neglected, evil results will follow.

Some people think that evangelism and missions are the sole purpose and function of the Church. This is untrue. Note the sound statement of the Reformed Presbyterian Testimony, XXII.3: "The end of church fellowship is to exhibit a system of sound principles, to maintain the ordinances of Gospel worship in their purity, to promote holiness, and to prepare the saints for heaven." There are some who seem to think that more evangelism is the answer to all problems and the remedy for all the Church's ills. But this is an untrue and unbalanced view of the matter. Just as a man's first obligation is to provide for his own family, so the Church's first obligation is to maintain its own soundness and integrity. Really, the future of evangelism and missions depends on keeping the Church itself sound and pure. To branch out into wide fields of external activity while neglecting sound preaching, doctrinal instruction and Christian nurture of the Church's own covenant children and youth, and Biblical church discipline, is a great mistake and will prove disastrous in the end. First of all we must make sure that the root and trunk of the tree are sound and remain so.

### **4. What is the relation of the Covenant of Grace to evangelism?**

Evangelism is God's way to bring about the salvation of the elect, which is guaranteed by the Covenant of Grace. This includes, of course, all preaching of the Gospel of Christ, whether addressed to the Church or to those outside of the visible Church, whether at home or abroad. The Gospel is to be proclaimed to all human beings, and in God's appointed time the elect will obey the Gospel command and come to Christ and be saved. "Every one of God's elect is, in the time appointed in the council of peace, apprehended of Christ by his Spirit, as one of his redeemed children; is regenerated, and thereby enabled to embrace the Saviour; and thus through faith becomes one with Christ in the covenant of grace, and acknowledging Jesus as his head and representative, is justified from all his sins" (Reformed Presbyterian Testimony, XIV.2).

### **5. What is the best method of evangelism?**

Simple methods are best, and sometimes methods need to be changed or improved, but the stress should never be on the method. The stress

should be on the CONTENT of evangelism — on the medicine itself, not on the package it is put up in. We are to stress the MESSAGE rather than the method. Our American worship of "methods" amounts almost to a form of idolatry. The important thing is that the real, Biblical message be preached, not the particular method by which it is accomplished (Phil. 1:15-18). Of course some methods are definitely unscriptural and should be avoided.

### **6. What special emphasis should be included in the message of evangelism is a country which has long known the light of the Gospel, such as America?**

Those who hear the Gospel must be told that they are covenant-breakers. Not only are all human beings guilty of Adam's breach of the Covenant of Works (for Adam acted as their representative), but in America the great majority of non-Christians are first, second or third generation breakers of the Covenant of Grace. That is, their parents, grandparents, or great-grandparents were Christian believers. Such covenant-breakers are even more guilty before God than the heathen in the heart of Africa who have never seen a Bible nor heard the name of Jesus Christ. Covenant-breakers are under an added obligation to repent and return to the covenant God of their fathers, and if they do not do so, they will to all eternity suffer added ruin, remorse and loss in hell.

### **7. Is there a contradiction between Christ's redemption, which is limited to the elect, and the Gospel offer, which is addressed to all mankind?**

No. There is involved in this a paradox, or apparent contradiction, but there is no real contradiction, even though human reason cannot solve the problem. It is the strength and glory of the Reformed theology that it does not attempt to cut the knot and solve such paradoxes by human reason. The Bible teaches that Christ died to redeem the elect, and the elect only; the Bible also teaches that the Gospel is to be proclaimed to all mankind. Our human minds cannot fully harmonize these two teachings, yet we know that they are both true, because both are taught in the Bible.

### **8. In evangelism, is it proper to tell unsaved sinners: "Christ died for you"?**

No. Note the statement of the Reformed Presbyterian Testimony, XI.4, quoted at the head of this lesson. Christ died for the elect, not for all men individually. We have no way of knowing whether Christ died for a particular individual until that person actually comes to Christ in repentance and faith. We should preach that Christ died to save sinners and that all men are commanded to repent and believe on Christ and that those who do repent and believe will be saved.

## LESSON 23

**The Covenant of Grace and the Church's Obligation to the World: 2. Missions**

"In the second petition, (which is, 'Thy kingdom come'), acknowledging ourselves and all mankind to be by nature under the dominion of sin and Satan, we pray that the kingdom of sin and Satan may be destroyed, the gospel propagated throughout the world, the Jews called, the fulness of the Gentiles brought in . . ." — The Larger Catechism, 191.

**Scripture References:**

Gen. 12:3, 18:8. The world-wide redemptive purpose of the Covenant of Grace as announced to Abraham.

Psalms 2:8; Isa. 11:10; 42:6; 60:3; 66:18-21. The Gentile nations to be Christ's inheritance and to receive salvation in Him.

Matt. 28:18-20. Christ's Great Commission to teach all nations.

Acts 9:15; 11:18; 13:46, 47; 15:3, 7, 12-18; 22:21; 28:28. It is God's command that the covenant salvation be preached to all nations.

Rom. 11:25-27. All of God's elect of Israel and of the Gentiles shall be brought to salvation in Christ.

**Questions:****1. How is the Covenant of Grace the basis of the Christian missionary enterprise?**

When God established His covenant with Abraham, it was in order that all the nations of the earth should be blessed in him. Thus the covenant salvation was to be for all nations. During the period of preparation, from Abraham to Christ, the Covenant of Grace was limited to the people of Israel. This was not for the sole benefit of Israel, but for the ultimate benefit of the Gentiles. It was not intended to be a permanent limitation, but only a temporary restriction of the covenant to the narrow channel of Israel in order that in due time it might overflow to all the nations of the world.

The elect of God are from every nation and race on earth (Rev. 7:9). Because God has chosen His elect unto salvation from all nations, the Gospel of salvation must be preached to the people of all nations. Both the eternal decree of election, and the preaching of the Gospel to all nations, are included in the great plan of God. Rom. 10:13-15.

**2. How is the doctrine of the Covenant of Grace a strong incentive to carry on missionary work?**

The doctrine of the Covenant of Grace is a strong incentive to carry on missionary work be-

cause the Covenant of Grace guarantees the salvation of the elect. God has His elect in every part of the world, and they will certainly be saved through the preaching of the Gospel. Thus true missionary work cannot fail of its God-intended purpose. The missionary is not engaged in a useless task, nor a task the success of which is doubtful or uncertain. His success is as sure as the promises of God. This does not mean that churches and missionaries do not sometimes fail to do their duty; it means that when they do their duty, their labor is never in vain in the Lord (1 Cor. 15:58).

**3. Why should the doctrine of the Covenant of Grace be a comfort to the Church concerning the future of the fruits of missionary work?**

The future of the fruits of missionary work is guaranteed by God's faithfulness in the Covenant of Grace. The permanent endurance of the Church established through the labors of missionaries does not depend upon the toleration extended by earthly kings and rulers, but upon the promises of God in the Covenant of Grace.

Persecution cannot really destroy the fruits of missionary work. The outward form of the Church may be affected for a time; the Church may even be driven "underground" and believers reduced to worshipping God "in deserts, and in mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth" (Heb. 11:38), as happened, by the providence of God, to the faithful Covenanters in Scotland. But such things do not really liquidate the Church. It is the bush that ever burns, yet is not consumed, for God is in the bush.

At the present day when we see the lights going out almost all over Asia, especially in the great country of China where the people of God have invested so much "blood and sweat and tears", we should realize that God is still on the throne of the universe and His covenant cannot fail. God will keep His covenant with His Church. It will endure, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. The truth of God, and the covenant salvation, will pass down from parents to children, generation to generation, in multitudes of instances, in spite of the devil and all his works.

**4. Is the purpose of missions limited to the salvation of individuals?**

No. The real purpose of the missionary enterprise, according to the Bible, is the salvation of the human race as a whole. This is shown by many texts of Scripture, such as Gen. 3:15; Psalm 65:2; 67:7; Isa. 3-5; John 4:42; 12:32; 1 John 2:2. This of course does not imply that every individual is to be saved. It does not imply any-

thing concerning the number of the saved in proportion to the number of the finally lost, although the Bible teaches that the elect from all nations constitute "a great multitude" which no man could number" (Rev. 7:9). When the Bible calls Christ "the Saviour of the world" and teaches us that the Covenant of Grace will bring about the salvation of the world, or of the human race as a whole, this means that the kingdom of God to all eternity, will include THE HUMAN RACE AS AN ORGANISM UNDER CHRIST ITS HEAD. The redeemed will constitute the

real, abiding humanity. The reprobate, who are eternally lost, are like branches pruned off a tree; the elect are like branches living and growing on the tree; the human race is the tree. God's great purpose, in the Covenant of Grace, is the salvation of humanity as an organic whole, a purpose which cannot fail. We should not think of humanity as a tree destined to be cut down and burned, while a few branches are taken away and saved. It is the other way around — part of the branches are cut off and burned, but the tree itself, as an organism, is to live on.

## LESSON 24

### The Covenant of Grace and the Church's Obligations to the World: 3. Social Applications of Christianity

"Man's chief end is to glorify God, and to enjoy him for ever." — The Shorter Catechism, 1.

"The preface to the ten commandments is contained in these words, 'I am the Lord thy God, which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage'. Wherein God manifesteth his sovereignty, as being Jehovah, the eternal, immutable, and almighty God; having his being in and of himself, and giving being to all his words and works: and that he is a God in covenant, as with Israel of old, so with all his people; who, as he brought them out of their bondage in Egypt, so he delivereth us from our spiritual thralldom: and that therefore we are bound to take him for our God alone, and to keep all his commandments." — The Larger Catechism, 101.

"The sum of the ten commandments is, to love the Lord our God, with all our heart, with all our soul, with all our strength, and with all our mind; and our neighbor as ourselves." The Shorter Catechism, 42.

#### Scripture References:

1 Cor. 10:31. Rom. 11:36. It is our duty to glorify God in every part of our life.

Luke 1:69-75. Being delivered from the kingdom of evil by God's Covenant of Grace, we are bound to glorify Him in all our life.

1 Pet. 1:15-21. The recipients of redemption are bound to live a God-glorifying life.

Lev. 18:30; 19:37. The covenant relation to God implies an obligation to live unto the glory of God.

#### Questions:

**1. Why are Christian people bound to glorify God by their life?**

For two reasons: creation and redemption. They have a NATURAL obligation to God (by

creation), and a COVENANT obligation to God (by redemption). Because God is our God and Redeemer, because He has brought us out of the land of Egypt and the house of bondage — redeemed us from the kingdom of evil — therefore we are bound to keep all His commandments, and live a God-glorifying life.

**2. What mistake do Christian people often make concerning their obligation to live a God-glorifying life?**

Christian people often fail to realize that God must be honored and glorified in ALL parts and areas of their life. It is common tendency, even among earnest Christian people, to think of their duty to glorify God too narrowly, limiting this obligation to certain special spheres of life and leaving others outside of it. Some tend to limit their service to God to the ordinances of religious worship, prayer, Bible reading, giving some money to home and foreign missions, and perhaps doing some personal or public evangelistic work from time to time, while they never think of their business, recreation, political life and social life in relation to God's Kingdom. Some indeed regard the whole realm of politics as separate from the duty to glorify God, saying that "Religion and politics will not mix". Others can see no connection between their Christian faith and the kind of schools their children attend. Still others fail to see any bearing of Christianity on the arts and sciences. This too-narrow individualism is certainly wrong. We are to glorify God — and to AIM at glorifying God — all along the line, in every sphere of life.

**3. What is the bearing of the doctrine of the Covenant of Grace on the social problems of our time?**

The doctrine of the Covenant of Grace implies that the Christian must glorify God in all departments of life. This includes all phases of the Christian's relation to human society. Therefore the Christian is under obligation to ap-

ply the teachings of the Bible to the social problems of the day. Especially the Church, through the preaching and teaching of its ministers and the acts of its assemblies, must endeavor to apply the Word of God to social problems.

**4. Why is it very difficult to apply the Word of God to present-day social problems?**

Because the social problems of the present day are mostly different from those of Bible times, and therefore we do not find ready-made solutions of these problems in the Bible. For instance, the problems of relations between capital and labor in this industrial age are quite different from, and much more complicated than, any problems of employer and employee in Bible times. We cannot solve today's social problems by merely quoting a text or two. We must search the Scriptures patiently for the PRINCIPLES that bear on social problems, and then apply these principles patiently and conscientiously to the social problems of our day.

**5. What special danger is involved in attempting to apply the principles of the Bible to today's social problems?**

The danger that we may read our own ideas or prejudices into the Bible, and then draw conclusions which are not really Scriptural but are merely our own notions. The contradictory conclusions which many Christians come to with respect to the teaching of the Bible on temperance, socialism, pacifism, the race problem, the amusement question, etc., show that not everything which is called Christian teaching is really such. Where two people reach contradictory conclusions, at least one of them must be mis-

taken. Some people are so sure that war is always wrong, for example, that they inevitably interpret the Bible in harmony with this idea, and discount or explain away all the Scripture passages that can be adduced on the other side of the question. Others take it for granted that some form of socialism must be the will of God, and read the Bible accordingly. Some even go so far as to claim that Christianity requires all national sovereignties to be pooled in a single world government, and seem unable to comprehend the objections to such a scheme which their fellow-Christians point out.

**6. Is not the application of Christian principles to society a hopeless task, in view of the prevailing wickedness of the human race?**

Even if there were only one Christian in the whole world, and all the rest were wicked people, it would still be that one Christian's duty to try to apply Christianity to society. Noah and his family were the only godly people of their time, and surely Noah might have regarded the situation as hopeless. Yet Noah did not limit himself to building the ark by which his family survived the Flood. He also preached righteousness to his own generation (2 Pet. 2:5), and we may be sure that Noah did not preach righteousness merely in the abstract, but in application to the concrete situation of his own day and age—a situation which is very vividly described in Gen. 6:5, 11-13. Noah preached righteousness to his own generation, not because he considered it probable that his preaching would be successful and human society reformed, but because it was HIS DUTY BEFORE GOD to preach righteousness. We are to do our duty; the results are in God's hands.

## LESSON 25

### The Covenant of Grace and the Christian's Relation to the World: 1. The Basic Antithesis

"Our first parents, being seduced by the subtilty and temptation of Satan, sinned in eating the forbidden fruit. This their sin God was pleased, according to His wise and holy counsel, to permit, having purposed to order it to His own glory.

"By this sin they fell from their original righteousness and communion with God, and so became dead in sin, and wholly defiled in all the faculties and parts of soul and body.

"They being the root of all mankind, the guilt of this sin was imputed, and the same death in sin and corrupted nature conveyed, to all their posterity descending from them by ordinary generation.

"From this original corruption, whereby we are utterly indisposed, disabled, and made opposite to all good, and wholly inclined to all evil,

do proceed all actual transgressions." — The Westminster Confession of Faith, VI.1, 2, 3, 4.

"Mankind are all now, by nature, the children of wrath, conceived in sin, brought forth in iniquity, sunk in total depravity, become mortal in their bodies, subject to disease and pain, incapable of doing anything spiritually good, in a state of enmity against God, and condemned to endless misery in the world to come." — The Reformed Presbyterian Testimony, V.4.

"Works done by unregenerate men, although for the matter of them, they may be things which God commands, and of good use both to themselves and others; yet, because they proceed not from a heart purified by faith; nor are done in a right manner according to the Word; nor to a right end, the glory of God; they are therefore sinful, and cannot please God, or make a man

meet to receive grace from God. And yet, their neglect of them is more sinful, and displeasing unto God." — The Westminster Confession of Faith, XVI.7.

#### Scripture References:

Gen. 3:15. The divinely-ordained enmity between the seed of the serpent and the seed of the woman.

Gen. 12:1. God's command to Abraham to separate from country and kindred.

Lev. 20:22-26. 1 Kings 8:53. The divinely ordained separateness of the covenant people.

Psalm 1. The basic antithesis between the righteous and the ungodly.

Psalm 2. The conflict between the heathen (seed of the serpent) and the Son (seed of the woman).

Psalm 10. The bitter opposition of the world to the covenant people of God.

John 3:3-6. The new birth divides humanity into the Kingdom of God and the kingdom of Satan.

John 8:44. Those who are not children of God, are children of the devil.

2 Cor. 5:17. The new birth gives everything in life a new meaning for the Christian, which the unsaved person cannot share.

#### Questions:

##### 1. Is the human race a unity today?

The human race possesses unity today only in the biological sense that all human beings constitute a single natural species descended from Adam and Eve. The human race does not possess spiritual unity today. When God created mankind, the race possessed spiritual unity. But this unity was shattered by the fall into sin. The result was not merely a wall of division between man and God, but the introduction of many divisions into the human family. The true source of solidarity — a right relation to God — having been lost, mankind inevitably fell a prey to divisive forces.

##### 2. How was the human race divided during the period from Adam to Noah?

After man fell, the dire effects of sin multiplied and increased. Soon Cain killed his brother Abel. Following the birth of Seth the race was sharply, radically divided into two lines: (a) the godly descendants of Seth, and (b) the ungodly descendants of Cain. Among the latter, wickedness increased by leaps and bounds. By the time of Lamech, the seventh generation from

Adam (Gen. 4:16-24) all consciousness of sin and all sense of dependence upon God seem to have been lost; Lamech lived an "uninhibited" life. Soon the earth was filled with the most terrible wickedness, crime and violence.

Meantime the godly descendants of Seth were quietly maintaining their faith and their principles (Gen. 4:26). It is clear that there was a definite, marked distinction between the two groups of human beings. It appears also that the breakdown of this separation by intermarriage between the godly and the ungodly (Gen. 6:1-8) brought, on the extreme development of wickedness which called for the judgment of the Flood.

##### 3. What wrong attempt was made soon after the Flood to restore the broken unity of the human race?

The construction of the Tower of Babel (Gen. 11:1-9). We read that the whole earth was still one in language at that time. The erection of the tower was an attempt to establish a center of unity on a humanistic basis, without recognizing God or giving glory to Him (verse 4). This proud attempt was frustrated by the intervention of God, who introduced a new division into the human race, the division of languages — a divisive force that has proved very powerful and very difficult to overcome through the history of the race.

Since then, numerous attempts have been made by ungodly men to restore the shattered unity of the race on a secular or merely human basis. Some of these have sought world unity by conquest, others by agreement, but all have ignored the living God. History is strewn with the wrecks of these vain attempts at a restoration of world unity on a human basis, without recognizing God or the fact of sin. Every such attempt is foredoomed to failure. "That which is born of the flesh is flesh" (John 3:6).

##### 4. How does regeneration, or the new birth, divide the human race into two radically different kinds of people?

Mankind by nature, apart from the saving grace of God, are totally depraved and corrupted in sin, unable to do anything spiritually good, filled with enmity against God, and under the wrath of God (Rom. 1:18). In carrying out the provisions of the Covenant of Grace, God has stepped into this situation and saved A PART of the human race by Christ's redemption and the work of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit bestows on the elect the new birth, by which their "heart" or inmost nature and personality is radically changed and inclined toward God and holiness.

The divinely-wrought change makes the person a new creature in Christ Jesus, and changes his entire life. Old things have passed away, all things have become new. The unsaved person,

on the other hand, is a stranger to this experience of the new birth. His whole life is set against God and against holiness. He is deeply selfish, and his noblest devotion never rises higher than humanity. In the bottom of his heart, he hates God and the people of God.

There is no middle ground between the person who is born again and the person who is not born again. Every person in on one side or the other of this dividing line. Only the restraining hand of God prevents the ungodly from rising up and killing every Christian in the world. The enmity in their hearts would have this result, if not restrained by God. Every persecution of God's covenant people by the world arises from this deep-rooted enmity in the hearts of unsaved people — enmity which is stirred up by Satan from time to time, as God in His providence may permit.

#### 5. What happens when Christian people for-

**get the radical difference that exists between them and the children of the world?**

When this basic antithesis is forgotten, several dire results soon follow. (a) Christian people begin to associate freely with ungodly people, even to the extent of intermarrying with them, so that the salt loses its savor and the Church becomes almost indistinguishable from the world. (b) Christian people begin to cherish a false optimism concerning the probable success of plans for world improvement on a merely human basis — schemes which disregard the sinfulness of the world and the need of the new birth, and which leave God out of account. Christian people begin to pin their faith to such human schemes as social service, political action on a merely human basis, etc. (c) Christian people begin to cultivate religious fellowship with the adherents of other religions; Jewish rabbis are invited to occupy Christian pulpits; religion, rather than Christianity, comes to be regarded as the important thing.

### LESSON 26

#### The Covenant of Grace and the Christian's Relation to the World: 2. The Duty of Separation

"When we hear any mention of our union with God, we should remember that holiness must be the bond of it. . . because it is a peculiar property of his glory not to have any intercourse with iniquity and uncleanness. Wherefore also it teaches, that this is the end of our vocation, which it is requisite for us always to keep in view, if we desire to correspond to the design of God in calling us. For to what purpose was it that we were delivered from the iniquity and pollution of the world, in which we had been immersed, if we permit ourselves to wallow in them as long as we live? Besides, it also admonishes us that, to be numbered among the people of God, we must inhabit the holy city Jerusalem; which, he having consecrated it to himself, cannot without impiety be profaned by impure inhabitants. Whence these expressions: 'He shall abide in the tabernacle of the Lord, that walketh uprightly and worketh righteousness', etc., because it is very unbecoming the sanctuary which he inhabits to be rendered as filthy as a stable." — John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, Book III, Chap. VI, Sec. II.

#### Scripture References:

John 14:30. Eph. 2:2. 1 John 2:15. The world of sin is Satan's kingdom.

2 Cor. 6:17, 18. 1 Tim. 5:22. James 1:27. Rev. 18:4. Separation from the world is a Christian duty.

1 John 2:15-17. God commands His children not to love the world.

John 7:7. The Christian should follow

Christ's example and testify of the world, that its works are evil.

#### Questions:

**1. In what two senses is the term "world" used in the Bible?**

(a) In a good sense, to designate the world of human society regarded as God's creation and property; for example, Matt. 13:38. "The field is the world"; Psalm 24:1, "The earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof; the world, and they that dwell therein." (b) In a bad sense, to designate that sinful world-system which, as Satan's kingdom, is against God; for example, 1 John 2:15, "If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him"; Eph. 2:2, "according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air."

**2. Is the Christian required to separate from human society, or the world itself?**

No. Medieval monasticism was an attempt to separate from the world itself by withdrawing from human society to a monastery or convent, an attempt to escape from corruption by abstaining from all association with the corrupt, but it resulted in dismal failure. In 1 Cor. 5: 9, 10, the apostle Paul shows that God does not require His children to withdraw from human society; He does not require them to refrain from all civil or business dealings with sinful, unsaved people, though religious fellowship with such is forbidden.

### 3. What kind of separation from the world is required by the Covenant of Grace?

The Covenant of Grace requires an obedient life of godliness and holiness of the covenant people of God. This involves a clear line of distinction and separation between the covenant people and the world that is Satan's kingdom. As pointed out in the preceding question, the Christian is not required to separate from human society or the world itself; he is not required to separate from anything that is good or innocent, but only from that which is contrary to God and to holiness. The Covenant of Grace definitely involves the obligation to separate from all participation in the sins of the world. The covenant people of God are not to be identified in any way with Satan's kingdom. They must separate from all that marks the world as Satan's kingdom.

### 4. What is involved in a consistent separation from the sinful world?

Separation from the sinful world means little or nothing unless it is carried out consistently. A consistent separation from the world involves abstinence from all conduct that is characteristic of Satan's kingdom. Some practices are characteristically worldly; the Christian must avoid them. Some places have become identified with the sinful world-system; the Christian should avoid them. The warning to God's people to separate from Babylon (the anti-Christian world-system) is relevant here: "Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues" (Rev. 18:4).

### 5. In considering the subject of worldliness, what error must be avoided?

The error of externalizing worldliness, or regarding it as consisting essentially in external actions or things. Worldliness is first and foremost a sin of the heart; its essence consists in the lust of the heart for something that God forbids (1 Cor. 10:6). That worldliness is essentially a matter of the spiritual state of the heart is shown also by the words of our Saviour in Mark 7:21-23, "For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, mur-

ders, thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness: all these evil things come from within, and defile the man.

It is true that worldliness has external manifestations, and it is true that the Christian duty of separation from the world has implications concerning external conduct. But we should remember that the antithesis between the covenant people and the children of this world is not PRIMARILY an external matter; it is a spiritual antithesis. Any attempt to define worldliness and decide questions about practical matters of conduct should proceed from the realization that the antithesis is basically not external but spiritual. If this is forgotten, worldliness will be too narrowly defined in terms of particular patterns of external conduct, and the result will often be a Pharisaic spiritual pride on the part of people who abstain scrupulously from those particular patterns of conduct, but whose hearts are really worldly to the core.

### 6. Why should a Christian bear witness against the sins of the world?

Our Saviour the Lord Jesus Christ testified of the world, that its works are evil (John 7:7). The Christian should follow Christ's example and bear witness against the sins of the world, as occasion may require. The fact that this testimony of the Christian may have no apparent result should not discourage him from discharging the duty. For Christian people to protest publicly against the Sabbath desecration involved in a state fair being open on the Lord's Day, with all kinds of amusements going on, may seem at first sight to be a useless gesture, in that it can hardly be expected to accomplish the closing of the fair. But it is not useless. It is the discharge of a Christian duty, and it will be for the honor and glory of God at the Judgment Day that a witness was borne against that sin at that time. More over it will leave the guilty persons even more without excuse than they would otherwise be.

**Note:** This series of lessons on the Covenant of Grace will be continued in the next issue of "Blue Banner Faith and Life". — Ed.

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## *Blue Banner Question Box*

Readers are invited to submit Biblical, doctrinal and practical questions for answer in this department. Names of correspondents will not be published, but anonymous communications will be disregarded.

#### **Question:**

Please explain what Arminianism is, and its chief faults. I find several in our group are very hazy on it.

#### **Answer:**

The name "Arminianism" comes from **Arminius** which in turn is the Latinized form of the Dutch name **Hermanns** or **Hermansen**. It has no

connection whatever with "Armenian," which is the name of a people and language of the Near East. The not uncommon confusion of "Arminian" with "Armenian" betrays lack of knowledge as to what Arminianism is. "Arminian" and "Arminianism" are theological terms; they denominate a particular interpretation of Christianity, or a particular system of theology. "Armenian," on the other hand, is an ethnological and linguistic term; it denominates a particular branch of the human race, and their language.

Jacobus Arminius was a Dutch theologian who was born in 1560 and died in 1609. However, Arminianism is really older than the time of Arminius. Under one name or another the basic ideas of Arminianism have existed through practically the entire history of the Christian Church. Thus, for example, the heresy of Pelagianism, which flourished in the fifth century after Christ, was basically similar to Arminianism. Similarly, the official theology of Roman Catholicism, which is based largely on the writings of Thomas Aquinas, includes features which resemble characteristic tenets of Arminianism. Throughout the history of Christianity the tendency to emphasize the freedom of man at the expense of the sovereignty of God has always been at work. Whenever this tendency has become strong and vocal, at any given time and place, heresy of the Pelagian-Arminian type has appeared. Moreover, it requires no special indoctrination to be an Arminian. The tendency toward Arminianism is always working in all of us, and is held in check only by the grace of God causing people to take the real sovereignty of God seriously and to make Scripture truly normative in their thinking. Apart from such special grace of God we all tend to be Arminians; that is, we tend to magnify our freedom and powers and to think of ourselves as more or less independent of God.

Arminianism was at first a reaction against the Reformed theology, or Calvinism. It took offense at several specific doctrines of the Reformed Faith. The early Dutch Arminians were called "Remonstrants" because they issued a manifesto called the Remonstrance objecting to these doctrines of Calvinism. To settle this controversy, the historic Synod of Dort was called in Holland. It met in the years 1618 and 1619, and was attended by delegates from several countries besides Holland. The Synod of Dort declared the doctrines of the Remonstrants to be heretical, and in opposition to them it issued the Canons of the Synod of Dort which affirmed the truth of the contrary doctrines of the Reformed Faith. Although condemned as a heresy, Arminianism continued to exist and to influence people. In a somewhat modified form it was held by John and Charles Wesley, the founders of the Methodist Church. Today in English-speaking countries the majority of Protestants who are not liberals are Arminian in their theology, though many of

them are members of officially Reformed or Calvinistic denominations. Many evangelical Christians who know nothing about Arminius and perhaps do not even know the term "Arminianism" are nevertheless Arminian in their thinking.

The five doctrines of the Reformed Faith to which the Arminians or Remonstrants objected were: 1. God's unconditional election of sinners unto salvation. 2. The total depravity of the unsaved sinner. 3. Particular atonement, or the doctrine that the intended purpose of Christ's atonement was to redeem the elect. 4. The efficacious character of the saving grace of God, which without fail brings about the salvation of the elect. 5. The perseverance of the saints, or the doctrine that the truly saved Christian cannot lose his salvation and perish eternally.

Over against these Reformed doctrines the Arminians held the contrary views, namely: 1. God's election of sinners to salvation is not absolute, but conditional, being based on God's knowing beforehand that they will repent and believe the Gospel. 2. The unsaved sinner is not totally depraved, but has only been morally weakened by sin. 3. Universal atonement, or the doctrine that the intended purpose of Christ's atonement was to redeem all mankind. 4. The grace of God is not in itself efficacious, but only persuasive, and does not certainly bring about the salvation of anyone. 5. Truly saved Christians can at any time totally fall away from grace and so perish eternally.

The unscriptural character of the Arminian system was somewhat modified by the Methodists under John Wesley and especially Richard Watson, the most prominent Methodist theologian. This modified form of Arminianism is called "Evangelical Arminianism" and is the type of Arminianism most often found today. Wesleyan or Evangelical Arminianism is more Biblical, but at the same time less consistent, than the older Arminianism of the Dutch Remonstrants. Evangelical Arminianism still differs in important respects from that consistent Biblical Christianity which we commonly call Calvinism or the Reformed Faith.

The teaching of the Bible on the subjects of divine sovereignty and human freedom is paradoxical. That is, it seems to involve a contradiction. The Bible teaches that God is sovereign and that He has, from all eternity, foreordained every event that comes to pass in the field of time and space. This foreordination includes the choice of particular persons to be heirs of eternal life, and the passing by of others who are to be condemned to eternal punishment on account of their own sins. At the same time the Bible teaches that man is a free agent and is responsible for the use or abuse of his freedom. It is his duty to repent and believe the Gospel, and

only by doing so can he receive salvation and eternal life. Here, then, is a paradox between divine sovereignty and human freedom. If God has foreordained all that comes to pass, including all my personal decisions, how can I really be free and how can I really be held responsible for my decisions? Am I not a mere robot or puppet manipulated by the eternal decrees of God?

Arminianism is a specific way of dealing with this and similar paradoxes of Scripture. It undertakes to solve the paradox by affirming the freedom and responsibility of man, and limiting the sovereignty of God to allow for this. Arminianism is, therefore, the belief that God is limited by man's free will. When they read in the Bible such statements as that of Ephesians 1:4 ("... he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love"), Arminians interpret this in such a way that they hold that the real choosing is done by man, not by God. They say that God, before the foundation of the world, chose unto eternal life those who he knew beforehand would by their own free will repent and believe on Christ. This amounts to saying that God, in eternity, elected those of whom He knew that they would elect themselves. It maintains that God's act of election is a mere ratifying of a decision made by man's free will. A well-known evangelist is quoted as saying, "God's hands are tied. He can only wait for you to make your decision." Thus the Arminian solves the paradox by affirming man's freedom and denying God's sovereignty.

Arminianism cannot do justice to Scripture. In interpreting the Bible in their own way, Arminians do violence to the words of Scripture. They cannot avoid doing this if they are to remain Arminians. They have to force unnatural meanings on statements of the Bible. For example, in Ephesians 1:11 we are told that Christians are "predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will." Straightforwardly interpreted, this text certainly means that God's act of predestination was not determined by anything outside of God Himself, for God is said to "**work all things after the counsel of his own will.**" But Arminians interpret this to mean that Christians are "predestinated according to the eternally foreseen decisions of man's free will."

Again, Scripture teaches that Christians are "created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them" (Eph. 2:10). This verse certainly teaches that the Christian's good works (including, of course, all the good decisions of his will) were foreordained by God in order that the Christian should perform them. It certainly teaches that these good works are the **outcome** of God's foreordination and saving work in the Christian. Ar-

minians, however, are forced by their system to interpret this text to mean that the Christian's good works were foreordained by God **because He knew beforehand that the Christian would perform them.** Arminians are forced to maintain that one of those good works — the decision to accept Christ — is not the outcome, but **the basis or original source** of God's saving work in the Christian. They hold that God's eternal predestination is based upon God's knowing in advance that the sinner would (of his own free will) repent and believe.

Did God choose me because He foresaw that I would choose Him, or did I choose God because He first chose me? Which is prior, which is more basic, God's decision or man's? They cannot both be; one or the other must be the more ultimate and basic. Arminianism decides in favor of man's decision being the more basic, and is then forced to interpret Scripture all along the line in terms of this false principle. Arminianism is really rationalistic; it misuses Scripture because of what it regards as the demands of human reason. It cannot face a paradox or apparent contradiction and let it stand. At all costs the paradox must be solved, says the Arminian. So he solves it at the expense of the sovereignty of God, thus denying an important truth of Scripture, and at the same time involving himself in other difficulties that are even worse.

Calvinism faces the paradox between divine sovereignty and human freedom and allows it to stand unsolved, while it affirms **both** God's real sovereignty and man's true freedom. Calvinism leaves the paradox unsolved because it stands unsolved in the Bible itself. The Bible teaches both God's sovereignty and man's freedom. It does not tone down or "interpret" either of these in order to emphasize the other. When the issue is raised, as it is, for example, in Romans 9:19, the Bible replies, not by trying to solve the paradox and thus satisfy man's reason, but by reminding us that as creatures we have no right to pronounce judgment on the acts of our Creator: "Nay but, O man, who art thou that repliest against God? Shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, Why hast thou made me thus?" (Rom. 9:20).

The relation between human freedom and divine sovereignty involves the relation between the finite and the Infinite, between time and eternity, between creature and Creator. It is bound to be veiled in mystery and cloaked with thick darkness; it cannot be fathomed by human reason; it is among the deep things of God. We should not expect to be able to explain it by human reason. We do not have to understand this mystery; all that is required of us is that we accept the truths of God's Word by faith. It is the strength, not the weakness, of Calvinism that

it refrains from attempting to solve this and similar paradoxes. In this matter the attitude of Calvinism is more **religious** than that of Arminianism. It does justice to Scripture, and it has a reverent attitude in refusing to tone down statements of the Bible because of the demands of human reason. The real Calvinist will never say "God's hands are tied." He is more moved by reverence for God and God's Word than by the insistent demand of sinful man's reason that all paradoxes be solved at any cost.

It is a mercy that many people are inconsistent. If Arminians were to follow their Arminian principles through with perfect logical consistency to the end of the road, they would finally have to say that man is his own saviour. But they do not and cannot say this because they are Christians, and the grace of God which is at work in them prevents them from being consistent Arminians. A really consistent Arminian would end up as a humanist. Actually, however, the Arminian continues as a Christian, in spite of holding a partly erroneous theology, because his happy inconsistency keeps him from following Arminianism all the way to the end of the road.

This inconsistency of Arminians is often quite conspicuous to others, though the Arminians themselves are, of course, unconscious of it. An evangelist will tell his audience over and over that everything depends on their own free will, even to the extent of saying that "God's hands are tied." Then before the "altar call" the same evangelist will pray earnestly that God will bring people to repentance and salvation. If God's hands are really tied, the prayer ought to be addressed to the audience, not to God, for how can a God whose hands are tied answer the prayer? But, you see, the evangelist does not **really** believe that God's hands are tied, though he has just said they are. He really believes that in the end it depends on God's working after all, even though this is just the opposite of what he said a little while before in his sermon. In other words, there is something in the evangelist which cannot accept the Arminian statement that "God's hands are tied" and that convinces him deeply (though he is quite unaware of the inconsistency) that God's power, which can come in answer to prayer, can and does move the sinner to repentance and faith. Every Arminian, if he is really a Christian, is a Calvinist at heart. Men can be better than their creed, just as they can be worse than their creed.

What is the harm of Arminianism? Is this dispute a mere quarrel about words and terms? Is it merely "theological hair-splitting"? Does it make any real practical difference whether we are Calvinists or Arminians? Yes, it certainly does make a real, practical difference. This controversy affects the heart and core of our religious life. It deeply affects what we think of God and what we think of ourselves. "Arminianism tends to self-sufficiency; Augustinianism (Calvinism) promotes dependence upon God" (A. H. Strong, **Systematic Theology**, one volume edition, page 605). Strong also points out that Arminian converts say "I gave my heart to the Lord", while Augustinian (Reformed or Calvinistic) converts say, "The Holy Spirit convicted me of sin and renewed my heart." In short, Calvinism exalts God and humbles man, while Arminianism limits God and flatters man and his powers. We hope it has been made clear that the essential difference between Calvinism and Arminianism is not merely theological but religious in the deepest sense. It concerns man's attitude toward God, and his appraisal of himself in the light of God.

— J. G. Vos

**Question:**

I would like to see an article in the "Blue Banner" sometime on heresy and Arminianism giving specific quotes from hymns. Psalms should be sung as a matter of obedience to God's command. But we can see a very real reason, namely: to protect us from error. Our own Covenanters need to be alerted.

**Answer:**

The Editor is quite in agreement with the statements and viewpoint of the correspondent whose request appears above. An article along this line will be published, D. V., in a later issue of the magazine.

— J. G. Vos

**Question:**

The "Blue Banner" has reported examinations of the **Scotfield Bible** and the **Pilgrim Edition of the Holy Bible**, but I have not found others. Have I missed them? If such examinations have not been published would it be possible to do so? I hunted the other day for a report on the **Interpreter's Bible** and failed to find it. There are many of these "Bibles" that one hears about, and wonders concerning the reliability of.

**Answer:**

This magazine published a series of articles by the Rev. Lester E. Kilpatrick dealing with various versions and annotated editions of the Bible. The titles and dates of these articles are as follows:

**The King James and American Revised Versions of the Bible**, Vol. 4 No. 2 (April-June, 1949), page 80.

**The Scotfield Reference Bible**, Vol. 4 No. 3 (July-September, 1949), page 119.

**The Westminster Study Edition of the Holy**

**Bible**, Vol. 4 No. 4 (October-December, 1949), page 149.

**The New Chain Reference Bible (F. C. Thompson)**, Vol. 5 No. 1 (January-March, 1950), page 36.

**Moffatt's Translation of the New Testament**, Vol. 5 No. 2 (April-June, 1950), page 83.

**The Pilgrim Edition of the Holy Bible**, Vol. 6 No. 1 (January-March, 1951), page 38.

**Williams' New Testament**, Vol. 6 No. 4 (October-December, 1951), page 212.

**The Revised Standard Version of the New Testament**, Vol. 7 No. 1, (January-March, 1952), page 16.

**The Berkeley Version of the New Testament**, Vol. 9 No. 2, (April-June, 1954), page 68.

We also published an item on the **Lamsa Bible** in Vol. 13 No. 3 (July-September, 1958), page 141.

If readers would like to have any of the above articles reprinted, please inform the editor. If there is sufficient demand we will reprint the requested articles. Also if there are other versions or annotated editions of the Bible that our readers would like to have articles on, please communicate with the editor, and an effort will be made to provide the articles.

The "Interpreter's Bible", to which our correspondent refers, is not a Bible at all, but a very large commentary, running to a dozen large volumes. It would be beyond the scope of this magazine to publish a detailed study or analysis of such a pretentious work. Published by the Abingdon-Cokesbury Press, it contains some good things, but taken as a whole it is unsound and unreliable, as it is dominated, in the main, by "higher critical" and liberal views of the Bible. This work is subtly destructive of faith in the Bible as the infallible Word of God. We cannot conscientiously recommend it to anyone.

— J. G. Vos

**Question:**

What is meant in Job 1:1 and Genesis 6:9 where it says that Job and Noah, respectively, were perfect men? Some argue that no mere man is or ever will be perfect. Christ was perfect but man cannot be. I believe that an answer in your magazine on this would be beneficial.

**Answer:**

Certainly Christ was and is perfect, and certainly no mere man can be perfect in this life. "No mere man, since the fall, is able, in this life, perfectly to keep the commandments of God; but doth daily break them, in thought, word, and deed"

(Westminster Shorter Catechism, 82.) The teaching of this answer of the Catechism is certainly Scriptural. "For there is not a just man upon earth, that doeth good, and sinneth not" (Eccles. 7:20). We must dissent, however, from the opinion that no mere man ever will be perfect, for Scripture teaches that perfection is the final destiny of every Christian. "Ye are come unto . . . the spirits of just men made perfect" (Heb. 12:22,23); "Now unto him that is able . . . to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy . . ." (Jude 24). Every Christian is certain finally (in the state of glory) to be perfect, being fully conformed to the moral perfection embodied in Christ. Sanctification is a process, incomplete in this life, but perfection is its goal and this goal is certain to be attained by all the elect of God.

The notion that moral perfection is a goal attainable in this present life is called "Perfectionism" and is rejected by the Reformed Faith as an unscriptural error. Perfectionism invariably appears when Christians have inadequate views of the requirements of the law of God and superficial views of the nature of sin. I once conversed with a young man who told me confidently that he had not committed a sin for five years. After some conversation he admitted that during these five years he had made some "mistakes" and had left undone some things that were his duty to do. He refused, however, to regard his mistakes and omissions as sinful. According to his way of thinking, only positive acts deliberately and intentionally done could be considered sins. The Bible, however, speaks not only "sins" but also of SIN, that is, of the evil state or condition of the human heart. Moreover, according to the Bible, thoughts can be sinful: "Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts." When sufficiently pressed, Perfectionists will admit that the kind of perfection they say can be attained in this life is less perfect than the perfection of the saints in glory. In other words, they are talking about an **imperfect perfection**. A perfection that is less than absolute is not perfect. And the only perfection that a Christian can really attain in this life is indeed an imperfect perfection.

At the same time it is always our duty to strive toward moral perfection. The ideal may never be lowered because of our sinful weakness. It is one of the evidences of the divine truth of Christianity that it demands absolute perfection of man. No man-made religion places before its adherents an ideal that they cannot attain in this life. Only Christianity, which is from the perfect God, demands absolute perfection of man.

With regard to Noah and Job, the language used does not mean absolute moral perfection, or sinlessness. It is evident from the history of these men that both of them were sinners. Noah became involved in intemperance (Gen. 9:20,21), and Job confessed his deep sinfulness in the sight of God (Job 42:6). The description of these men as "perfect" means that they were devout men with

mature and balanced or well-rounded character. In comparison with the prevalent wickedness of his day, "Noah was a just man and perfect in his generations, and Noah walked with God" (Gen. 6:9). In comparison with his friends Eliphaz, Bildad and Zophar, and in contradicton to Satan's charge that Job was basically a selfish and wicked man, Job was upright, a man of integrity (Job 42:7,8).

— J. G. Vos

**Question:**

How can the Bible teach the dictum "Love thy neighbor as thyself" and yet approve the vastly different social standards meted out in providence? If a rich man loved his poor neighbor as much as himself would he not share his goods with him? And should a Christian in the United States own an automobile when others less favored in providence lack the necessities of life? Job was "a perfect and upright man" yet he had much more of this life's goods than he needed, and the poor obviously abounded in his community. Could we have a word on this?

**Answer:**

This query came from an overseas reader of the magazine. In replying, we would refer him, first of all, to an article entitled **Will We Let Them Starve?**, by the Rev. Francis E. Mahaffy, published in **The Covenanter Witness** for February 18, 1959 (page 101; reprinted from **Christian Economics**). This article, with which the present writer heartily agrees, brings out the relationship between poverty and sin and shows that mere sharing of wealth does not and cannot solve the problem of poverty. At the same time the article stresses the fact that it is the Christian's duty to relieve his neighbor's distress.

Certainly Scripture teaches the duty of Christian charity expressed in practical relief generously given to the needy and those in distress (James 2:15, 16). This text speaks of cases where "a brother or sister" (i.e., a fellow Christian) is "naked, and destitute of daily food" — that is, genuinely in economic distress. Callous indifference to such need cannot be justified. But it is one thing to say that it is our duty to relieve real distress, and quite another to say that Christian duty requires a general levelling and equalization of wealth. Wealth accumulated by the thrifty and industrious and given to others simply because they have less may and often will do the recipients harm rather than good. There is a good deal of sinful laziness in everyone — even in Christians — and few people will practice industry and thrift if they can get the same economic benefits without these virtues. In other words, general levelling of possessions tends to corrupt those who are on the receiving end of the deal. This has often been noticed in the case of recipients of relief from the government. There are plenty of people in America who pay substantial income

taxes who do not feel that they can afford to eat butter, so they use the much cheaper oleo-margarine instead. Meantime the government uses the income tax money to purchase butter which is issued free to those regarded as economically underprivileged. There are a good many similar practices which are economically and ethically unwarranted.

To love one's neighbor as oneself means to help him in his real need and to seek his true welfare. If his house has burned down or if a member of his family is faced with an operation and a big hospital bill, generous gifts from Christian friends may be in order, the extent depending on the circumstances of the case. In other cases a personal loan to help one's neighbor get on his feet economically may be much better for the neighbor himself. In still other cases it may be really better for the neighbor to carry his own burden. It is no real love or kindness to do for another what he could and should do for himself.

With regard to the ownership and use of automobiles in America, our overseas correspondent perhaps does not realize that in present-day American life the automobile is often a necessity rather than a luxury. The whole economy is geared to this form of transportation. In many respects the automobile is a producer of wealth. This is not to say that many Americans do not lavish too much money on cars. Some people's cars are their idols. But the abuse of a thing is not an argument against its legitimate use. Few pastors could do their work in America without a car. In many an American college and university, students live at home with their parents and travel ten, twenty or even thirty or more miles twice each day to attend classes; without automobiles most of them could not manage this at all. The editor of a religious journal was asked whether the automobile is a blessing or a curse. He wisely replied, It depends on who is in the car and where they are going.

No one need lack the necessities of life in America, with the existing provision of relief to the needy. As for other countries, it is very doubtful whether for Americans to get rid of their cars and send the money abroad would really do very much to relieve poverty anywhere. To whom could Americans sell their cars except to other Americans? Probably not many could be exported. And if American Christians were to live without automobiles, they would in many cases simply lose much of their earning power, or else have to spend the equivalent of the cost of the car on public transportation in trains, planes or buses. Probably the needy in Asia and Africa would be little helped. We should remember, too, that it is the mass production of automobiles that has put them within reach of the ordinary person in America. It is reported that a visitor from Soviet Russia refused to believe

that the hundreds of well-kept cars which he saw parked outside of an American factory were owned by the men employed in that factory. Nevertheless it was true.

With regard to Job, we have his own statement that he was not selfish nor callous with regard to the poor and needy. "If I have withheld the poor from their desire, or have caused the eyes of the widow to fail; or have eaten my morsel myself alone, and the fatherless hath not eaten thereof; (for from my youth he was brought up with me, as with a father, and I have guided her from my mother's womb;) If I have seen any perish for want of clothing, or any poor without covering; if his loins have not blessed me, and if he were not warmed with the fleece of my sheep; if I have lifted up my hand against the fatherless, when I saw my help in the gate; then let mine arm fall from my shoulder blades, and mine arm be broken from the bone" (Job 31:16-22). Evidently Job's benefactions were many, and we need not doubt that they were wisely and also generously dispensed.

The early Christian Church in Jerusalem practiced community of goods for a time. This was evidently the result of an impulse of spiritual power, and also perhaps in view of the imminence of persecution. Concerning this "communism" of the Jerusalem church we notice, however: (1) There is no record that it was commanded by God. It seems to have been spontaneous. (2) Apparently it was only temporary in Jerusalem; we hear nothing of it in the later part of the apostolic age. (3) There is no evidence that it was ever practiced in any other church than that of Jerusalem. (4) It was voluntary and not required of anyone, as is shown by Peter's words addressed to Ananias in Acts 5:4. (5) It was partial, as proved by the fact that some Christians did not sell their property; the house of Mary, the mother of John Mark was not sold (Acts 12:12). (6) It seems to have resulted in a chronic problem in the Jerusalem church, which alone in the apostolic age was for a considerable period of time in need of special relief funds from the gentile churches.

The office of deacon is greatly neglected in our day. In many churches of the Presbyterian and Reformed family the deacons do little more than receive the offerings and attend to the business side of the church's life. But in Scripture the office of deacons was first of all to provide for help to needy Christians. To do this they needed to be men full of faith and of the Holy Spirit. In some denominations, notably the Christian Reformed Church, the deacons take this task seriously. I know of a case where a college professor faced a great financial problem in that a member of his family had to have several expensive operations and long hospitalization. The deacons of his congregation called on the family and offered generous help. It would

have been given in such a way that only the board of deacons would know of the gift. The professor refused the gift because he felt he was able to carry the burden alone and the money in the deacon fund should go to others who needed it more than himself. However the deacons urged him to accept some help, though he still refused. This example shows a truly Scriptural functioning of the diaconate. In some cases deacons may provide a loan to help a church member get on his feet economically. A minister of the Christian Reformed Church told me that he had received a telephone call from a social service worker at the city hall, informing him that a family in his church had applied for public relief and had named him as their pastor. He thanked the social worker and said that no public relief would be necessary, as the church congregation would see that the family was adequately provided for. He added, "We intend to take care of our own people one hundred percent." That sort of action, rather than a general leveling of possessions, is the truly Scriptural and Christian answer to the problem of poverty.

— J. G. Vos

#### Question:

It is a well-known fact that the great body of the Westminster Assembly of (English) divines were of Presbyterian persuasion. But when it comes to the more famous names of the classical Puritans, such as Goodwin, Owen, Charnock, Sibbes, Manton, their churchmanship is not so well-known. Can it be maintained that the bulk of the Puritans whose works have come down to us were Presbyterians?

#### Answer:

This query came from a reader in England. We are requesting a well qualified scholar in the field involved to prepare an answer which will be published, D.V., in a later issue.

#### Question:

The view taken by J. C. McFeeters in defending the Covenanters' decision to leave the church is definitely the opposite to that expressed by Calvin in the *Institutes*, Book IV, Chapter I, paragraphs 12-20 (especially 18-20). While I understand McFeeters perfectly and realize that this way of thinking is commonly accepted, still after weighing the arguments on both sides I must take Calvin's side. Would you please discuss this matter in the Question Box, as it surely touches a fundamental problem.

#### Answer:

This query came from a Canadian pastor of Dutch background. The paragraphs of Dr. McFeeters' *Sketches of the Covenanters* referred to occurs in Chapter XXVII of the book, which was

reprinted in *Blue Banner Faith and Life*, Vol. 12 No. 3 (July-September, 1957), page 119. It is as follows:

"The first question that appealed to the heart was concerning comfort and convenience. Their churches were occupied by other ministers. There the people could have preaching, hear the Word, listen to prayers, sing Psalms, and receive baptism and the Lord's Supper. True, the services were spiced and ornamented with details, which the Covenanters disliked, because they were unscriptural. But could they not find hidden manna on the sand, and kernels of wheat in the chaff? Could they not get sufficient food in the new ministrations to sustain their souls? Could they not reach heaven by the new road as certainly as by the old? Such were the inquiries that appealed to their love of ease. These sturdy sons of the Covenant said, 'No.' They said it, too, with emphasis like the lightning that strikes the oak. They said, 'Public worship, not in all parts according to the Book of God, is corrupt; we will not participate in such services, for the Lord has said, "Cursed be the deceiver, that sacrificeth unto the Lord a corrupt thing."'"

McFeeters is here writing of the Covenanters in 1664 forsaking the parish churches of Scotland and assembling in field conventicles to worship God. The material in Calvin's *Institutes* referred to by our correspondent is too long to quote here in full. It is in the fourth book of the *Institutes* which deals with "The Holy Catholic Church." Chapter I of Book IV deals with the true Church, and the duty of cultivating unity with her, as the mother of all the godly. Paragraphs 10 to 29 of Chapter I are summarized in Beveridge's translation as follows: "The necessity of cleaving to the Holy Catholic Church and the Communion of Saints. Refutation of the errors of the Novatians, Anabaptists, and other schismatics in regard to this matter."

Two things must be borne in mind. First, Dr. McFeeters was writing a popular-style account of the Covenanters for reading in Christian families, use by young people, etc. He did not profess to be writing a strictly scholarly treatise on church history. Therefore it is possible that something can be said in defence of the position taken by the Scottish Covenanters in 1664 beyond what he undertakes to say about the matter. Second, Calvin's *Institutes* was written more than 100 years before 1664, therefore Calvin did not have their particular situation in mind, and it is possible that what he says may not exactly fit the circumstances of their case. As summarized by Beveridge, Calvin had in mind the Novatians, Anabaptists "and other schismatics." Novatian was a presbyter of the church at Rome in the third century. He disagreed with the policy of the Church on the matter of readmission to church privileges of those who denied Christ under stress of persecution. The

Church allowed the readmission of such after a period of probation, but Novatian wished to keep them out permanently. He and his followers formed a separatist church organization which continued to exist for a long time. This was an attempt to have a perfectly pure church by keeping unworthy persons from membership. The Anabaptists became prominent in the Reformation period. They were the radicals of the Reformation movement and like the Novatians they wanted a perfectly pure church on earth. This they sought to obtain by separating not only from the Roman Catholic Church but also from the ordinary forms of Protestant Christianity such as Lutheranism, and later Calvinism. Because Lutherans and Calvinists were often accused of holding the radical and extreme views of the Anabaptists, Calvin and others were at pains to show that the real Protestant faith was very different from that of the Anabaptists, some of whom held that a Christian might not serve as a magistrate in the civil government, and that the millennium was to be set up under the rule of the saints.

Such attempts at purity of the Visible Church, then, formed the background and occasion for Calvin's discussion in the *Institutes*, Book IV, Chapter I, Paragraphs 12-20. In Paragraph 18 he points out that even in the times of the worst corruption in the Old Testament, the true prophets such as Isaiah, Jeremiah, Joel, Habakkuk and others did not separate themselves from the Church or religious organization which centered in the Jerusalem temple. They witnessed against the evils but did not set up a separate and rival organization. In Paragraph 19 he argues that Christ and the apostles did not separate themselves from the worship in the Jerusalem temple, in spite of the fact that it was also frequented by wicked men and largely under the control of corrupt men. In Paragraph 20 he comes down to the separatists of his own day, describing their attitude as one of "pride," and adding: "Refusing to acknowledge any church that is not pure from the minutest blemish," they virtually claim to have reached perfection already, hence they lead believers into the sin of presumption. Calvin goes on to argue that the Church is precisely the sphere in which we experience forgiveness of sins, for in it the cleansing grace of God is at work.

It would seem that the problem Calvin is dealing with, and that faced by the Covenanters in 1664, are not the same. There is indeed a common element, in that in each case a corrupted church organization existed and in each case godly Christians had to consider whether or not to separate wholly from it. But the nature of the alleged corruption was not the same in the two cases. Both the Novatians and the Anabaptists held up the false and unscriptural ideal of a perfectly pure church to be attained on earth by rigid exclusion of certain classes of people

from membership. The Covenanters of 1664 made no such claim and held no such views. They held the common Reformed doctrine of the Church as set forth in the Westminster Confession of Faith, Chapter XXV. Sections IV and V of that Chapter show how far they were from holding that there can be a perfectly pure church on earth: "IV. This catholic Church hath been sometimes more, sometimes less visible. And particular Churches, which are members thereof, are more or less pure, according as the doctrine of the Gospel is taught and embraced, ordinances administered, and public worship performed more or less purely in them. V. The purest Churches under heaven are subject both to mixture and error; and some have so degenerated, as to become no Churches of Christ, but synagogues of Satan. Nevertheless, there shall always be a Church on earth, to worship God according to His will."

The Covenanters freely recognized that all churches, including their own in its best days, were involved in "mixture and error." It was not on account of imperfection in the church that they separated from the Scottish parishes and met for worship in field conventicles. The civil government — the wicked Stuart monarchy — had perjured itself and had violated grievously both the constitution of the State and that of the Church. A tyrannical power which claimed to rule by divine right above the law had reduced the official Church of Scotland to a "puppet" status. Requirements had been imposed on the ministry which could not in conscience be complied with, and hundreds of pastors left their parish and manse rather than compromise. The more earnest and godly of the people followed their pastors. Meanwhile the vacated pulpits were filled by the government-sponsored "curates". Now where was the true Reformed Church of Scotland in this situation? The old church buildings were still there, but many of the ministers had left them. Which is more essential to the being of the Visible Church — the buildings or the ministry? The situation, of course, was confused, as it was bound to be when "The boar out of the wood doth waste it, and the wild beast

of the field doth devour it" (Psalm 80:12). To use the words of the Westminster Confession, the true Church in Scotland at this time became "less visible." It became, more or less, what the true Church in China is today, namely an underground movement. The Covenanters of 1664 would have readily agreed to all that Calvin says in the sections referred to. But they would have added, in effect: "We are not separating from the true Church. On the contrary, we are doing the best we can to maintain it, but it is impossible for us to maintain it in buildings and organizations that have been captured by the enemy and are completely dominated by hostile forces. The true Church in Scotland has been driven out of the time-honored buildings and is forced to worship in fields and forests. Do not call us 'Separatists' for we are not such. We are adhering, as best we can in time of persecution, to the lawful ministry of the Church of Scotland. We are adhering to the Reformation as provided in the Solemn League and Covenant, which the King swore and signed, and then later repudiated and had it burned by the official hangman. Those who have violated their oath are the real schismatics, not those who are conscientiously keeping their oath at the cost of hardship, sacrifice, danger and even death."

The true parallel in sacred history to the situation of the Covenanters of 1664 is not the time of Isaiah, Jeremiah, Joel, etc., mentioned by Calvin, but the time when Antiochus Epiphanes defiled the Jerusalem temple, and the Jews finally rose under Mattathias and later Judas Maccabaeus and took to the hills to make a stand for freedom and religion. Were they separating from the true Church in Jerusalem? On the contrary, they separated from what had been captured and was controlled by a tyrannical, alien power that contradicted their faith. Those were the times when "they wandered in deserts, and in mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth" (Heb. 11:38). Nor would they use the Jerusalem temple again for divine worship until, after their re-capture of the holy city, they had purified the temple with solemn rites.

— J. G. Vos

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## *Reviews of Religious Books*

The favorable reviewing of a book here is not to be understood as necessarily implying an endorsement of everything contained in it. Within the editorial policy of *Blue Banner Faith and Life* each reviewer is solely responsible for the opinions expressed in his reviews. Please purchase books from your book dealer or direct from the publishers; do not send orders for books to the manager of this magazine.

**THE KING JAMES VERSION DEFENDED!**  
A Christian View of the New Testament Manuscripts, by Edward F. Hills. The Christian Re-

search Press, 5011 Hickman Road, Des Moines, Iowa, 1956, pp. 158, paper back. \$1.50.

The author of this volume has earned con-

siderable distinction as a conservative orthodox scholar in the field of New Testament Textual Criticism. In the Preface, written by R. B. Kuiper, it is stated that the subject of his dissertation, written in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the Th.D. degree was: **The Caesarean Family of New Testament Manuscripts**. The Journal of Biblical Literature has published three articles by him, each bearing directly on the problems of the New Testament text: **Harmonizations in the Caesarean Text of Mark** (1947), **The Inter-relationship of the Caesarean Manuscripts** (1949), and **A New Approach to the Old Egyptian Text** (1950): Professor C. S. C. Williams of Oxford University took cognizance of the first articles in **Alterations to the Text of the Synoptic Gospels and Acts** (1951), and the second was referred to by G. Zuntz, another Oxford Professor, in **The Text of the Epistles** (1953).

In his approach to the problems of textual criticism Dr. Hills employs a starting point which differs radically from the traditional method of textual criticism. In applying the same method to the study of the Biblical text as to that of other ancient writings, the critics, he maintains, ignore or deny the inspired character and providential preservation of the Biblical text. A consistently Christian method of textual criticism presupposes that "the original New Testament manuscripts were written under special conditions, under the inspiration of God, and the copies were made and preserved under special conditions, under the singular care and providence of God" (p. 9).

It is this emphasis that underlies his approach to the New Testament text: that God, by his providential care, has preserved the genuine New Testament text in unbroken continuity from apostolic times. The authentic text is not to be edited piecemeal from all extant manuscripts, but has been preserved intact in faithful copies of the original manuscripts of the New Testament. The Westminster Confession of Faith (1646), in somewhat less precise terms, affirms that the Scriptures were "immediately inspired of God, and by his singular care and providence kept pure in all ages." The author disagrees with Dr. B. B. Warfield's comment on this statement of the Confession. This assertion, says Dr. Warfield, is "to be understood not as if it affirmed that every copy has been kept pure from all error, but that the genuine text has been kept safe in the multitude of copies, so as never to be out of the reach of the Church of God, in the use of ordinary means" ("ordinary means" refers to the methods of Textual Criticism, which apply as well to ordinary uninspired writings). Dr. Hills holds that we could not hope to recover the genuine New Testament text from all the discrepant extant manuscripts by means of critical methods which deny or ignore the providential guardianship of the text. God's providential preservation of Scripture means that "God authenticates as well as preserves, that he has placed His Church in actual possession of the genuine text" (p. 28).

What, then, is the genuine text which God has preserved in all ages? Dr. Hills answers that the Byzantine text is a faithful reproduction of the original inspired text. This was the standard text of the Greek church during the Byzantine period, 312-1543. He holds that the Western and Alexandrian texts are corrupted revisions of the original New Testament text, while the Byzantine text remained pure.

This represents a radical break with the view of the New Testament manuscripts worked out by such notable scholars as Westcott and Hort, whose Greek New Testament has gained wide acceptance. These scholars held that the Syrian (Byzantine) text is later than the Western and Alexandrian texts and is inferior to them. The pure textual line, they held, is represented in a text they referred to as "Neutral" because it was supposed to be free from conspicuous defects. Dr. Hills possesses an expert and erudite knowledge of the whole field of Textual Criticism, which he uses to destroy confidence in the views of these and other critics. He answers the objections against the Byzantine text which have been held generally by New Testament critics.

The arguments in favor of the Byzantine text are presented in a scholarly manner. We are inclined, however, to question the validity of Dr. Hills' evaluation of work done by other critics of the New Testament text. In his claims for the Byzantine text, Dr. Hills recognizes divine providence as working through Byzantine monks in the Middle Ages, but virtually denies that the scholarship of modern textual critics, such as that of Tischendorf, Westcott and Hort, and Nestle, is within the range of the operation of divine providence. We may well question Dr. Hills' own scholarship when he argues in circular fashion that the Byzantine text has been providentially preserved and was prominent at the time of the Reformation; therefore the Byzantine text is necessarily the authentic text over against all other claimants. For obviously other types of texts have also been providentially preserved and may be the authentic text. Does Dr. Hills' argument not amount to a claim that the Byzantine text is the true text because it is the true text?

We agree with John H. Skilton when he writes (**The Infallible Word**, 1946, p. 162), "Textual criticism, in God's providence, is the means provided for ascertaining the true text of the Bible. . . No valid appeal can be made to the doctrine of providence to escape the necessity for a thoroughgoing enlightened scientific criticism. God's special care and providence cannot be expected to guarantee that the type of text used most widely in the past and for the longest time is, in every respect, the best text. All types of text in use in the past were essentially pure: but God, of course, did not grant to men in former times who followed erroneous principles of criticism the fruits of the use of correct principles. And it would be utterly wrong for us to permit our textual criticism to be shack-

led by the mistakes of the past. It would be absurd for us to expect the past ages, which, whatever their virtues, certainly had manifest limitations, to place practically the best possible text in our hands and to make textual criticism relatively unnecessary for us." This statement by an orthodox scholar reminds us that the **Textus Receptus**, based on the Byzantine text, which Dr. Hills defends so emphatically, was itself a product of a not-too-scholarly kind of textual criticism, as anyone knows who is familiar with the history of the New Testament text.

The **Textus Receptus**, on which the King James Version was based, was the first printed Greek New Testament; it was edited by Erasmus and published in Basel, Switzerland in 1516. Several editions of this text were published, and it received wide acceptance during the Protestant Reformation; hence it is sometimes called the Reformation Text. The name **Textus Receptus** comes from a statement appearing in the preface of the second edition of the Elzevirs, publishers at Leyden — "Textum ergo habes, nunc ab omnibus receptum: in quo nihil immutatum aut corruptam damus" (You have the text now received by all: in which we give nothing altered or corrupt). Hence the name, "Received Text".

Dr. Hills hold that "the **Textus Receptus** is the best printed text of the Greek New Testament that has ever been produced. This is because it agrees more closely than any other printed Greek New Testament text with the Byzantine text found in the majority of the extant Greek New Testament manuscripts" (p. 121).

Even if it should be granted that the **Textus Receptus** is the best possible text, it by no means follows that the King James Version is the best possible English translation of that text, as Dr. Hills argues. He makes some extravagant claims for the King James Version. Although he states that he is defending the Greek text underlying the King James Version and not the accuracy of the English renderings (p. 133), he regards the KJV as "a faithful translation into English of this same text" (p. 140). More than that, any attempt to correct the inaccuracies in translation of the KJV is "evidently to fly in the face of providence" (p. 142). "The providence of God has bestowed upon the King James Version advantages which no other translation shall ever possess" (p. 142, emphasis mine). We regard this argument from the past providence of God as virtually an absolutizing of history. Surely Dr. Hills does not regard history as an infallible standard by which to judge even the authenticity of Scripture. But how, except by regarding history as infallibly normative, can he venture to say that no future English translation can ever surpass the King James Version? Numerous instances from other translations could be cited which are beyond doubt more accurate reproductions, in English, of the **Textus Receptus** than is the King James Version.

Although we cannot subscribe to all his conclusions, we believe that Dr. Hills has made no small contribution to the field of New Testament textual criticism. In the light of more recent textual research and of the discovery of ancient papyri, some of the conclusions of Westcott and Hort and other critics appear highly questionable. There is some recent evidence pointing to an earlier origin of the Byzantine readings than was formerly supposed. Future developments in the study of New Testament manuscripts may attest more fully some of the claims of this Christian scholar.

— Joseph A. Hill

**RESPONSIBLE PROTESTANTISM**, by Cecil De Boer. Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., Grand Rapids 3, Michigan. 1957, pp. 247. \$3.50.

That Christian people are collectively responsible for the moral character of society is hardly open to dispute. The question is not whether Christians are accountable to God for social conditions, but how Christian responsibility may be discharged in terms of effective social action on the part of those who still envision, by faith, the **Civitas Dei** (Revelation 21:1, 2).

Christian responsibility means separation from the sins of society but not isolation from sinful society. The sub-title, **The Christian's Role in a Secular Society**, implies real social involvement and action, not mere pontificating about the evils of the modern world. The evils that are common in government, education, labor, etc., can be dealt with effectively only if the **Christian** conscience can be made the guide of the nation. It goes without saying, however, that "if Christian people are really to function as the conscience of a nation they must first have grappled with the deeply personal problems of a man's relation to God, since otherwise their social testimony will amount to little more than a futile social theory. . . . Our final aim is the extension of the Kingdom of God" (p. 104ff.).

It is on these presuppositions that the late Cecil De Boer, Professor of Philosophy at Calvin College from 1950 to 1955, outlined a rather definite program for **Christian social and political thought and action in America**.

Those who favor a constitutional recognition of the Lordship of Jesus Christ would be particularly interested in what he had to say in the essay on "Christian Action in America". Here he emphasized the moral character of the nation and its corporate responsibility to God. Much of American political theory, he went on to say, is the product of the eighteenth-century Enlightenment, so that, if historic origins of the people determine its political and social evolution, it is doubtful that the American state is a **Christian state**. "The only state that could be called positively **Christian** would be one which deliberately sought to further the interests of God's Kingdom by promoting the purest possible form of public

order and justice" (p. 97). But America is far from this ideal. "The American interpretation of popular sovereignty contains little that could be called positively Christian" (p. 95). American democracy being what it is, "we may as well make up our minds that in a nation such as ours the idea of a Constitutional recognition of Christ as Lord is almost wholly visionary" (p. 98). The Calvinist is definitely limited in what he can do in the way of political reformation, says the author. "Witnessing for the truth will probably be the main activity of an organization in this country interested in the duties of Christian citizenship. And we may as well become reconciled to the prospect of playing no significant role for a long while to come in the political fortunes of America" (p. 99ff). Nevertheless, "it seems rather obvious that the Christian elements in this country, Calvinistic or otherwise, must organize if they wish to function effectively as the conscience of the nation" (p. 100). Though at the present time the organization of a Christian political party seems unrealistic or impractical, we ought not to neglect the responsibilities of Christian citizenship (p. 102ff.).

Closely related to the topic of the Christian nation is the question of the relation of church and state, to which the author has devoted two chapters, "Church and State in a Christian Society", and "Church and State in a Secularized Society". These chapters are worthy of study by those who believe that "if a given political society were positively Christian, it would in its public utterances acknowledge the sovereignty of God" (p. 171). It has occurred to the present writer that those synodical committees that are concerned with social and political matters might gain from his book some new and worthwhile insights into old problems. Also this book would be especially helpful to teachers and professors of History, Social and Political Sciences, Industrial Relations, and Economics who wish to organize their courses and classroom lectures around a Christian principle of interpretation. They would find some new slants on issues confronting Christians in education, race relations, international relations, labor problems, the Ecumenical Movement, and modern science and technology, to name but a few of the areas in which Christian action is possible.

Christian action presupposes Christian thought. Any plan of Christian action involves a Christian philosophy. Those whose interest lies in the field of philosophy will notice that Protestant thought and action are frequently compared with Roman Catholic thought and action. It is at these points that Dr. De Boer did not get the unanimous assent of his original readers (Most of the articles were originally published in the now-defunct *Calvin Forum*). He thought that there is "something challenging and gallant" about Catholic philosophy, which he described as "an autonomous rational investigation of the natural truths of reason" (p. 70). While he repudiated the dogma of the autonomy of reason, a fundamental assump-

tion of Romanism, he could offer no effective challenge to the Roman Catholic system of thought because of his own enthusiasm for a Scholastic conception of degrees of knowledge. He did not emphasize the radical cleavage between Romanism's view of reality and that of the Reformed faith, but declared that "however much the spirit of Catholic and Calvinistic philosophy may differ, their conclusions coincide to a surprising degree" (p. 68). We find it difficult to see, except from the viewpoint of scholastic dimensionalism, that Romanism's "graduated order of reality" and its "hierarchy of the sciences" are "in startling correspondence" with the ordered levels or *wet-skringen* (modal law spheres) of Calvinistic philosophy. Nor can we accept Romanism's notion of an evil choice as "self-annihilation of the will" (p. 69), if this is taken to mean, as in Catholic thought, a falling back into non-being. While the author outlines with care the Christian Philosophy of the Idea of Law (Dooyeweerd), he makes, from the viewpoint of the Reformed faith, some undue concessions to Catholic thought.

— Joseph A. Hill

**CHRISTIANITY AND IDEALISM**, by Cornelius Van Til. The Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Co., P. O. Box 185, Nutley 10, N.J. 1955, pp. 139, paper cover. \$1.80.

Attempts have been made from time to time to show the reasonableness of Christianity by appealing to some forms of philosophy. Idealism in particular seems to concur with the Christian position. Accordingly, many theologians have held that Christianity must look to Idealism for a philosophical defense of its position. But Cornelius Van Til, Ph.D., Professor of Apologetics at Westminster Theological Seminary, holds that it is really unreasonable to seek support for Christianity in Idealistic philosophy, because Idealism and Christianity, he contends, are mutually exclusive. Christianity teaches man to worship and serve God the Creator. Idealism, like Pragmatism, teaches man to worship and serve the creature. Idealism has a language which resembles that of Christianity, but its thought content inevitably leads toward the position of Pragmatism, a form of anti-theistic thought. In ten articles he deals with the controversial relation between Idealism and Christianity, giving a critical analysis of the published works of some modern representatives of Idealist philosophy in contrast to his own position, that of the Reformed faith.

For those who are unfamiliar with philosophical terms, the following definitions may help to show the radical cleavage between Christianity and non-Christian philosophy.

**Pragmatism:** a movement in philosophy whose characteristic doctrine is that reality is bound up with experience and the meaning of reality is to be found in its **practical** significance. Prag-

matism is a form of materialism (i.e., it holds that material substance is the only existing reality) and includes the evolution concept (i.e., that reality is a self-developing whole).

**Idealism:** a school of philosophy which holds that Mind or Rational System is behind all that exists in the world of time and space. Our temporal (time conditioned) experience corresponds to an ordered system of Ideas which lies beyond the time-space universe as the ultimate Reality. This means that a system of ideas forms the basis of all reality and meaning.

**Theism:** the biblical view of God, especially as he is related to the creation, namely, the notion of an absolute, self-sufficient, personal God. Theism is the central metaphysical concept of Christianity; God is for the Christian the basis of all reality and meaning.

Van Til's thesis: Idealism, although at some points apparently very close to the Christian theistic position is, no less than Pragmatism, the opposite of Christianity. Although Idealism constantly avows its allegiance to Christianity it vacillates between the Christian position and that of Pragmatism and in the end comes to stand with Pragmatism.

Let us now follow briefly the argument of the first article, "God and the Absolute".

Van Til carefully shows that a difference of the first magnitude exists between Christianity and Pragmatism, since the latter reduces God to a finite aspect of the universe and advocates a religion without God. Nor is its epistemology (theory of knowledge) any better from the Christian viewpoint than its metaphysics (theory of being). For if facts exist independently of both God and man, as Pragmatism holds, then it follows that both God and man must learn and interpret facts as they occur successively in time. Needless to say, Pragmatism has no use for a God who knows the end from the beginning because he has "foreordained whatsoever comes to pass."

Idealism, in contrast to Pragmatism, holds that the category of interpretation (ideas) precedes that of existence. It posits a rational system as the basis of all our experience. It holds that our experience would be meaningless unless there be complete rationality beyond and prior to our experience. This "basis of the Universe" is what the Idealist philosopher calls the Absolute or God.

On these points Idealism seems to concur with Christianity, which holds that God is the source of facts and that comprehensive rationality (i.e., God's decree) is the basis of all facts of history and experience. Van Til goes on to show, however, that we must not hastily conclude that the Idealist notion of the Absolute is identical with the Christian conception of God. Al-

though the terms "Absolute" and "God" are used interchangeably by Idealist philosophers, their meaning is more in line with Pragmatism than with Theism. For inherent in the Idealist notion of the Absolute (transcendent rationality) is the assumption that rationality is the same for both God and man. All thought, human and divine, is of one type, according to Idealism. All thought, human and divine, is supratemporal (independent of space-and-time experience). Thus man's thought is on a par with God's thought and the interpretation of reality is a co-operative enterprise between God and man which implies that man ultimately interprets reality for himself. Herein lies the root of the difference between Christianity and Idealism. For from this Idealistic assumption of the identity of human and divine thought, it follows that the Universe is a wider concept than "God". In the last analysis it is the Universe that is really the Absolute of Idealism. "God" and man are correlatives within the universe; together they form the convex and concave sides of the same disc. The Absolute is not God but the universe inclusive of both "God" and man. They are equally ultimate aspects of the one reality. Thus we are back to the relativism of Pragmatism. Idealism with its demand for complete rationality for both man and God has, like Pragmatism, made God dependent on the universe. This is not Christianity.

Herein also lies the basic contradiction inherent in the Idealistic position. Idealism posits the Absolute as **beyond** — beyond the space-time universe and therefore beyond our comprehension; at the same time it demands that all reality be perspicuous to thought, human thought as well as divine. But a God who is really transcendent, really beyond experience, sets a limit to human thought. Hence the notion of the Absolute, if taken seriously, would destroy entirely Idealistic logic.

Van Til exposes the anti-theistic implications of the "best" representatives of Idealistic philosophy, F. H. Bradley and Bernard Bosanquet. The anti-theistic tendencies implicit in the Idealism of these earlier representatives have become explicit in more recent Idealism. In view of the difficulties of Bosanquet's position, J. E. McTaggart, A. S. Pringle-Pattison and others have logically denied transcendence altogether and have come to an all-inclusive temporalism (non-timeless basis of the universe). Even more consistent with the nature of Idealism, Pringle-Pattison, J. Watson and C. C. J. Webb discarded the Absolute and frankly rejected a non-temporal Beyond as inconsistent with Idealistic logic. Thus the history of Idealism justifies Van Til's criticism that it is inherently anti-theistic. For later Idealism approaches very near to Pragmatism in its theory of reality, theory of knowledge, philosophy of religion, and ethics. God is ruled out of all these areas. The Absolute has receded into the background and has be-

come nothing more than a logical principle. It is clear, then, that Idealism is not a type of Christian philosophy, as some have contended, but is at best a form of idolatry.

It goes without saying that the gospel is for the university scholar as well as for the farmer and merchant. We are convinced, therefore, that if Christian ministers and teachers are to bear witness influentially for the truth of Christianity against the claims of unbelieving scholarship, they must be students of philosophy and apologetics as well as of evangelism and pastoral calling. No seminary curriculum can be adequate for our times that does not teach tomorrow's ministers how to defend the Christian faith against all contemporary forms of anti-Christian thought. Dr. Van Til has through the years contended against Idealism, Existentialism, Neo-Orthodoxy and other forms of error, and we believe that this and his other writings in the field of apologetics constitute a defense of Christianity that is consistent with the Word of God.

— Joseph A. Hill

**THE GREAT TEXTS OF THE BIBLE: VOLUME VII (MATTHEW)**, edited by James Hastings. William B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., Grand Rapids 3, Mich. 1958 (reprint; date of original publication not given), pp. 451. \$4.00.

The present volume published by Eerdmans is a reprint of the original publication and is another example of the beautiful job of printing and binding that we have become accustomed to expect from this company. The editor, James Hastings, was a Scottish divine of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries (1852-1922). The flap informs us that this is but one of a twenty volume set, and that the set itself is only one of six multiple-volume sets which the author-editor produced in the years of his retirement. This set, entitled **The Great Texts of the Bible**, is referred to as "a classic" and styled "The Aristocrat of Pulpit Preaching Aids." It is hailed with enthusiasm by religious leaders north and south and is highly recommended to the preacher-public by the publishers.

The volume under review is on Matthew's Gospel and deals with twenty-seven texts and topics. They begin with "The Name of Jesus" (Matt. 1:21). Eight of the texts are taken from the Sermon on the Mount. "The Physician," "The Great Invitation," "Rest Under the Yoke," "My Church," "The Transfiguration," "Eternal Life," "The Blood of the Covenant" and "Christ's Parting Charge" are some of the others.

This reviewer may as well begin by acknowledging his deficiencies which include a comparative unacquaintance with the author and his output. Something has been known about the man, although nothing at first hand. The same goes for the large majority of the writers quoted and

recommended. For most if not all of those with whom he is on speaking terms the reviewer has a large measure of respect and admiration.

Considering the editor's nationality it is only natural that most of the writers cited are British and especially Scottish. Of the authors listed for supplementary study there are 326 by actual count, and quotations from these and other writers run into the hundreds. By these facts as stated we may form some estimate of the erudition of the author.

Generally well known and esteemed among these are such names as that of the great Bible expositor Alexander Maclaren; New Testament scholars such as B. F. Westcott and F. J. A. Hort; and preachers like G. Campbell Morgan, Charles Spurgeon and J. H. Jowett. Also on the credit side is a quotation from Dr. G. Vos, the well known Princeton scholar of the period. No question about the orthodoxy of the volume on that point!

On the debit side, to begin with, it may as well be said that heterodoxy characterizes the volume as a whole. The author's own statements relative to the person and work of Christ are of doubtful orthodoxy, especially his representations concerning the death of Christ and the atonement. Typical of the work as a whole is a very decided leaning toward and dependence upon the mighty host of modern liberal preacher-writers. Present throughout is the preoccupation of the liberal with the ethical to the neglect of the factual. Really sound quotations are comparatively rare. From time to time the liberal doctrine of the universal Fatherhood of God and human brotherhood is set forth. The writings of Harvard Unitarian Francis Peabody are rather frequently quoted and recommended. One quoted writer recommends that the Christian missionary should not fall short of real and deep respect for all religions. Quotations and recommended reference works of David Swing, Lyman Abbott, Horace Bushnell and Francis Peabody may serve to show which way the wind is blowing.

The volume in question might possibly be classified as "pay dirt" provided one had the time and patience to work it over. An effect in consequence of the fact that the book is a reprint and of British origin is that the writers quoted and the authors recommended are now largely unknown and forgotten. Anyone interested in making a study of liberal preaching of a half century and more ago will find it invaluable.

Expressive of the reviewer's viewpoint relative to all such preaching aids is the following from the pen of Dr. Francis L. Patton:

"A man who makes a serious study of this subject (Homiletics) and brings to it a well-furnished mind, will need none of the popular homiletical helps and can afford to throw his Dictionary of Illustrations out of the window." "A full man, with a fresh mind, after sufficient brooding

on his text, will get down to the roots of the text, will see what nobody else will see in the same light; for the thing seen, to use a Kantianism, is not the text-in-itself, but the text-in-itself in relation to the man-in-himself; and this being the case, if the man-in-himself be a man — that is, if he has grown out of his babyhood and rounded into a separate mind — the possibilities are infinite respecting the sermons that may be preached from any text. And so I say, get powers of expression, get knowledge, get thought-power, get rich Christian experience, get a knowledge of homiletical *technique*, and then let the sermon be yours — nay, rather, let it be you. Let it be an arrow shot from the tense bow-string of conviction and it will hit the mark every time."

— John C. Rankin

**JONATHAN EDWARDS' SERMON OUTLINES**, ed. by Sheldon B. Quincer. Wm. B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., Grand Rapids 3, Mich. 1958, pp. 164. \$2.50.

**THE SELECT WORKS OF JONATHAN EDWARDS**, Vol. I. Banner of Truth Trust, 58 Highgate West Hill, London, N. 6, England. 1958, pp. 176. \$2.95.

**JONATHAN EDWARDS ON EVANGELISM**, ed. by Carl J. C. Wolf. Wm. B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., Grand Rapids 3, Mich. 1958, pp. 137. \$2.00.

The bicentenary of the death of Jonathan Edwards sees a new widespread interest in his writings. This man, in the words of B. B. Warfield, "stands out as the one figure of real greatness in the intellectual life of colonial America . . . To theology he gave his nature years and his most prolonged and searching thought, especially to the problems of sin and salvation. . . . It was in his sermons that Edwards' studies bore their richest fruit. . . . The effect of such preaching delivered with the force of the sincerest conviction, was overwhelming."

The three books under review illustrate three different ways of seeking to recapture the message of this outstanding theologian and evangelist. Dr. Quincer has selected thirty-five of the best sermons of Jonathan Edwards, and has outlined them to summarise the preacher's message. Dr. Quincer's skill in giving us the gist of Edwards' thought is undeniable, and there is much that is suggestive in his book. And yet one feels that this is not the most satisfactory way of recapturing the message of any preacher. A skeleton, however, skilfully decked out — and there can be no denying of Dr. Quincer's skill — is still a skeleton.

A second possibility is to do what Mr. Iain Murray and the Banner of Truth Trust are doing not only with the works of Jonathan Edwards but also with other writings of previous genera-

tions, and to republish books which have proved themselves in the past to be of inestimable value. This volume contains Edwards' "Narrative of Surprising Conversions," describing the great revival of 1735 at Northampton, and three of his sermons printed in full. The account of the revival, with its clear insight into all the issues which were involved, is most valuable in view of much inaccurate thinking about revival in the present day, and we are grateful to the Banner of Truth Trust for making it accessible. The three sermons quoted reward careful reading, but contain some of the repetition which was so characteristic of eighteenth century writings, and which lessens their appeal for today. It is not at all to disparage Jonathan Edwards' own words to say that the most valuable part of this book, for this reviewer at least, is the most competent memoir and assessment of his life and work by Mr. Murray.

So we come to the third method of seeking to recapture the greatness of the thought of the past with Dr. Wolf's digest of Jonathan Edwards' thought on Evangelism. Digests have often been given a bad name as encouraging mental laziness, and in many cases the charge can be adequately substantiated. But not here. Where one is dealing with a style which was characteristic of its age, and where that style is frankly verbose and repetitious, the one satisfactory solution is to be found in the kind of digest which Dr. Wolf has given us, which "gives the gist of Edwards' most important writings on evangelism, and it does this in Edwards' own words." Such a digest bears less of the print of an editor's hand than does a book of sermon outlines such as Dr. Quincer's — it is instructive to compare the two abbreviations of Edwards' famous sermon on "Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God" given by Dr. Quincer and Dr. Wolf — and it is more likely to give an accurate presentation of the writer's thought.

Might one, with considerable hesitation, make the suggestion to the Banner of Truth Trust, which is doing such fine work in bringing out of its treasure things old and new, that it might consider the possibility of doing with other writings what Dr. Wolf has done so adequately with Jonathan Edwards' thought on Evangelism? Mr. Murray in his Memoir has shown us how well-fitted he is for such a task. But perhaps this reviewer is a product of the age of Digests!

— Hugh J. Blair

**THE RIDDLE OF LIFE**, by J. H. Bavinck. Wm. B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., Grand Rapids 3, Mich. 1958, pp. 128. \$2.00.

This book, by Professor J. H. Bavinck, of the Free University of Amsterdam, deals with some of the problems which arise in the minds of thinking people — where have we come from,

where are we going, what are we in ourselves, how does God exist, how are we to explain the problems of suffering and evil? Have our scientific capacities and our educational capabilities grown far beyond our moral powers? How can we avoid making gods out of money, honour and pleasure, and wherein does the uniqueness of Christianity lie? It might be thought impossible to deal with all these problems in a book of 128 pages, and yet Professor Bavinck gives a most lucid and orderly answer to them, showing finally that their solution is to be found only in Jesus Christ.

Summaries of ground already traversed and most effective illustrations are among the things which show Professor Bavinck to be a teacher of extraordinary ability. Perhaps his best illustration is found in a chapter which he calls "God's Plan: The Great Chess Game." One of the problems which perplexes most of us is the problem of evil. If God is all-powerful and all-loving, how are we to explain the power of evil in the world? So often it seems as if the power of evil was too much for God. In answer Professor Bavinck pictures a game of chess between an expert and a novice. The novice makes his moves, and at times meets with some measure of success, and even at times feels confident of victory. But as the game goes on, and his moves are not only countered but actually used by the expert to further his own plan of campaign, it becomes more and more evident not only that the novice will suffer ultimate defeat but that his apparent temporary victories contribute their share to that ultimate defeat. The contest between black and white in the world is just like that. Black, standing for all that is evil, may seem to have its victories; and white, standing for all that is good, may seem at times to be facing defeat. "But all of black's moves, no matter how brilliant, . . . fit into white's wise master-plan. The one Chess-player has the game in hand and every play of His opponent is ruled by Him. Ultimately it will become evident that everything which seemed to be a conquest by black was nothing but His single might triumph."

There is an excellent chapter on pleasure as one of our idols: the practical aspect of the book is as successful as the theoretical.

If we had not been told, it would have been quite impossible to realise that this book is a translation from the Dutch edition, and one can only marvel at the linguistic skill of Professor J. J. Lamberts, Assistant Professor of English, Northwestern University, who made the translation.

It cannot be said often that a book from a philosophical viewpoint is hard to lay down; but that was certainly the case with this book and this reviewer.

— Hugh J. Blair

**CHRISTIANITY VERSUS THE CULTS**, by J. K. Van Baalen. Wm. B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., Grand Rapids 3, Mich. 1958, pp. 136. \$2.00.

Mr. Van Baalen in his larger work, **The Chaos of Cults**, has already shown himself a most competent writer on the cults of today. This book, the publishers tell us, "contains all the essential material of the larger book in a condensed and concise form, and it will prove of inestimable help to the average layman who has no time to study the larger book." This book, however, is not an abridgement of the earlier work, but can stand on its own as an effective statement of what is believed and taught by most of the popular "isms" of today. The reviewer has little to add to what has already been written about the larger book in an earlier issue of **Blue Banner Faith and Life**, except to repeat the wish that more might be said to show that the cults often have their rise and gain their strength from the fact that some Biblical truth is not being adequately taught by the orthodox churches. Mr. Van Baalen's last three chapters, containing a positive statement of the essentials of the Christian faith, are a little too sketchy to be of maximum value, though they do show the importance of definite doctrinal teaching. Within the limits which it sets for itself this book should prove of very real service to Christians who are confronted by the challenge of the cults.

— Hugh J. Blair

**PARTNERS FOR LIFE: HAPPINESS IN MARRIAGE** (Symposium). Baker Book House, Grand Rapids 6, Mich. 1958, pp. 47, paper cover. 75 cents; \$7.50 per dozen.

This little booklet on happiness in marriage, consisting of five chapters, written by two pastors, two professors and a physician, looks at marriage from the Christian point of view, and stresses the importance of Christian standards in every part of marriage. This booklet could most successfully be put in the hands of all young people looking forward to marriage, and indeed of all who would understand the true basis of a real marriage and a real home.

— Hugh J. Blair

**PERFECTIONISM**, by Benjamin B. Warfield. Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Co., P.O. Box 185, Nutley 10, N. J. 1958, pp. 464. \$4.95.

This is the fifth of a series of volumes in which the Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Company make available to present-day readers the writings of B. B. Warfield, first gathered together and published in a limited edition by the Oxford University Press about thirty years ago. This particular volume is especially relevant today in view of the many widely divergent lines of teaching on the subject of "Holiness," ranging from extreme Antinomianism on the one hand to Sinless Perfection on the other.

Let it be said at once that this book is invaluable as a study of the subject with which it deals. As Dr. Craig writes in the preface, "These studies. . . have lost little, if any, of their value with the passing years either for those who would know something of the past history of Perfectionism or those who would know its present significance." We are most grateful to the Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Company for making them available to a new circle of readers.

One feels at times that the book suffers a little from the method of its publication. It is, like the rest of Warfield's volumes, a compilation of articles contributed at different times to different periodicals; and, while the different chapters present a systematic and orderly discussion of the subject, there is inevitably some repetition of material. For example, the chapter on "The Theology of Charles G. Finney" restates some aspects of Finney's teaching which have been referred to in earlier chapters. The fact that much of the book was written to deal with the teaching of particular Perfectionists means that one sometimes gets the impression that this was merely a historical controversy; but if one is careful to remember that similar teaching is recurrent in a new generation, the value of Warfield's analysis of it and Scriptural answer to it is still abundantly apparent.

The lack of an Index is a defect in a book which deservedly is a standard work on the subject.

Warfield leaves no doubts about the weaknesses of Perfectionism. It is essentially Pelagian, for in effect it makes the Christian the employer and the Holy Spirit the employee in the work of sanctification. "God stands always helplessly by until man calls him into action by opening a channel into which his energies may flow. It sounds dreadfully like turning on the steam or the electricity." It separates sanctification from justification as a distinct attainment in Christ: it is thought of as a wholly new acquisition, sought and obtained by an entirely fresh act of faith. It externalizes sanctification, reducing the Spirit's work to the mere preventing of sinful acts and excluding from it altogether the positive renewal of the believer's person. "At the most," writes Dr. Craig in his Preface, summarising Warfield's view, "it saves from sinning but not from sin, that is from 'known sin,' but not from the 'corruption of man's heart.' And this because it ignores the fact that sin consists of any lack of conformity unto the law of God as well as transgression of that law."

For this reviewer perhaps the most valuable part of the whole book is the Appendix, where a sermon on "Entire Sanctification" based on 1 Thess. 5:23, 24 gives the Scriptural teaching of a true Perfectionism — an entire sanctification of the entire man, depending only on God's almighty and unfailing faithfulness, and to be accomplished by a process that finds its completion only at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.

— Hugh J. Blair

FAITH AND PERSEVERANCE, by G. C. Berkouwer. Wm. B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., Grand Rapids 3, Mich. 1958, pp. 256. \$4.00.

This volume in the series "Studies in Dogmatics" by G. C. Berkouwer, Professor of Systematic Theology in the Free University of Amsterdam, is a heartening contribution to the field of systematic theology, and to the practical life of the Christian, alike. It can be read with great profit, both by theologian and by layman. It should be in everyone's library.

One might wonder what the author could add on the subject of Christian Perseverance, so fully delineated in Reformation and Puritan literature. It might seem, for the Calvinist, that the last word on this subject has long since been written. What more can be said than that perseverance is as sure as sovereign election?

Berkouwer recognizes that the doctrine was well stated by Calvin and other Reformers, and beautifully set forth in the Confessions, and he has no intention of adding anything startlingly new or different. What he does intend to do is to restate the doctrine in terms of the contemporary theological climate. He is concerned, on the one hand, that perseverance may be misrepresented as a static, formalized generalization, to be accepted as a "logicistic" revelation, without bearing upon "the tremendous mobility and transitoriness of human life" (p. 10). And he is concerned, on the other, that the doctrine, so precious in Scripture, is attacked as an impossibility by the "existentialism" of our day.

The chief purpose of this treatise is to demonstrate that Christian perseverance is neither an abstract, formal revelation, needing only to be particularized for each individual, nor an existential tension in which the believer strives to persevere, independently of God's grace, or at best, synergistically with it.

Throughout Berkouwer argues that perseverance, as the continuum of faith, is dependent solely on the grace of God. Grace is all, and human merit — including faith — is nothing. He will not even allow that faith is the subjective complement to the objective grace of God, as Reformed Christians sometimes mistakenly put it (pp. 45, 105). It is only because God loves us from all eternity that we believe and persevere, notwithstanding the terrible deceitfulness and power of sin, and this is the "Consolation of Perseverance" (Chap. 7).

The grace of God is existentially, that is, concretely and individually revealed, precisely to confront and overcome the existential sin which is ever with and in us. Thus there is a never-ending tension in this life between grace and sin, which sometimes seems all but unbearable, yet a tension in which the Christian's faith is upheld by God's grace, and Satan is already defeated.

There is an especially fine evaluation of the Lutheran position on perseverance in Chapter 3 ("Three Controversies"), in which Berkouwer expresses genuine feeling for it, and evidently strives

for reconciliation. "In the disputes with Lutheranism one discovers that it is not a matter of Calvinism against synergism, but of a divergence in which suddenly one recognizes in the other the *sola fide* and the *sola gratia*" (p. 63). (Note: *sola fide* is the Latin for "by faith alone"; *sola gratia* is Latin for "by grace alone." — Editor). ". . . In this controversy it was the intention of both sides to express fundamental Scriptural thoughts" (p. 72). He irenically concludes, "if the Reformed on their part will continually warn against the danger of speculation and hold fast in simple faith to Jesus Christ as the mirror of our election, it may be possible that the Lutherans on their part will again reflect on the alienability of grace and again consider the testimony of the Scriptures concerning the immutable favor of God" (p. 80).

In Chapter 5 ("Perseverance and Prayer") there is a salutary exposition of the blessings of intercession, of the intercessory work of Christ, and the Comfort of the Holy Spirit. Here is rich food — and nourishing — for meditation.

This reviewer has only two questions of any importance. The one has to do with Berkouwer's understanding of Hebrews 6, an admittedly crucial passage for the doctrine of perseverance (pp. 117 ff.). The author seems to hold that the passage refers to true Christians and the genuine marks of Christians (verses 4, 5), and that this is simply a practical admonition to remain true to the faith, and not "a view concerning the apostasy of the saints" (p. 120).

In this he appears to differ from Calvin and others, who have held that the marks in verses 4 and 5 are not exclusively those of a true Christian, but the outward characteristics of all professing believers, true or false, and that the whole passage does refer to apostasy, albeit not of true believers, but of those who "went out from us, because they were not of us" (1 John 2:19). In the light of the entire New Testament context, this reviewer prefers Calvin's exegesis.

The other question refers to the assurance of salvation, a subject certainly conjoined with that of perseverance. Perhaps Berkouwer takes that up in another volume. Certain it is that the will to persevere will be affected by the strength or weakness of the sense of assurance of salvation, and by the essential Spirit-indwelt nature of assurance.

The frequently used words "ontic" (ontological?) and "logicistic" seem formidable, but otherwise the English translation is lucid and smooth.

Every Christian would do well to read this book carefully, and apply its magnificent insights to the depth and breadth of his spiritual life.

— Victor Bucci

**REFLECTIONS ON THE PSALMS**, by C. S. Lewis. Harcourt, Brace and Company, 750 Third Ave., New York 17, N. Y. 1958, pp. 151. \$3.50.

In our last issue it was announced that a review of C. S. Lewis' new book on the Psalms would be published in the present issue. It is

with regret that I must now say that the publication of the review will have to be postponed until a later issue. It will appear, D. V. in the third or fourth issue of 1959. The reasons for this postponement are as follows:

In the first place, the copyright notice in the volume is worded in such stringent terms that permission must be obtained from the publishers before a single direct quotation from the book can be used. It is almost impossible to review such a book fairly and intelligently without direct quotation from it. If the copyright notice means what it says, the book may not be quoted even in reviews. And there is not sufficient time to obtain the needed permission before the present issue of the magazine goes to press.

In the second place, after having purchased the book and read a considerable portion of it, I have found it seriously unsound in so many respects that I feel I cannot publish a fair review of it until I have studied it much more thoroughly than it is possible for me to do before the present issue of the magazine goes to press.

I am deeply saddened by what Lewis has written on the Psalms — the more so because I have greatly enjoyed several of his books and have profited spiritually by more than one of them. The world-wide popularity and influence of C. S. Lewis in Christian circles will certainly give his **Reflections on the Psalms** a large circulation and reading. It will be instructive to note what the reaction to this book will be in various sectors of the religious press.

— J. G. Vos

**THE TWO EMPIRES IN JAPAN**, by John M. L. Young. The Independent Board for Presbyterian Foreign Missions, 246 West Walnut Lane, Philadelphia 44, Pa. 1958, pp. 234. \$2.00.

This volume deserves to be designated "Book of the Year" in the field of foreign missions. In my judgment it is the most important book on foreign missions to appear in recent years. For sheer relevance and downright facing of realities it is outstanding. And in addition to its value as a storehouse of information and interpretation, it is interestingly written, very readable, and well illustrated with many photographs. The author has served for many years as a missionary in the Far East — first in Manchuria, then in Central China, and finally in Japan. He has been in close contact with the changing scene in Japan since shortly after the end of World War II, and before that, as a missionary in Japanese-occupied Manchuria, he could observe Japanese policy toward the Christian Church at close range.

The Foreword to this book is written by Rev. Samuel E. Boyle, well-known missionary of the Reformed Presbyterian Church. Like Mr. Young, Mr. Boyle has served many years in the Orient, first in China and then in Japan. Mr. Boyle heartily commends the book to the Christian

public. Concerning the viewpoint of the author he says:

"The religious standpoint of the author is that of Biblical theism as this faith is set forth in the Westminster Confession of Faith. He is a militant defender of historic Christianity and firmly holds to the faith that the Bible is the authoritative, inerrant, and verbally inspired Word of God, our only infallible rule for faith and practice. It is from this absolute Biblical ground that the author views the struggles of the Japanese Christian movement under the State.

"Mr. Young believes in a Christianity in full harmony with the Holy Scriptures and the creeds of the church. Because this faith is grounded in the very Words of Christ which will outlast the heavens and the earth, because it rests on the Scriptures which Jesus said could not be broken, this must be the Christianity which triumphs in Japan. Any diluted substitutes cannot stand because the judgment of God is against them."

The sub-title of the book is "Centennial Reflections," for 1959 is the one hundredth anniversary of the beginning of Protestant missionary work in Japan. The early history of Christianity in Japan is told with fascinating narration; the many photographs of early missionaries and historic scenes add greatly to this part of the book, as indeed the wealth of illustrations adds to the book as a whole. As we read we see the unfolding drama — the growth and influence of Christianity in Japan paralleled by the increasing determination of the State to neutralize and control this powerful new faith. The tragic story of the compromises of the many, and the heroic story of the faithfulness of the few, are told with dramatic realism.

"Freedom, Christendom's Gift to Conquered Japan" is the title of the chapter which tells of the first real establishment of religious and civil liberty in Japan, with the allied occupation under General MacArthur. Unlike many ecumenical church leaders who had tried to maintain that Japan's restraints upon Christianity were not essentially evil but should be accepted by the Church, the occupation authorities saw with perfect clearness the evil, tyrannical, totalitarian character of the Japanese laws and policy about religion, and quickly effected a drastic and total change to real freedom.

The result of freedom in Japan was the influx of missionaries in large numbers. Japan was evangelized as never before. But with the restoration of full sovereignty to Japan the tide began to turn and now there are again ominous signs, noted especially by those like Mr. Young, who knew Japan as it was before and during World War II. The book points out the very serious nature of some of the changes that are taking place today, and closes by appraising the possibilities and opportunities of the future in Japan.

This book faces realities — the grim reality of powerful opposition which the missionary cause must face, and the sobering, sad reality of compromise with evil on the part of much of the nominal Christian force in Japan. This is not one of those missionary books that show only the bright side of the picture in a series of stories about the conversion of individuals. The author comes to grips with that which blocks and threatens the cause of Christ in Japan. He is not pessimistic; on the contrary, he is optimistic, but not because of his reading of current conditions — he is optimistic because of his faith in the unbreakable promises of the omnipotent God.

Women's Missionary Societies could not choose a better book than this, I feel, for reading and study. It will not fill you with the "inspiration" of a comfortable feeling that everything is fine, but it may break down your easy false optimism and send you to your knees in prayer to the God who holds the nations in the hollow of His hand. I recommend this book most heartily to all friends of foreign missions and all who love the Reformed Faith and recognize its world-wide importance.

— J. G. Vos

VACATION BIBLE SCHOOL LESSONS AND SUPPLIES, published by Great Commission Publications, 627 Schaff Bldg., Philadelphia 2, Pa. 1959. Sample kit of materials, \$3.75. Kit is returnable for credit or refund within 3 weeks of time received.

Great Commission Publications is the trade name of the Committee on Christian Education of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church. Besides the sample kit of materials listed above, which is available at \$3.75 with privilege of return in good condition for credit or refund, they issue a free **VBS Guide and Catalogue** which not only lists all the materials, but contains many worthwhile suggestions as to how to have a successful vacation Bible School in your church.

It is a pleasure to recommend these materials heartily because they are true to the Bible and to the Reformed Faith which our Church holds as its interpretation of the Bible. Many available Vacation Bible School materials which are technically well gotten up are slanted in the direction of an Arminian type of theology or other errors. These helps are sound — they ring true to the Westminster Confession of Faith and other standards of the Reformed Faith. Moreover they are very well prepared from the technical and pedagogical point of view. As soon as you open the packet and look them over, you will be impressed with the fact that these are high quality materials and will be very nice to work with. Their attractiveness is outstanding.

As last year, so this year, we are glad to note the complete absence of so-called pictures of Jesus from these materials. Comparatively good materials from other sources practically always abound in these pictures which are religiously offensive to many of our readers. Being com-

mitted to the exclusive use of the Psalms as songs to be used in worship, we do not approve of the inclusion of two or three hymns in the children's books, though this feature is found in nearly all VBS materials from any source. We are pleased to note that a metrical version of part of Psalm 19, taken from the United Presbyterian Psalter, is included with the hymns.

The theme of the Primary materials is "Fathers and Sons"; of the Junior materials, "The Ten Commandments"; and of the Intermediate materials, "The Exodus." The last named includes some good material from archaeological sources. There are good pupils' workbooks and excellent handwork materials, as well as other helps.

If you are planning a Vacation Bible School for this summer and have not yet ordered your materials, send for a sample kit and catalogue of these materials before you decide what to use. You will not be disappointed with the character and quality of these supplies issued by the Great Commission Publications.

— J. G. Vos

**"FUNDAMENTALISM" AND THE WORD OF GOD**, by J. I. Packer, Wm. B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., Grand Rapids 3, Mich. 1958, pp. 191, paper cover. \$1.25. Available in Britain and Ireland from The Tyndale Press, 39 Bedford Square, London W. C. 1, England.

This little pocket-sized paperback volume may prove to be the most important book of recent years in the field of popular defence of Biblical Christianity. It reminds one of Machen's **Christianity and Liberalism** which was published some thirty years ago. The present book may be said to pick up the torch where Machen laid it down, and to hold it high to shed its light on the confused religious and theological scene of the present day.

The author, Dr. J. I. Packer, is a British scholar of repute, being Senior Tutor of Tyndale Hall, Bristol, England. His painstaking, thorough scholarship is evident throughout the book, as is the clarity and force of his thinking. Anyone who thinks that great scholarship means obscurity should read this book; the author's style, like Machen's, is clear, simple and pointed. In the general "low visibility" of today's religious atmosphere, this book penetrates through what is superficial and lays bare the heart of the real issues. Among other topics, the author discusses Authority, Scripture, Faith, Reason and Liberalism. He does not like the term "Fundamentalism," but is concerned about the present polemic against "Fundamentalism" in Britain. He says that "anti-fundamentalism" has become a widespread fashion. While recognizing that the term "Fundamentalism" is variously used and that some who are called "Fundamentalists" are guilty of various crudities and errors, he convincingly

ly shows that the real animus of "anti-fundamentalism" is against what is really the truth of God.

The author defends evangelical Christianity against many false charges, such as that it insists on taking everything in the Bible literally. He argues keenly for the infallibility, inerrancy and plenary inspiration of the Scriptures, defending these points against present-day attacks from all quarters. Not only Liberalism, but also Neo-orthodoxy comes in for searching criticism and is found seriously faulty.

This reviewer does not fully agree with the author in his statement that in the Bible real events, such as the story of Adam and Eve, may be recorded in a symbolic manner (pp. 99, 104 ff.). At the same time it must be recognized that, as Dr. Packer rightly points out, there is a vast difference between saying that a real historical event, such as Adam's fall, may be recorded in symbolic terms, and saying, as Neo-orthodoxy does, that it was not a real historical event.

This book cuts with razor-edge. It should be read by every minister and theological student. Every intelligent Christian who is not sure where he stands on such issues as the infallibility of the Bible should by all means read this book. After reading this book, I venture to predict, he will know where he stands, and if he has the spiritual perception which comes from the regenerating work of the Holy Spirit, he will stand on the right side of the issues.

The Eerdmans firm is to be commended for making this very important book available in the United States at the modest price of \$1.25. This will make wide distribution possible. Why not give a copy to your pastor and to that boy or girl away at college?

— J. G. Vos

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## ***Financial Help Needed***

As this issue goes to press we are about \$400.00 short of the amount needed to complete publication for the year 1959 without a deficit. For this we are dependent almost entirely on contributions, as few subscriptions can be expected during the summer and fall months. Contributions from readers in any amount, no matter how small, will be gratefully received and promptly acknowledged. We are trying to bear witness to divine truth, including neglected areas of truth. If you conscientiously approve of this testimony, please consider whether you are in a position to help without slighting your prior obligations to the Lord's Church and Kingdom.

J. G. Vos, Editor and Manager  
3408 7th Avenue  
Beaver Falls, Pennsylvania, U. S. A.



**BLUE  
BANNER  
FAITH  
AND  
LIFE**

VOLUME 14

JULY-SEPTEMBER, 1959

NUMBER 3

**Brethren, be not children in understanding:  
howbeit in malice be ye children, but in understand-  
ing be men.**

**I Corinthians 14:20**

**A Quarterly Publication Devoted to Expounding, Defending and Applying the  
System of Doctrine set forth in the Word of God and Summarized in the Standards  
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## *Passing Away*

By Christina G. Rosetti

Passing away, saith the World, passing away:  
Chances, beauty and youth sapp'd day by day:  
Thy life never continueth in one stay.  
Is the eye waxen dim, is the dark hair changing to gray  
That hath won neither laurel nor bay?  
I shall clothe myself in Spring and bud in May;  
Thou, root-stricken, shalt not rebuild thy decay  
On my bosom for aye.  
Then I answer'd: Yea.

Passing away, saith my Soul, passing away:  
With its burden of fear and hope, of labor and play,  
Hearken what the past doth witness and say:  
Rust in thy gold, a moth is in thine array,  
A canker is in thy bud, thy leaf must decay.  
At midnight, at cockcrow, at morning, one certain day,  
Lo, the Bridegroom shall come and shall not delay:  
Watch thou and pray.  
Then I answer'd: Yea.

Passing away, saith my God, passing away:  
Winter passeth after the long delay:  
New grapes on the vine, new figs on the tender spray,  
Turtle calleth turtle in Heaven's May.  
Though I tarry, wait for me, trust me, watch and pray.  
Arise, come away; night is past, and lo, it is day;  
My love, my sister, my spouse, thou shalt hear me say —  
Then I answer'd: Yea.

---

## *He Keeps the Key*

Author Unknown

Is there some problem in your life to solve,  
Some passage seeming full of mystery?  
God knows, who brings the hidden things to light.  
He keeps the key.

Unfailing comfort, sweet and blessed rest,  
To know of every door He keeps the key —  
That He at last just when He sees 'tis best,  
Will give it thee.

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## *Be Fixed in God*

(Author Unknown. Adapted)

Though sun and moon and stars be not, the heavens a vanished  
scroll,  
The pillars of the earth are His. Be fixed in God, my soul.  
The waves may roar, the nations rage, and yet at His command  
At the four corners of the earth the four great angels stand,  
And swiftly hasteneth the day foretold in His sure Word,  
The kingdom of the world shall be the Kingdom of the Lord.

# BLUE BANNER FAITH AND LIFE

VOLUME 14

JULY-SEPTEMBER, 1959

NUMBER 3

## *Sketches of the Covenanters*

By J. C. McFeeters

Chapter XXXVIII.

### **The Lone Star. A. D. 1681.**

Donald Cargill was at this time the only minister of the Society people. He was the Lone Star appearing in the firmament of the Covenanted Church. The night was very cloudy. The storm of persecution had darkened the land; the defection of the Church had deepened the darkness; the wrath of the Lord, against the persecuting nation and the Covenant-breaking Church, had covered Scotland with a woeful night. The stars had disappeared till one alone, a solitary orb, had power sufficient to pierce the deadly gloom with its lustrous rays.

Donald Cargill was the Elijah of his day, the solitary standard-bearer of the Covenant after the death of Cameron. Doubtless there were seven thousand, yea, seven thousand twice told, who had not bowed the knee to Baal; but they were hidden in caves and in holes of the rocks, waiting for some terrible display of the power and glory of the Lord. There were many stars, but the night was too dark for them to shine; also they had become almost nebulous. Even Alexander Peden, Scotland's fiery prophet, who never weakened in the Covenant nor waned in his brilliant career — even he did not identify with the Cameronians in the declaration of war against King Charles and the demand for his abdication. Cargill was the lone leader of the dreadful Covenanters in their new and aggressive movement.

The last years of Cargill were his best, and his last services were his greatest. He grew like the cedar, increasing in strength, usefulness, and dignity till cut down by death. His zeal leaped into flames with the adverse winds; he did his noblest works when he was most sorely pressed. He conducted divine services even when wounded and bleeding; he carried the gashes of the sword into the pulpit and the scars of battle down to the grave. A glance at his wonderful career should be inspiring.

Even in childhood Cargill was noted for prayer. He grew up on a beautiful farm where the fields dip into the shady valley and ascend the lofty hills. Rugged nature taught the opening childhood to take on much beauty, grandeur, and dignity. He loitered often on the confines of the higher world in his meditations and in

prayer. But especially the altar of worship, the family Bible, the fireside catechising, the stern discipline, and the solemn Sabbaths moulded the boy and awakened the powers that distinguished the man. Family religion, which was strict, solemn, and awe-inspiring made heroes of the men of the Covenant. Without family religion the children may be expected to become moral imbeciles and spiritual ciphers.

When Cargill was yet a youth, he was known to spend whole nights in prayer. What those nights must have been to that young heart! What unfoldings of the Gospel and of the love of God! What revelations of the beauties of Christ, the preciousness of His blood, and the treasures of His Covenant! What insight into the value of the soul and its commission from God! What views of stewardship, accountability, rewards, punishments, destiny, eternity! What visions of the kingdom of the Lord Jesus Christ, His royal rights, His glory and majesty, His jealousy over the Church, His indignation against evil, His vindication of right. What those nights of prayer must have been to that boyish heart! The Holy Spirit came down upon the tender suppliant; the glory of the Lord shone round about him; the heavens bent and burst with blessings above his head; he made many an incursion into the upper world. What a wonderful life we may expect to arise out of a beginning like this! Look out for the boy that spends whole nights in prayer, or even whole hours talking with God! Assuredly the outcome will be amazing.

Courage was prominent among the qualities that brought Cargill to the front and made him out of Scotland's many mighties. He was afraid of nothing except God's displeasure. His towering intellect, polished with education, instructed in the Bible, and irradiated with the Holy Spirit, gave him a wide horizon. He made the throne of the Lord Jesus Christ his view-point, and therefore saw things in their true relation. He had a strong, spiritual grasp of the truths of Christ and His universal dominion. He saw Jesus crowned with many crowns; the Church united to Christ in marriage; and all the universe subject to Christ for the Church's sake. Cargill's clear and comprehensive view of Christ and His universal dominion enabled him to take the right side in the great struggle that was then shaking Scotland's

foundations. He wisely chose the strong side. He cast his lot in with the poor "remnant," who were hunted, captured, and executed as fast as the bloodhounds of King Charles could do their cruel work. Most men called this the weak side, but Cargill's eyes took in the spiritual world. He gazed upon the infinite power of God, the omnipotence of truth, the armies of heaven. He knew that all the forces of righteousness were moving forward in matchless harmony in support of the "remnant" who kept faith with the Lord Jesus Christ. In the consciousness of this almighty strength, which was at his back, how could he be afraid?

Cargill accepted the office of the Gospel ministry with a deep sense of unworthiness. When urged to enter the ministry he hesitated and spent a day in fasting and prayer to discover the mind of the Lord. God spoke to him by sending into his heart the irresistible command: "Son of man, eat this roll, and go speak unto the house of Israel." He took this to be the answer, as those words rang in his ears day and night. He hesitated no longer; from that time he was consecrated to the work of the Gospel, and his zeal made him a bright target for the foe.

His regular service on one occasion fell on the anniversary of the king's restoration to the throne. The house was crowded; the country was rejoicing with the king, though he had already launched upon the crimson tide of persecution. Casting a glance over the audience and judging that many had come to do the king honor, his soul flamed into indignation, and his eyes flashed with scorn for the crowned murderer. "We are not here," said he, "to keep this day as others keep it. We thought once to bless the day when the king came home again, but now we have reason to curse it. If any of you have come to solemnize this day, we desire you to remove." Then arising into passionate vehemence, he cried, "Woe, woe, woe unto the king! His name shall be a stench while the world stands, for treachery, tyranny, and lechery." From that day they sought his life to take it away; yet he lived and preached twenty more years.

Cargill's life was tossed about on roughest waves. He made many narrow escapes. Near his early home lies a deep valley, adown which a mountain stream rushes within a rock-rimmed channel, churning itself into milky whiteness. On one occasion he was pursued by soldiers all the way from Dundee; nine miles distant. He fled down the steep cliff and leaped the chasm. The

soldiers following him came to the spot but dared not to jump. Cargill walked up the opposite embankment and escaped. Being reminded one day that he had made a good leap he humorously replied, "Yes, but I had a good run before the leap."

At another time he saw a group of soldiers approaching in search of him. He coolly walked forward and, taking a square look at them, went on. They not knowing him personally never once thought that a man of such an airy countenance could be the one for whom they were searching. At Queensferry the house still stands where he and Captain Hall were arrested. The brave Captain threw himself between Cargill and the officer. The struggle was a tough one; Hall was mortally wounded; Cargill, too, was much hurt but escaped. But this did not prevent him from keeping his engagement at the Conventicle; he preached in his wounds. Nothing but death seemed to be able to check this man of God in the work of the Gospel. His greatest service however is yet to be related.

Have we incorporated the element of Divine strength into our lives? Do we make the throne of Jesus our view-point, from whence we see all things related to Him, and through Him to each other? Do we stand for the right, however weak that side may seem, knowing that all the powers that be of God are on that side? That times call for heroic lives, men who will not flinch under reproach, nor apologize for their convictions; men who will support the truth at any cost, and denounce sin at every hazard. Can the Church now furnish such men?

#### Points for the Class

1. Who succeeded Cameron as leader of the Society people?
2. Tell something about Cargill's early life.
3. How was he influenced to become a minister?
4. What objection had he to the king's anniversary?
5. What dangers did he meet?
6. How did he persist in the work of the Gospel?
7. Describe the strong side of every good cause.

(To be continued)

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## *Back Again in Galilee*

By the Rev. John C. Rankin

In the foregoing chapter some indication has been given of the importance of Jesus' second of-

ficial visit to Jerusalem for the life which was to follow. It was indeed an important epoch in

His life, potent in its influence for all that was to come. A whole new turn of events was occasioned by it as Jesus adjusted to the new situation. What it meant was that the conflict incidental to His very advent and inherent in the situation was now definitely out in the open.

Certain things devolving out of the head-on collision with the leaders and rulers of the Jews were now in order. One of those was that the time had come to gather His disciples to Him and begin their training. A part of their education would be practical training in the field. But before they could be commissioned and sent forth, they must first be thoroughly indoctrinated in the facts and precepts of the Kingdom. Having been so taught they would be formally set apart and so sent forth to represent the Lord. In this way Jesus, in a sense, would multiply Himself, extend His work and sphere of influence and hasten the accomplishment of His special mission. It was apparent that there was now special reason and occasion for such extension and haste.

Again, it was obviously also the time for miracles. Their supreme purpose was to serve as proofs. They would be brought forth as signs of the Messiah. Thus by deeds as well as by words would Christ give answer to His foes. At the same time the miracles would fulfill His blessed ministry to the poor and needy, suffering multitudes. But they were needed and were now in order to combat the false accusations of His opponents and to certify the truth of His claims.

Everything in the life and labors of the Lord which followed was in one way or another connected with the open conflict which had now begun. Jesus was never one to shrink from the conflict of ideals and ideas. He was ever ready to engage in public debate, in forthright verbal conflict. The time had come for this. Now it was time to

"Let courage rise with danger  
And strength to strength oppose."

His adversaries were "the intellectuals" of the day. These scribes and Pharisees, as one has said, were "the keenest sophists and thinkers of the time" (Irwin H. Linton in an article in *Christianity Today*, March 18, 1957, p. 16). But, astute and clever as they were they had yet to learn to reckon with an intellectual ability greater than theirs, beyond anything that proud humanity had ever seen or known. For Jesus, both by nature and by inspiration of the Spirit, was the perfect intellect, perfectly filled with that wisdom which cometh only from above, which is "first pure, then peaceable, gentle and easy to be entreated, full of mercy and good fruits."

The events which from this time ensued all illustrate Jesus' instant recognition of and compliance with the demands of the hour.

We have seen how He had already established

temporary headquarters in Capernaum. This Galilean town was located near the Sea of Galilee and was the center of a thriving fishing industry. The early Galilean ministry had been conducted in and around it.

Now, back again in Galilee, Jesus is next seen walking by the sea. As he treads along the shore, He sees four of His disciples, two sets of brothers, Peter and Andrew, James and John, and calls them to leave all and follow. We may well believe that they were by no means unprepared. Doubtless they had been forewarned that the call would come. So they were forearmed and ready for instant response, ready to leave life and work, loved ones and homes, and follow Him whom they already owned as their Master and Lord. As Jesus had said, "Whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be my disciple." (Luke 14:33).

There follows now a Sabbath in the city; and what a Sabbath! What a day in Galilee! It began in the synagogue which again He entered and where now again He taught. His hearers as heretofore were entranced with His teaching. But before the service was over a devil had been cast out, a demon dispossessed of his prey. Upon the return of Jesus and the four to Peter's home, his wife's mother was healed of a fever.

These things, however, were only the beginning. "At even," at the setting of the sun, "they brought unto him all that were diseased and them that were possessed with devils, and he healed them" (Mark 1:32-34). Luke tells us that "he laid his hands on every one of them" and they were healed (Luke 4:40). Can there be any doubt that this was the Saviour's answer to the objection raised by the Jewish authorities against His healing on the Sabbath?

The next day, having spent the dawn in a solitary place alone in prayer, Jesus, the disciples with Him, was off and away on the first great preaching and healing tour of the region. The disciples, impressed with His sudden immense popularity, seemed to think He ought to stay. "All men seek for thee," they said. But it was never in Jesus to cater to the crowd. His mission was to cover the region; His consuming passion to go from town to town with the message of the Kingdom. So we read that He said "Let us go into the next towns, that I may preach there also: for therefore came I forth." "And he preached in their synagogues throughout all Galilee, and cast out devils" (Mark 1:38, 39).

The more complete account as given by Matthew is that He "went about all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the gospel of the kingdom and healing all manner of sickness and all manner of disease among the people. And his fame went throughout all Syria: and they brought unto him all sick people that were taken with divers diseases and torments, and those that

were possessed with devils, and those that were lunatic, and those that had the palsy; and he healed them. And there followed him great multitudes of people from Galilee, and from Decapolis, and from Jerusalem, and from Judea and from beyond Jordan" (Matt. 4:23-25).

It was at about this time that we discover that all of His former disciples had rejoined Him and that others had been called to follow. And so one day after a night-long vigil "he called unto him whom he would, and they came unto him. And he ordained twelve that they should be with him, and that he might send them forth to preach" (Mark 3:13-19). In Matthew chapter 10 we learn how He sent them forth to "go not in the way of the Gentiles or into any city of the Samaritans, but go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel." This, again, was all part of His answer to His enemies.

Another event of the period took place on a day in which, as it is said, "he went up into a mountain: and when he was set, his disciples came unto him: and he opened his mouth and taught them." Matthew, chapters 5 to 7 record the content of this mountain discourse.

There is no need for us to be particularly zealous for the exact order of events during this time, even if it were possible to ascertain it correctly. There seems to have been a kind of rhythmic movement in it, as Jesus and His companions would fare forth from Capernaum and return. Out and away they would go and back again. He was in and out of the city, but His ministry was thus far still confined to Galilee.

A number of notable miracles were performed at this time. Of special significance was one in which a leper, "a man full of leprosy," as it is said, was healed. Its special importance was because of Jesus' action in connection with it. Having cured the man of his loathsome and dreadful disease, He sent him to Jerusalem for the rites incident to his cleansing, for a testimony to the authorities to show them how scrupulous He was in His conduct relative to all the laws of Moses. On one of the return visits to Capernaum there occurred the miracle of the healing of the paralytic who was borne of four and let down through the roof into the presence of the Christ.

To be noted in this connection, and frequently if not always thereafter, was the presence of official observers from Jerusalem who had now begun to dog His steps. One of the later of these tours out from Capernaum as the center took Jesus and His chosen ones on a tour of southern Galilee to the city of Nain, where a widow's son was raised from the dead.

While this full-scale Galilean ministry was being conducted, other charges began to be leveled

against the Lord besides those which had been brought against Him while in Jerusalem. He was criticized and blamed for not fasting, and for eating and drinking to excess. "Behold, a man gluttonous and a winebibber," they said. He was condemned for violations of the Sabbath in other ways than that of healing on that day. They found fault with Him and His disciples for eating with unwashed hands. He was accused of keeping bad company; censured for His association with publicans and sinners. He had an answer for all of these charges. His mother and His brethren were convinced that He was "beside himself;" and, "looking round about on them that sat with him he said, Behold my mother and my brethren! For whosoever shall do the will of God, the same is my brother, my sister and mother."

Far more serious and nefarious, however, than any of these was the charge devised and hurled by the scribes and Pharisees, that He was but the servant and agent of Beelzebub the prince of the devils. These who were enemies of God, for all their professions of religion, were themselves children of the devil, and had circulated the report that John the Baptist had a devil. But the charge which they now brought against Jesus was that Satan had possessed Him; that is, that He was possessed by the king devil himself!

This survey of the events of the period abundantly confirms the observation that a new situation was indeed developing. Even so, for a time, and not withstanding the rising opposition, wherever He went and wherever He might be, multitudes of the common people still gathered round and pressed upon Him to hear the Word of God. Even so, they still thronged about Him for that healing touch divine which He, and He alone, could give.

Jesus plainly had a certain feeling about the miracles. Not that they were not cheerfully performed. Not that He did not gladly reveal His love and express His compassion in them. But if and when the healing flowed, it always had to be in His own way and not in that of any man. Also, in His view, they were always a secondary ministry. They were held subordinate to that which was ever uppermost with Him, namely, the conversion of the sinner. The supreme thing in His thought was ever the salvation of the souls of men — deliverance from the power of darkness and their translation into the Kingdom of heaven and of God.

We cannot but be impressed as we read, with the vastly increased activity of this period, as the full Gospel ministry unfolds. The teaching swelled into a mighty flood of the truth concerning the Kingdom and the King. The miracles mounted into a great outpouring of power and

love. The mighty works of God-in-Him flowed from His hand in a veritable flood.

#### Some Scripture References

**On the Miracles in General.** Mark 9:35. Luke 6:17-19.

**On the Healing of the Leper.** Matt. 8:1-4. Mark 1:40 ff. Luke 5: 12ff.

**On the Healing of the Paralytic.** Matt. 9:1-8. Mark 2:3. Luke 5:18.

**Jesus' Primary Concern for the Soul.** Matt. 9:35-38.

**Other Notable Miracles.** Matt. 9:20-22 and Luke 7:1-10. Matt. 9: 18-26 and Mark 5: 22-43. Luke 8:41-56. Matt. 8:5-13. Matt. 9:28ff. and Mark 5:1ff. Luke 8:26 ff.

Note: The foregoing study is part of a series by Mr. Rankin on the life of Christ. The series will be continued, D. V., in the future issues of this magazine. — Editor.

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## *The Puritan Principle of Worship*

By the Rev. William Young, B. Litt., Th.D.

(Continued from preceding issue)

In Calvin's refutation of the claims of the Church of Rome, the regulative principle of Reformed Worship provides a charter of Christian liberty. A superficial view might suppose the regulative principle to be a confining, restricting principle that condemns Christian worship to barrenness and ugliness. In Calvin's doctrine and practice, as in that of the Puritans in the following century, the regulative principle was a liberating power, cutting off at the root the tyrannical imposition of men in the worship of God and exhibiting that worship in its native beauty, the beauty of holiness. The implication of the regulative principle for Christian liberty is expressed in Calvin's stirring words: "The power we have now to consider is, whether it be lawful for the Church to bind laws upon the conscience? In this discussion, civil order is not touched; but the only point considered is, how God may be duly worshipped according to the rule which He has prescribed, and how our spiritual liberty, with reference to God, may remain unimpaired. In ordinary language, the name of human traditions is given to all decrees concerning the worship of God, which men have issued without the authority of His word. We contend against these, not against the sacred and useful constitutions of the Church, which tend to preserve discipline, or decency or peace. Our aim is to curb the unlimited and barbarous empire usurped over souls by those who would be thought pastors of the Church, but who are in fact its most cruel murderers. They say that the laws which they enact are spiritual, pertaining to the soul, and they affirm that they are necessary to eternal life. But thus the Kingdom of Christ, as I lately observed, is invaded; thus the liberty, which He has given to the consciences of believers, is completely oppressed and overthrown . . . What I contend for is, that necessity ought not to be laid on consciences in matters in which Christ has made them free . . . They must acknowledge Christ their deliverer, as their only king, and be

ruled by the only law of liberty, namely the sacred word of the Gospel, if they would retain the grace which they have once received in Christ: they must be subject to no bondage, be bound by no chains." (*Institutes IV, X, 1*).

The Christian is free from the commandments of men in matters of worship because God is the only lawgiver and His will is the perfect rule of all righteousness and holiness. Consequently, human constitutions are contrary to the word of the Lord, if they are devised as part of the worship of God and their observance is bound upon the conscience as of necessary obligation. Calvin points out that in *Colossians* Paul "maintains that the doctrine of the true worship of God is not to be sought from men, because the Lord has faithfully and fully taught as in what way He is to be worshipped." (*Inst. IV, X, 8*). Calvin comments on *'ETHELOTHRESKIAS*, will worship: "That is, fictitious modes of worship which men themselves devise or receive from others, and all precepts whatsoever which they presume to deliver at their own hand concerning the worship of God." (*Ibid*).

Throughout the further discussion of ecclesiastical legislation in *Inst. IV, X*, Calvin repeatedly appeals to the regulative principle of worship as the chief ground for rejecting the traditions of man. A few passages may be quoted in addition to those given to show how pervasively the regulative principle has penetrated the Reformer's outlook. "Since Paul then declares it to be intolerable that the legitimate worship of God should be subjected to the will of men, wherein do we err when we are unable to tolerate this in the present day? Especially when we are enjoined to worship God according to the elements of this world — a thing which Paul declares to be adverse to Christ (*Col. II, 20*)." (*IV, X, 9*). "Moreover, the worst of all is, that when once religion begins to be composed of such vain fictions, the perversion is immediately suc-

ceeded by the abominable depravity with which our Lord upbraids the Pharisees of making the commandment of God void through their tradition, if this is not done when recommending the ordinances of God only frigidly and perfunctorily, they nevertheless studiously and anxiously urge strict obedience to their own ordinances, as if the whole power of piety was contained in them — when vindicating the transgression of the divine Law with trivial satisfactions, they visit the minutest violation of one of their decrees with no lighter punishment than imprisonment, exile, fire, or sword?" (IV, X, 10). Commenting further on the show of wisdom in will-worship, Calvin remarks: "But what does Paul say to all this? Does he pluck off those masks lest the simple be deluded by a false pretext? Deeming it sufficient for their refutation to say that they were devices of men he passes all these things without refutation, as things of no value. Nay because he knew that all fictitious worship is condemned in the Church, and is the more suspected by believers, the more pleasing it is to the human mind — because he knew that this false show of outward humility differs so widely from true humility that it can be easily discerned; — finally, because he knew that this tutelage is valued at no more than bodily exercise, he wished the very things which commended human traditions to the ignorant to be regarded by believers as the refutation of them." (IV, X, 11). Calvin complains of the imposition of a multitude of ceremonies as a restoration of Judaism which burdens rather than aids the weak. To the question "Are no ceremonies to be given to the more ignorant, as a help to their ignorance?" he replies: "I do not say so; for I think that help of this description is very useful to them. All I contend for is the employment of such a measure as may illustrate, not obscure Christ. Hence a few ceremonies have been divinely appointed, and these by no means laborious, in order that they may evince a present Christ. To the Jews a greater number were given, that they might be images of an absent Christ. In saying he was absent, I mean not in power, but in mode of expression. Therefore to secure due moderation, it is necessary to retain that fewness in number, facility in observance, and significance of meaning which consists in clearness." (IV, X, 14). (Lat. "in numero paucitatem, in observative facilitatem, in significatione dignitatem, quae etiam claritate constat").

Although Calvin is directing his argument toward abuses prevalent in his own day, he recognizes that the regulative principle is applicable to all ages. "For whenever men begin the superstitious practice of worshipping God with their own fictions, all the laws enacted for this purpose forthwith degenerate into those gross abuses. For the curse which God denounces — viz. to strike those who worship him with the doctrines of men

with stupor and blindness (Isaiah 29, 13f) — is not confined to any one age, but applies to all ages. The uniform result of this blindness is, that there is no kind of absurdity escaped by those who, despising the many admonitions of God, spontaneously entangle themselves in these deadly fetters. But if, without any regard to circumstances, you would simply know the character belonging at all times to those human traditions which ought to be repudiated by the Church, and condemned by all the godly, the definition which we formerly gave is clear and certain — viz. That they include all the laws enacted by men, without authority from the word of God, for the purpose either of prescribing the mode of divine worship, or laying a religious obligation on the conscience, as enjoining things necessary to salvation." (IV, X, 16). For the passage referred to in this quote, see IV, B, 1 and cf. Calvin's tract on the Necessity of Reforming The Church (Edinburgh Ed. Tracts, Vol. I pp. 127 ff.).

Calvin supports the regulative principle by further appeal to Scripture passages. He points out that "it is not a property of the Church to disregard the limits of the word of God, and wanton and luxuriate in enacting new laws. Does not the law which was once given to the Church endure for ever?" Deut. XII 32 and Prov. XXX, 6 are quoted with the following observations: "Since they cannot deny that this was said to the Church, what else do they proclaim but their contumacy, when, notwithstanding of such prohibitions, they profess to add to the doctrine of God, and dare to intermingle their own with it? . . . Let us understand that the name of Church is falsely pretended wherever men contend for that rash human licence which cannot confine itself within the boundaries prescribed by the word of God, but petulantly breaks out, and has recourse to its own inventions. In the above passage there is nothing involved, nothing obscure, nothing ambiguous; the whole Church is forbidden to add to, or take from the word of God, in relation to His worship and salutary precepts. . . Now, if the Lord does not permit anything to be added to, or taken from the ministry of Moses, though wrapt up, if I may so speak, in many folds of obscurity, until He furnish a clearer doctrine by His servants the Prophets, and at last His beloved Son, why should we not suppose that we are much more strictly prohibited from making any additions to the Law, the Prophets, the Psalms, and the Gospel? The Lord cannot forget Himself, and it is long since He declared that nothing is so offensive to Him as to be worshipped by human inventions." (IV, X, 17). Calvin further quotes Jer. VII, 22, 23. XI, 7 and I Sam. XV, 22, 23 to show that human inventions may not be defended by appeal to the authority of the Church.

The witness of the Reformed creeds to the Regulative Principle of Worship is along the lines laid down by Calvin. The Heidelberg Catechism

(1563), used in the German and Dutch Reformed Churches gives as the answer to Question 96, What does God require in the second commandment?, "That we in nowise make any image of God, nor worship him in any other way than He has commanded in His Word." The Belgic Confession by Guido de Bres (1561) used by the Dutch Reformed Churches, in expounding the sufficiency of the Scriptures, declares "The whole manner of worship which God requires of us is written in them at large." (Article VII). Likewise in discussing the order and discipline of the Church, the Belgic confession rejects "all human inventions, and all laws which man would introduce into the worship of God, thereby to bind and compel the conscience in any manner whatever" (Article XXXII).

Among the Reformed Creeds, the Westminster Confession of Faith and Catechisms excel in the accuracy with which doctrine is formulated and the balance with which the various elements of Scriptural truth are set in relation to one another. These standards, it should be remembered, were the work of a body of divines consisting almost entirely of English Puritans. The following passages, in Carruthers' Text of The Confession edited from the original manuscript written by Cornelius Burges in 1646, provide a succinct formulation of the regulative principle.

"The whole counsel of God concerning all things necessary for His own glory, man's salvation, faith and life, is either expressly set down in Scripture, or by good and necessary consequence may be deduced from Scripture: unto which nothing at any time is to be added, whether by new revelations of the Spirit or traditions of men. Nevertheless, we acknowledge the inward illumination of the Spirit of God to be necessary for the saving understanding of such things as are revealed in the Word: and that there are some circumstances concerning the worship of God, and government of the Church, common to human actions and societies, which are to be ordered by the light of nature, and Christian prudence, according to the general rules of the Word, which are always to be observed." Chapter I, Sec. VI.

"God alone is Lord of the conscience, and hath left it free from the doctrines and commandments of men, which are, in anything, contrary to His Word; or beside it, if matters of faith, or worship. So that, to believe such doctrines, or to obey such commands, out of conscience, is to betray true liberty of conscience: and the requiring of an implicit faith, and an absolute and blind obedience, is to destroy liberty of conscience, and reason also." Ch. XX, Sec. II.

"The light of nature showeth that there is a God, who hath lordship and sovereignty over all, is good, and doth good unto all, and is therefore to be feared, loved, praised, called upon, trusted in, and served, with all the heart, and with all the

soul, and with all the might. But the acceptable way of worshipping the true God is instituted by Himself, and so limited by His own revealed will, that He may not be worshipped according to the imaginations and devices of men, or the suggestions of Satan, under any visible representation or any other way not prescribed in the Holy Scripture." Ch. XXI, Sec. I.

The sense of the regulative principle may be rendered clear and precise by certain observations on the Westminster formulation which we may safely take as the unanimous consensus of Puritan conviction on this subject.

1. The regulative principle is a consequence of the sufficiency of Scripture. Nothing need nor may be added to the Word of God as a rule of faith and practice. Therefore only what is prescribed by the written Revelation may be admitted in the worship of God.

2. The mode of prescription need not be that of explicit command in a single text of Scripture. Approved example warrants an element of worship as surely as does an express precept. Moreover, good and necessary consequence can warrant acceptable worship. Without entering upon disputed questions as to the proper subjects of Baptism, all would agree that Scripture warrants the admission of women to the Lord's table although no express command or approved example can be adduced. There is a sound adage sometimes quoted by Reformed divines that the sense of Scripture is Scripture.

3. The regulative principle does not entail an impossible demand that an indefinite number of minute circumstances concerning the worship of God should be deduced from Scripture. The time and place of worship for a Christian congregation are not minutely prescribed.

4. Yet this does not mean that all circumstances are adiaphora. The circumstances not prescribed by the Word of God are only such as are "common to human actions and societies" and only some such.

5. The general rules of the Word of God are to be observed in the ordering of these circumstances "by the light of nature and Christian prudence." This implies that acts of worship itself are regulated in a much more specific manner by Scripture than are other human actions. An act of worship is never a thing indifferent, something neither commanded nor forbidden by God, while some civil actions and even circumstances accompanying acts of worship may be thus classed among the Adiaphora.

6. This distinction between acts of worship and civil acts is implied in the distinction between things contrary to God's Word and things beside God's Word. In all things human laws contrary to the Word of God are not binding, though in some things human laws beside the Word of

God may be binding, as in laws passed by the civil magistrate that may restrict conduct in things indifferent. With respect to matters of faith and worship, however, human laws beside the Word of God even though not directly contrary to it have no binding force.

7. The reason for this state of affairs is that

the entire content of faith and worship is revealed in the Word of God. The argument closes with a return to the starting-point, the sufficiency of Scripture revelation as prescribing the entire content of worship including all the ways in which God may be worshipped acceptably.

(To be continued)

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## *Religious Terms Defined*

**MEANS OF GRACE.** "The outward and ordinary means whereby Christ communicateth to us the benefits of redemption are His ordinances, especially the Word, Sacraments and prayer; all which are made effectual to the elect for salvation" (S.C. 88).

**MEDIATOR.** One who intervenes between two parties who are at enmity against each other, and brings about reconciliation between them. "It pleased God, in His eternal purpose, to choose and ordain the Lord Jesus, His only begotten Son, to be the Mediator between God and man" (Westminster Confession of Faith, VIII. 1).

**MERCY, CHRISTIAN.** The Christian virtue of endeavoring to relieve, in the name of Christ, the sufferings and distress of those who are miserable, whether from sin or from its consequences.

**MERCY OF GOD.** That attribute of God by which He is inclined to pardon the guilty, and to relieve the distress of the miserable. God's mercy is free, being bestowed according to His sovereign choice; and it is gracious, being bestowed upon those who not only have no merit of their own, but have offended against Him.

**MERIT.** That which is earned or deserved. This is contrasted with grace or mercy, which is not earned or deserved. It is not by his own merit, but by the merit of Jesus Christ, that the Christian receives eternal life.

**MESSIAH.** A Hebrew term meaning "Anointed," equivalent to the Greek "Christos" or "Christ." In the Old Testament, kings and high priests were anointed with oil to set them apart to their office; the oil symbolized the Holy Spirit. Jesus Christ as the perfect, final prophet, priest and king is pre-eminently the Messiah.

**MILLENNIUM.** The thousand year period of restraint of Satan and of the reign of Christ, which is spoken of in Revelation 20:1-10. (There are various views as to the meaning and fulfillment of this prophecy).

**MONOPHYSITES.** The adherents of a heresy in the early Church which denied that Jesus Christ has two **distinct** natures, divine and hu-

man, and held that these two are united so as to form only one nature.

**MIRACLE.** An event in the physical world, having a spiritual purpose, which is caused by the direct action of God, apart from the forces of nature. (In God's ordinary providence He works through the sequence of cause and effect in the realm of nature; in the case of a miracle, God works directly, by His supernatural power, to produce an effect in the physical world which lacks an effective cause in the natural order. A miracle has natural effects, but no natural cause).

**MISSIONS.** The task of the Church, in obedience to Christ's Great Commission (Matt. 28: 18-20) to undertake the establishment of the Christian Faith throughout the world, which involves three elements: (1) Evangelism, or preaching the Gospel; (2) the establishment of the Visible Church and its ordinances; (3) the teaching of the entire system of truth revealed in the Bible.

**MONOTHELITES.** The adherents of an ancient heresy which denied that Jesus Christ has two wills, a divine and a human, and held that He has only one will. (This was condemned as heretical by the Sixth General Council, A.D. 680, on the ground that it was contrary to the full and true humanity of Jesus Christ).

**MONTANISTS.** A sect of Christians which sprang up in the second century after Christ as a reaction against worldliness and deadness in the orthodox or catholic Church. The Montanists were named after their founder, Montanus, a Phrygian by birth, who claimed divine inspiration and the gift of prophecy. They were much more strict than the catholic Church in their insistence upon holiness and separation from the world. The most famous Montanist was the great Tertullian, who insisted upon a clean, clear separation of Christians from everything pagan. In his zeal Tertullian himself became involved in some religious and theological errors.

**MYSTERY.** A truth which could never be discovered by human reason, but can be known only by special divine revelation (such as the truth stated in 1 Cor. 15:51).

**NATURE.** The orderly, uniform system of the universe, operating according to the law of

cause and effect as ordained by God, against the background of which God's miraculous acts stand out in sharp contrast to the ordinary course of events.

NESTORIANISM. The ancient heresy which taught that in Christ there are not merely two natures, divine and human, but two persons, one divine, the other human.

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## *Some Noteworthy Quotations*

WHAT WE WIN by prayer, we must wear with praise.

— Matthew Henry

THIS DOCTRINE OF BROTHERLY LOVE is not understood by the world, because the greater part are dazzled by all sorts of masks or disguises. Thus, fictitious sanctity dazzles the eyes of almost all men, while love is neglected, or, at least, driven into the farthest corner.

— John Calvin

LET THE PREACHER TAKE CARE to keep to the text and attend to what is before him and make the people understand that. Those preachers who say whatever comes into their mouths remind me of a maid going to market. When she meets another maid she stops and chats a while, then she meets another and talks with her too, and then a third and a fourth, and so gets to market very slowly. So with preachers who wander off the text; they would like to say everything at one time, but they can't.

— Martin Luther

THE WHOLE LIFE OF MAN, until he is converted to Christ, is a ruinous labyrinth of wanderings.

— John Calvin

BLUSH, SINNER, BLUSH! Ah, that thou hadst grace to blush!

— John Bunyan

THERE IS NOTHING that Satan more desires than to get good men in his sieve to sift them as wheat, that if possible he may leave them nothing but bran; no grace, but the very husk and shell of religion.

— John Bunyan

FOUR SORTS OF ZEAL are to be condemned: blind zeal, Rom. 10:2; bitter zeal, James 3:14; proud zeal, 2 Kings 10; partial zeal, Matt. 23:23.

— Philip Henry

IN HEAVEN ALONE is the enjoyment of our highest good. God is the highest good of the reasonable creature. The enjoyment of Him is our proper happiness; and it is the only happiness with which our souls can be satisfied. To go to heaven, fully to enjoy God, is infinitely better

than the most pleasant accommodations here . . . . These are but drops, but God is the ocean.

— Jonathan Edwards

GIVE WHAT THOU COMMANDEST, and command what Thou wilt.

— Augustine of Hippo

THE GRACE OF GOD does not find men fit for salvation, but makes them so.

— Augustine of Hippo

NARROW IS THE MANSION of my soul; enlarge Thou it, that Thou mayest enter in. It is ruinous; repair Thou it. It has that within which must offend Thine eyes; I confess and know it. But who shall cleanse it? Or to whom should I cry, save Thee?

— Augustine of Hippo

MAN HATES EVIL, because it is against his interest; but God hates evil, because it is against His nature.

— Thomas Manton

THE GREAT BURDEN of all true conviction is not chiefly the sins committed, but the sinful deadness of heart and aversion to divine things which is the root of actual transgression, and which remains immovable in spite of all we do.

— A. A. Hodge

CHRIST'S SOLDIERS always win their battles on their knees. On their feet they may be conquered, but on their knees they are invincible.

— Charles H. Spurgeon

IT IS A HARDER THING to be a holy person than to be a martyr. It is more easy to withstand an enemy than a temptation. When we conflict with an enemy, we do but conflict with an arm of flesh and blood; but with inward conflict we fight "with principalities and powers."

— Thomas Manton

WORKS ARE NOT THE CONDITION of justification, yet they are evidence of it. By the righteousness of faith we are acquitted from sin, and by the righteousness of works we are acquitted from guile and hypocrisy. Though works have nothing to do in the court of heaven in matter of justification, yet they have a voice and testimony in the court of conscience.

— Thomas Manton

# *The Reformed Faith We Profess*

By J. G. Vos

Note: This series of articles, which is being published by request, is intended to tell what the various teachings of the Reformed Faith are, in simple, non-technical language, and to show as pointedly and clearly as possible how they differ from other views which are widely held at the present day. The purpose of these studies is not

argument nor even the establishment of Scriptural proof for the various doctrines, but simple exposition. At the end of each instalment the reader will be referred to literature in which the case for the Reformed doctrines is argued and in which the Scriptural proof is marshalled and displayed. — Editor.

## CHAPTER II

### The Reformed View of God

"God is a Spirit, infinite, eternal and unchangeable in His being, wisdom, power, holiness, justice, goodness and truth" (Shorter Catechism, 4). "There are three persons in the Godhead: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost; and these three are one God, the same in substance, equal in power and glory" (Shorter Catechism, 6).

Basic to the Biblical view of God is His unity. There is only one true God, and it is with this truth firmly in mind that other truths about God must be viewed. This one God is not a simple unity, for it is also true that God is three — the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. The trinity of God is a mystery which human reason cannot explain, but it is not a contradiction as has often been claimed. If we were to say that God is both one and three in the same sense, that would be a contradiction, and no rational mind could believe it. But that is not what orthodox Christianity holds about God. What orthodoxy holds is, rather, that God is one in a certain sense, and He is three in a different sense. He is one in "substance" and three in "person". These three persons in God are not merely God's way of working in the world, or His way or revealing Himself to man, but are eternally existing and distinct from each other in the being of God Himself. "The Father is of none, neither begotten, nor proceeding; the Son is eternally begotten of the Father; the Holy Ghost is eternally proceeding from the Father and the Son" (Westminster Confession of Faith, II.3). Jesus Christ is God the Son who at a certain point in history took a human nature to Himself and was born as a human being. Thus Christ is not only God but also man. As man, of course, Christ has a human body and a human soul or mind, but as God He is a Spirit.

God is a personal being. When we say that God is a personal being, we do not mean exactly what we mean when we say that we ourselves are personal beings. We mean that and more, for God is a personal being in a higher sense than man is. But God possesses all that personal-

ity means in man. God is a being possessing freedom and self-consciousness, who can call Himself "I" and whom we can call "Thou."

God is also a self-existent being. He exists of Himself, independently of all other beings, without a cause, without an origin, and without a purpose outside of Himself. God has no history; He has no past and also no future, for He exists in an eternal present. The distinction of past, present and future has meaning in relation to God's creatures, who live in the framework of time or history; it does not have meaning for God Himself who dwells in an eternal NOW. The self-existence of God is sometimes expressed by saying that God is a self-contained being.

God is a pure Spirit. He is the Creator of matter but He Himself is a non-material being. Man has a spirit, but God is a spirit. He has no physical body such as man has. This is one reason why God is invisible to our bodily eyes. When the Bible speaks of God as if He had a physical body, mentioning His eyes, arms, hands, etc., this manner of speaking is a figure of speech called anthropomorphism, that is, speaking about God as if He were man. Such anthropomorphic statements always teach some truth about God but they are not to be taken literally, for God is a pure Spirit without body.

God is infinite, eternal and unchangeable in His being and all His attributes. God's "being" is His existence; His "attributes" are His qualities or characteristics. In both His being and His attributes God is boundless, timeless and changeless. He is thus very different from man who is a finite or limited being, geared to the framework of time and constantly changing as he emerges from the past through the present into the future. Since man was created in the image of God, there is a true sense in which God and man are similar. But in being infinite, eternal and unchangeable, God is wholly different from man.

God's attributes may be divided into two kinds, namely His incommunicable attributes and His

communicable attributes. God's incommunicable attributes are those qualities which are true of God alone, and not true of any created being. For example, to be all-powerful or almighty is an incommunicable attribute of God. God's communicable attributes are those which can be shared in a limited way by God's creatures, such as angels and men. Some of God's communicable attributes are His justice, goodness and truth.

God is absolutely distinct from the universe. This is implied in the truth that God is self-existent, and it is also explicitly taught in the Bible. The most basic distinction of the Bible and of Christian theology is the distinction between God and the universe. This is taught in the very first verse of the Bible: "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth." The universe is dependent on God; God is not dependent on the universe. God is eternal; He never had a beginning or an origin. The universe, on the other hand, is temporal; it exists within the sphere of time; it had a beginning.

A further truth about God is His transcendence. This means that God is not only distinct from the universe, but also far above, behind and beyond it, and that there is absolutely nothing beyond God. God is our ultimate environment. We have a physical environment, including not only our immediate physical surroundings but such wider areas as the earth, the solar system and the physical universe as a whole. We also have a social environment, including our family, friends, associates, and also human society as a whole. But beyond all these is our ultimate environment, namely God. He is beyond all else, and beyond Him there is nothing. Thus according to the Bible our ultimate environment is not a thing but a Person — not "something" but "Someone" — and this conditions the meaning of everything else. The Bible seldom uses philosophical terms such as "transcendence"; instead, it expresses this idea in very simple language by saying that God dwells "on high" or "in heaven." Solomon in his dedicatory prayer affirmed the truth that heaven and the heaven of heavens cannot contain God (1 Kings 8:27). This is the truth of God's transcendence.

A correlative truth to God's transcendence is His immanence. This means that God is present everywhere in the universe, and that absolutely nothing great or small could exist without His continual presence in it. God is actively present everywhere and in all things throughout the whole realm of created existence. His presence sustains all in continued existence and energizes all for continued functioning. God is present in the solar system, in the vast spiral nebulae of remotest outer space, millions of light years from this earth, and He is also actively present in every grain of sand, every atom, every electron. Without God's presence in them none of these could

exist for a moment. God's immanence is sometimes called the cosmic presence of God.

To have a correct and adequate idea of God we must keep in mind both His transcendence and His immanence. If either of these truths is stressed without the other, the result will be an unbalanced, and therefore false, idea of God.

God can never be understood, analyzed or explained. Only irreligious people will demand that God be explained and cleared of mystery before they will believe in Him. God dwells in the light that no man can approach unto. Just because He is God, and therefore infinite, no created mind can ever understand Him. God will always remain mysterious to us, even in the glory of eternity. A God whom we could analyze and explain would not really be God; such a "God" would only be a projection of the human mind. Only the Spirit of God knows the deep things of God. By divine revelation man can have a true knowledge of God but it is always limited by the fact that the human mind is a created mind. Therefore the mystery always remains. We should keep this humbling thought in mind when we feel like raising objections to this or that fact about God (such as His eternal predestination) because our reason is baffled. If we have a truly religious attitude toward God we will worship Him with faith, awe and wonder, and realize that the mystery must always remain.

#### Some False Ideas about God

Atheism is the denial of the existence of God. It usually means the denial of the existence of any kind of "god" or supernatural being. Theoretical atheism says that there is no God, as a matter of philosophical belief. Practical atheism admits that God exists, but ignores Him in actual life. The practical atheist is a secularist who thinks God does not count.

Agnosticism is really just as bad as downright atheism, but it states its position more cautiously. The atheist says that there is no God; he lays this proposition down as a certainty. The agnostic, on the other hand, merely says that he does not know and that no one can ever know. He declares that we are necessarily ignorant concerning God. There may be a God but man can never know this with certainty. Clearly this is just as bad as atheism in eliminating God from thinking and life.

Materialism is the belief that nothing exists except matter and (physical) energy. This is the official creed of world communism and it is really a form of atheism. If nothing exists except matter and energy, then nothing spiritual exists and therefore the human soul does not

exist and God does not exist. Materialism is therefore merely a specific form of atheism.

Polytheism is the belief in many gods. It forms the theological background of idolatry. Before they received the Gospel of Christ, our ancestors were all polytheists, and we see the evidence of this today whenever a calendar is hung, with the names of days and months nearly all derived from heathen gods and goddesses. Polytheism exists today in many parts of the world, but it is a dying faith. Wherever polytheism comes into contact with a purer form of belief in God, it tends to disintegrate and disappear along with other false beliefs and superstitions. There are three great monotheistic religions in the world — Christianity, Judaism and Islam or Mohammedanism. These differ among themselves, but they all hold that there is only one God. Polytheism cannot stand up against any of them.

Pantheism is the belief that everything is God and that God is everything. This is widely held, in various forms, by philosophers, religionists and some scientists today. At first sight it seems absurd to say that "All is God." Yet Pantheism seems plausible and has an attraction when people do not know the living and true God from the Bible. Pantheism tends to think of God as impersonal. God is a thing — the greatest of all things — yet after all a thing rather than a Person. Add all that exists together, and from one viewpoint it is called "the universe" while from another viewpoint it is called "God". God is regarded as the principle of order, beauty, law, intelligence which is inherent in nature or the universe. In regarding God as impersonal He is regarded as, in a sense, lower than man. The Pantheist seeks to avoid this difficulty, however, by saying that "the all" is unconsciously striving toward personality and that this unconscious striving finally comes to self-expression in man. Man is therefore, according to this way of thinking, a specimen of the impersonal "God-that-is-the-all" achieving personality as man.

Pantheism is utterly destructive of religion, for it breaks down the distinction between the personal and the impersonal, and that even more basic distinction between the Creator and the creation, thus contradicting Genesis 1:1, the basic platform on which the whole of Biblical thought rests. We cannot pray to a God who is not personal — a God who is the whole of which we are parts. Prayer to a Pantheist is merely psychological auto-suggestion; it may have an effect on the person praying, but it is not communication with a real Person.

Many philosophers and scientists who say they believe in God are really Pantheists. When some scientist writes an article in a popular magazine saying that we can still believe in God,

it often appears on close examination that he believes in God in a Pantheistic sense. It is a great pity that some preachers quote these statements of Pantheistic thinkers as if they constituted a great encouragement to the Bible-believing Christian, when as a matter of fact they are only symptoms of the modern revolt against the Bible.

Another false idea about God is called Humanism. This is properly belief in man, and the Humanist is really a man-worshipper. Humanists usually admit that God exists, or at least that the idea of God exists and performs some useful functions. But they regard Humanity as the goal and end of all existence. If they talk about God it is because they consider the God-concept useful to mankind; for example, they say that belief in God helps man by checking crime, stabilizing the social order, and the like. This is just the opposite of religion. Religion is man sacrificing his life to the service of the Infinite God, and thus living for One greater than self and greater than humanity. Humanism thinks that God exists to further man's aims and purposes. It is thus akin to magic, which is the attempt to control supernatural forces for human purposes.

Deism was a popular faith about two hundred years ago, but it is largely a dead faith today. The Deists affirmed the existence of God and His transcendence but denied His immanence and His plan of salvation through Christ. They affirmed the idea of divine creation but denied the doctrine of providence. They held that God created the universe as a tremendous automatic machine — a machine with the most marvelous built-in laws and powers. God created this universe-machine and started it functioning, and it has been working automatically ever since. God has no contact with it any more and pays no attention to it. To the Deist, therefore, God was just a hypothesis to explain how the universe got started originally. The Deists had no religious faith in God and did not really worship God. There can be no prayer to the God of Deism, nor can we have any religious communion with such a being.

#### Some Questions to Ponder

1. Does the average church member today have a truly Biblical belief about God?
2. How has the widespread acceptance of the theory of evolution affected people's views about God?
3. Why is a correct view of God important? Could we not have the values of religion even with an incorrect view of God?
4. What is the relation between the Biblical

view of God and the subjects of prayer and answer to prayer?

5. How should we classify the beliefs of Ed-  
dyism or "Christian Science" concerning God?

6. Why is the doctrine of the Trinity a basic  
Christian truth?

7. Are there many real atheists? Is it easy  
or hard to be an atheist? What makes people  
profess to be atheists?

8. Why would Humanism not be a satisfy-  
ing faith to a person facing death?

9. Why did Deism practically die out, instead  
of increasing in influence during the last two  
hundred years?

10. Which of the false notions about God is  
the subtlest counterfeit of Biblical Theism, and

why? Which constitutes the greatest danger to  
the Christian Church today, and why?

#### Some Literature on this Subject

The Westminster Confession of Faith, Chap-  
ter II.

The Larger Catechism, Q. 6-11.

The Shorter Catechism, Q. 4-6.

The Reformed Presbyterian Testimony, Chap-  
ter I and Chapter III.

The best exposition of the doctrine of God  
on a level suitable for study by the lay member  
of the Church, in my judgment, is **The Doctrine  
of God** by Herman Bavinck (407 pages; publish-  
ed by the Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co.,  
Grand Rapids 3, Michigan). This book by one  
of the greatest Reformed thinkers of modern times  
is adequate, clear and simple in style.  
Though dealing with the most profound of all  
subjects, its treatment is satisfying and eminently  
Biblical.

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## *Studies in the Covenant of Grace*

### LESSON 27

#### The Covenant of Grace and the Christian's Relation to the World: 3. The Sphere of Cooperation.

"It is the duty of people to pray for magis-  
trates, to honor their persons, to pay them tribute  
and other dues, to obey their lawful commands,  
and to be subject to their authority, for con-  
science' sake. Infidelity, or difference in religion,  
doth not make void the magistrates' just and  
legal authority, nor free the people from their  
due obedience to them . . ." — The Westminster  
Confession of Faith, XXIII.4.

"It is the duty of Christians who reside with-  
in the bounds of such nations as do not make a  
fitting acknowledgment of divine authority to  
live in submission to the existing government,  
provided that in so doing they are careful to regu-  
late their conduct according to the Scriptures,  
and to preserve a conscience void of offence to-  
ward God and man. It is also the duty of  
Christians, for the sake of peace and order, to  
conform to the common regulations of society in  
things indifferent or morally commendable". —  
The Reformed Presbyterian Testimony, XXIX. 5.

"It is lawful for Christians residing in na-  
tions in which the light of the gospel has not  
been generally diffused, to continue submission  
to such authority as may exist over them, agree-  
ably to the law of nature, which, where revela-  
tion does not exist, is the only standard of civil  
duty. In such cases the infidelity of the ruler  
cannot make void the just authority conferred

on him by the constitution." — The Reformed  
Presbyterian Testimony, XXIX.6.

#### Scripture References:

Matt. 22:17-21. It is a Christian duty to ren-  
der the things of Caesar to Caesar.

Jer. 29:4-7. It is our duty to seek the peace  
and welfare of the nation in which God's provi-  
dence has placed us.

1 Peter 2:13-17. Christians are to glorify  
God by conscientious conduct in the relationships  
of human society.

2 Cor. 6:14-18. Fellowship and cooperation  
between Christians and unbelievers, in religious  
matters, is forbidden by the Word of God.

Acts 27:30-32. An example of legitimate and  
commendable cooperation between a Christian  
and unbelievers.

Rev. 2:14, 20. Two examples of forbidden  
fellowship and cooperation between a Christian  
and non-Christians.

1 Cor. 10:27. An example of legitimate so-  
cial fellowship between a Christian and non-  
Christians.

#### Questions:

1. Does the Covenant of Grace require se-  
paration between Christians and non-Christians in  
every sphere of life?

No. There are certain areas of life in which separation between Christians and non-Christians is a duty, and there are other areas of life in which cooperation between Christians and non-Christians may be legitimate, and even commendable.

**2 In what areas of life is separation between Christians and non-Christians required by the Word of God?**

God's Word requires Christians (a) to refrain from marrying unbelievers; (b) to refrain from choosing non-Christians as their close friends and intimate companions; (c) to abstain absolutely from any cooperation or fellowship with unbelievers in the spheres of religious activity and religious worship.

**3. Is the expression "the world," in the bad sense, equivalent to "human society"?**

No. Although the Bible requires Christians to maintain separation from "the world" in the bad sense, separation from human society as such is not required. Even though the Christian's citizenship is in heaven, he is still living here on earth and is a member of human society, which involves certain legitimate obligations and relationships. Our duty as Christians does not cancel the relationships and obligations of human society, except in certain cases where special sinful conditions are involved. In case of conflict between our duty to God and the requirements of human society, we must of course obey God rather than men. But there are many matters in which every Christian must discharge his duty to human society. Thus cooperation between Christians and unbelievers is inevitable. It is important for us as Christians to understand the nature of this cooperation, and its proper limits.

**4. Is there any area of life in which the difference between Christians and non-Christians does not count?**

No. There is always a deep, radical difference between the Christian and the non-Christian. The Christian has been born again of the Holy Spirit; he knows and loves the true God; he is on the road to heaven. The non-Christian has not been born again of the Holy Spirit; he does not know nor love the true God; he is on the road to hell. Even though the external action of a Christian may be identical with that of a non-Christian, still the motive, meaning and consequences of the act always diverge widely. Suppose that a Christian and a non-Christian each pay taxes amounting to \$100.00. It might appear that in this matter there is no difference between the Christian and the non-Christian. But the Christian pays his taxes because he fears the living and true God, and regards civil government as God's ordinance. His

payment of his taxes is an act of obedience to the true God. For that act of obedience, he will receive a reward in eternity. The non-Christian, on the other hand, pays his taxes either because he cannot avoid it, or at best merely because he loves his country. He does not do it to please and honor God; therefore his paying his taxes, like everything that he does, is really a sin, which must come under the righteous judgment of God. (See the Confession of Faith, XVI.7). When we look beneath the surface of things, we see that the difference between the Christian and the non-Christian always counts, in every area of life.

**5. Is the Christian's cooperation with non-Christians voluntary or compulsory?**

It is compulsory in the matter of obedience to the laws of the State, and voluntary with respect to other matters. Thus, for example, a Christian cannot choose whether he will pay his lawful taxes or not, nor whether he will testify as a witness if lawfully summoned to do so. God has authorized civil government, or the State, to use physical force, if necessary, to bring about obedience to its laws (Rom. 13:4).

On the other hand, there are many matters outside the sphere of civil government, or the State, in which cooperation between Christians and non-Christians is voluntary. These include all "voluntary associations" which exist either for a good or a morally indifferent purpose, but are not limited to Christian people. Examples of such "voluntary associations" are the American Red Cross, Parent-Teacher associations, stamp-collectors' societies, poultry breeders' associations, literary, historical and scientific associations, and business and professional organizations. No Christian is under any obligation, as a matter of Christian duty, to join or cooperate with any of these "voluntary associations"; he is free to act according to his own choice, so long as cooperation does not necessarily involve support or endorsement of something contrary to the law of God. (See Blue Banner Faith and Life, Vol. 3 No. 4, October-December 1948, pages 176-178, for a full discussion of the problem of membership in "voluntary associations").

**6. Must Christians always obey the law of the State?**

While the Bible repeatedly enjoins obedience to the laws of the State and the commands of magistrates and rulers, it also teaches that the Christian's first and highest allegiance is to God, and that in case of a conflict between the law of God and the commands of earthly rulers, it is the Christian's duty to obey God rather than men (Acts 5:29). Thus, for example, Christian people ought to disobey a law of the State requiring participation in the rites of a false religion, or requiring that ministers and

missionaries obtain a permit from the State before engaging in the work of preaching the Gospel and organizing churches.

Such laws, though enacted by earthly legislatures, are null and void in the sight of God, and Christian people should resolutely refuse to obey them, even at the cost of persecution and suffering.

On the other hand, where there is no clear-cut issue between the law of God and the commands of the State, Christian people should conscientiously obey the laws of the State, even though they may regard the laws as unwise, or may suffer some personal loss or injustice because of obedience. Mere belief that a law of the State is unwise or unjust does not warrant disobedience. Christians are justified in refusing to obey only when the law of the State requires them to do something that is definitely contrary to the law of God.

**7. Is it proper for Christian people to hold office, or elect others to do so, under a constitution of civil government which does not recognize the true God and His Son Jesus Christ?**

The duty of Christian people to obey the laws and cooperate in civil matters does not involve incorporation with a non-Christian government (by voting or holding office). Such political incorporation would make the Christian morally responsible for the government's secular character — its ignoring God and Christ. That is to say, it would involve the Christian in sin. It is a sin for a nation to make no acknowledgment of God and His Son in its constitution. The Christian who votes or holds office under such a constitution becomes a party to this sin of omission, and therefore a sharer in the guilt that is involved. For a fuller discussion of this matter see *Blue Banner Faith and Life*, Vol. 4 No. 1, January-March 1949, pages 8-12.

## LESSON 28

### The Covenant of Grace and Holiness

"The Holy Spirit, according to the promise of the Father, is commissioned by Jesus Christ, the administrator of the Covenant of Grace, to sanctify justified sinners, and to prepare them for heaven." — *The Reformed Presbyterian Testimony*, XVII.2.

"Sanctification is a work of God's grace, whereby they whom God hath before the foundation of the world chosen to be holy, are in time, through the powerful operation of his Spirit, applying the death and resurrection of Christ unto them, renewed in their whole man after the image of God; having the seeds of repentance unto life, and all other saving graces, put into their hearts, and those graces so stirred up, increased, and strengthened, as that they more and more die unto sin and rise unto newness of life." — *The Larger Catechism*, 75.

"The souls of believers are, at their death, made perfect in holiness, and do immediately pass into glory; . . ." — *The Shorter Catechism*, 37.

#### Scripture References:

Ezek. 36:25-27, 31. Sanctification by God's Spirit is promised to the covenant people of God.

1 Pet. 1:13-16. Heb. 12:14. The duty of those whom Christ has redeemed to cultivate holiness.

1 Thess. 5:23, 24. Jude 24, 25. Perfect holiness is the promised and assured destiny of every true member of the people of God.

#### Questions:

1. What is the meaning of the words "sanctify" and "sanctification"?

These words, which are derived from the Latin, concern the subject of holiness. "Sanctify" means "make holy"; "sanctification" means "making holy" or "being made holy." These terms designate that progressive change of character which is carried on by the work of the Holy Spirit in those who have been born again, throughout their life on earth, until they are made perfect in holiness on entering the state of glory at their death.

**2. Is sanctification a work of God, or a work of man?**

Sanctification is a work of God, wrought by the almighty operation of the Holy Spirit. It is, however, a work of God in which the Christian is called to cooperate. This does not mean that God and man are joint partners, on equal basis, in the work of sanctification. It means, rather, that the Holy Spirit's work of sanctification is wrought partly through the instrumentality of the human personality, which involves the Christian's earnest cooperation with the Holy Spirit's work. Thus in the Bible we are commanded "Grieve not the Holy Spirit" (Eph. 4:30), "Quench not the Spirit" (1 Thess. 5:19), and we are warned against the sin of resisting the Holy Spirit (Acts 7:51). Again, we are commanded: "yield yourselves unto God" (Rom. 6:13), and "present your bodies a living sacrifice" (Rom. 12:1).

**3. What spiritual danger is involved in the fact that sanctification is a slow process?**

The danger of discouragement, or becoming weary and faint in our minds (Heb. 12:3). The fact that sanctification is not only a life-long process, but also involves a bitter struggle against

the world, the flesh and the devil, often tempts the Christian to discouragement and faint-heartedness. Because of the severity of the conflict with sin and temptation, his faith may falter and his enjoyment of the light of God's countenance may grow dim. To warn and guard against these spiritual perils, the Bible presents numerous exhortations to earnestness, constancy and unwearied striving against sin.

**4. How does the doctrine of the Covenant of Grace help the Christian to throw off spiritual weariness and discouragement?**

The doctrine of the Covenant of Grace teaches the Christian that the outcome of his conflict with sin is a certainty. His final salvation and his final attainment of absolute moral perfection are not in doubt — they are sure. They are as sure as the faithfulness of the eternal God, who cannot lie, by the terms of that "everlasting covenant, ordered in all things, and sure" which is all the Christian's salvation, and all his desire. To the Christian, the Covenant of Grace is an unconditional covenant of promise. The only real condition of this covenant has been fully met and provided by the Surety, the Lord

Jesus Christ — even His own precious blood shed on Calvary, and His own perfect righteousness of His life under the law. Thus Christ by His blood and righteousness has purchased and paid for the Christian's final attainment of absolute moral perfection. That which the Lord Jesus Christ has already purchased and paid for cannot fail to be accomplished. The knowledge, from the Word of God, of this absolute certainty, provides the Christian with a strong encouragement in his desperate battle with evil, especially the evil which he finds in his own nature.

**5. Does the certainty of the Christian's attaining absolute holiness, which is promised in the Covenant of Grace, imply that the Christian need not exert himself against sin, but can "let go" and leave the work of sanctification to God?**

Certainly not. No true Christian will ever take any promise of the Bible as an excuse for sluggishness or sins of neglect. If anyone urges God's promise of absolute holiness as a pretext for lack of effort, that only shows that that person does not really know God. To the born again Christian, the promise will lead to earnest effort in resisting sin.

## LESSON 29

### The Covenant of Grace and the Problem of Christian Education: 1. What is Christian Education?

"But, notwithstanding the clear representations given by God in the mirror of His works, both Himself and of His everlasting dominion, such is our stupidity that, always inattentive to these obvious testimonies, we derive no advantage from them. For, with regard to the structure and very beautiful organization of the world, how few of us there are who, when lifting up their eyes to heaven, or looking round on the various regions of the earth, direct their minds to the remembrance of the Creator, and do not rather content themselves with a view of His works, to the total neglect of their Author! And with respect to those things that daily happen out of the ordinary course of nature, is it not the general opinion that men are rolled and whirled about by the blind temerity of fortune, rather than governed by the providence of God?" — John Calvin, Institutes of the Christian Religion, Book 1, Chap. V, Section XI.

**Scripture References:**

Psalm 36:9. Gen. 1:1. Psalm 139:17, 18. Heb. 11:3. Human beings can have no truly adequate knowledge of anything except in relation to God.

Gen. 18:19. Deut. 11:18-21. The Covenant of Grace requires that parents teach the truth of God to their children.

Psalm 94:10; 119:66. Proverbs 1:7; 2:6.

Knowledge, wisdom and understanding come from God.

**Questions:**

**1. What is the relation of the Covenant of Grace to the subject of Christian education?**

In the administration of the Covenant of Grace, God has constituted Christian parents the representatives of their children. On the parents rests the responsibility for carrying out the covenant obligations with respect to the children. Among these covenant obligations one of the most important is that of providing for the Christian education of the covenant children. This is implied in infant Baptism, and is specifically mentioned in the vows taken by parents when their children are baptized. It is the solemn covenant duty of the parents to see that their children receive an adequate Christian education.

**2. What is Christian education?**

Christian education is education of covenant children and youth by teachers who are Bible-believing Christians, which is God-centered in character and content, and God-glorifying in aim.

**3. What is included in Christian education?**

Rightly understood, Christian education includes both Christian religious education and

Christian general education. That is to say, it includes the whole range and realm of truth and knowledge, both God's revelation in Scripture and His revelation in nature and history. Whether imparted by the home, the Church or the school, Christian education must lead covenant children and youth to view everything, without exception, in the light of the Triune God, and in relation to Him and His will.

**4. How is Christian education often too narrowly thought of today?**

In American Protestant circles it is very common to think of Christian education as limited to Christian religious education in the strict sense, that is, the study of the Bible and especially its message concerning the way of salvation. The common idea is that if our children have a good knowledge of the Bible, the way of salvation and Christian conduct, then their Christian education has been properly provided for, even though nine-tenths of their education (in the public schools) is carried on without so much as mentioning God. Even when covenant children are carefully taught the Bible and the way of salvation (in the home and the church), in most cases they study history, science and other "ordinary" school subjects with no reference to God, just as if God did not count in the world of nature and the realm of human affairs.

**5. What is wrong with the narrow idea of Christian education?**

This too-narrow notion of Christian education is the product of a false separation of religion from life in general. Too easily we tend to think that God is important on the Sabbath but not on week-days; that God counts in church but not in the laboratory; that we need God to understand religious truth, but not to understand scientific or historical truth. Too easily we omit God from large areas of human life. We must realize that at every point in our life we are concerned with God. The person who thinks that history or chemistry can be rightly understood without God is in danger of having a religion without God. God is God everywhere and in everything, or He is not really God at all.

**6. What is the effect of this narrow idea of Christian education on our children and youth?**

The inevitable effect is a deplorable division of their thinking into separate compartments, religious and secular. The Christian education which they receive in the home and the church teaches them to think of all of life in terms of God, His plans and purposes, His will, His kingdom. The secular education which they receive in the public schools teaches them to think of nearly all of life as having no connection with

God. The realms of nature, history and human society are presented in the schools as if they were perfectly intelligible apart from God. God, creation and providence are regarded as irrelevant by the modern secular philosophy which dominates public education. Since the children and youth spend about thirty hours each week under the influence of this secular teaching which regards God as irrelevant, and only (at the best) three or four hours weekly under the Christian teaching of the home and the church, it is easy to see which type of teaching is likely to make the strongest impression on their minds. Since God is regarded as unnecessary by modern public school education, our children naturally tend to absorb the idea that for the most of human life, God does not count, though there is a special, separate, isolated compartment of life called "religion", where belief in God has its place.

Modern secular education not only ignores God as irrelevant; it also propagates teachings which are directly contradictory to the truth revealed in the Bible. For example, the Bible teaches that mankind is a special creation of God; many schools and colleges today teach that mankind is a product of a gradual process of natural evolution, by inherent forces, from the brutes. The Bible teaches an absolute, unchangeable standard of right and wrong revealed by God; many schools and colleges today teach that moral standards are the product of experience and change with the times. What can be the result of exposing our covenant children and youth to such contradictory teachings, except acute mental and spiritual indigestion? How can our children and youth gain a unified and consistent view of the universe and of human life, when their education is divided between two irreconcilable philosophies of life — Christian and secular? Is it any wonder that many, after passing through our secular schools and colleges, come to the conclusion that God is unnecessary for most of life, and Christianity concerns only mystical experience or "spiritual life"?

**7. What is involved in truly Christian education?**

Truly Christian religious education must be conducted by parents and teachers who are themselves Christian believers, having faith in God and His Word. Those whose standpoint is that of modern skepticism or unbelief cannot carry on truly Christian education, and will do more harm than good to those under their care. Nor can those who are only slightly interested, or not interested at all, in Christianity, carry on truly Christian religious education. If their heart is not in it, it cannot be a success. Truly Christian religious education must also be orthodox; that is, it must be true, in its character and content, to the historic Christian faith revealed in the Bible. Much that is called Christian religious

education today is far from orthodox, being filled with modern heresies such as evolution, "modern" views which deny the real inspiration and authority of the Bible, etc. Such "modern" religious education is really worse than none at all. It is not an advantage but a menace.

#### 8. What is involved in truly Christian general education?

Like Christian religious education, general education to be truly Christian must be conducted by teachers who are themselves Christian believers, and who can therefore approach the subject matter of education from the standpoint of faith in the God of the Bible and faith in God's Word. The textbooks that are used should be written by believing Christians, from the standpoint of faith in the true God. The whole range and content of education must be God-centered; that is, God must be the unifying principle and the interpreting principle of the whole curriculum. It is not enough that direct contradictions of the Bible be excluded. To exclude advocacy of the theory of human evolution will accomplish little unless the truth of divine creation and providence be put in its place. We must avoid not merely crude and gross denials of Bible truth, but the far more prevalent and subtle notion that most school subjects can be taught from a

"neutral" point of view — the notion that God has nothing important to do with most of life and knowledge. In truly Christian general education, everything must be God-centered and interpreted in the light of God.

#### 9. Why is the problem of Christian education specially difficult?

Because it is a very complex problem, involving our whole philosophy of life, including our most basic beliefs. Multitudes of present-day Christians fail to realize the baffling complexity of this problem, and think that it can be easily solved by some particular concrete proposal, such as the reading of a chapter of the Bible daily in every public school classroom. It is not so simple as that. Adding some Bible reading or even some sound Bible teaching to a school curriculum which is based on the idea that God is irrelevant for science, history and society, will not solve the problem; it will only produce confusion in the minds of the pupils. The Bible must be taught, certainly; but beyond that, the whole curriculum must be integrated by the Christian view of God, man, knowledge and history. Otherwise the pupils will tend to acquire a double-barrelled, unreconciled view of life — a hodge-podge of Christianity and secularism.

### LESSON 30

#### The Covenant of Grace and the Problem of Christian Education: 2. Responsibility for Christian Education

"The duties of parents to children relate to their health, their maintenance, their education, and morals . . . . In respect to their education and morals, great care should be taken. As it relates to the present life, habits of courage, application, trade, prudence, labor, justice, contentment, truth, benevolence, &c. should be formed. Their capacities, age, temper, strength, inclination, should be consulted, and advice given suitable to these. As it relates to a future life, their minds should be informed as to the being of God, his perfections, glory, and the mode of salvation by Jesus Christ. They should be catechised; allured to a cheerful attendance on divine worship; instructed in the Scriptures; kept from bad company; prayed with and for; and, above all, a good example set them, Prov. 22:6; Eph. 6:1, 2." — Buck's Theological Dictionary, pp. 324-5.

"Do you promise to pray with and for your child in private and family worship; to provide for his temporal well-being, and for his education as God enables you; to acquaint him with his lost condition and need of a Saviour; and to instruct him in the plan of salvation and the principles of our covenanted profession?" — Vows of parents in infant Baptism, in The Direc-

tory for the Worship of God adopted by the Reformed Presbyterian Church of North America, 1945 (emphasis supplied).

#### Scripture References:

Mark 5:22, 23, 36-43; 9:17-27. In the Covenant of Grace, God has constituted parents the representatives of their children.

1 Sam. 2:12, 22-24; 3:11-14. God holds parents responsible for the proper training and discipline of their children.

2 Tim. 1:5; 3:14, 15. Where parents are faithful to their covenant obligations, their children will grow up to know, love and serve God.

#### Questions:

1. Where has God placed the primary responsibility for the Christian education of covenant children and youth?

Few evangelical Christians would question the importance of Christian education for covenant children and youth, though there is much difference of opinion as to just what Christian education properly includes. But when we come to discuss the question of where God has placed

the primary responsibility for the Christian education of the children of Christian families, we find considerable diversity of belief. The three answers that are commonly given are: (1) the home; (2) the church; (3) the State. It should be noted that the question is not whether the home, the Church and the State may each have some connection with or responsibility for, Christian education, but rather, Where has God placed the **primary** responsibility for the Christian education of covenant children and youth. It should also be noted that this question does not concern responsibility for the evangelization and Christian teaching of the millions of children whose parents are not Christian believers; that is indeed an important question, but it is distinct from the question of responsibility for the Christian education of **covenant** children and youth.

This question should be decided, not on the basis of custom or tradition, but on the basis of Biblical teachings and principles. It is clear in the Bible that God has constituted Christian parents the representatives of their children during the latter's minority. All parents have a **natural** responsibility for the care and education of their children; besides this natural responsibility, Christian parents have an added **covenant** responsibility for the Christian education of their children.

Accordingly, it must be affirmed that the primary responsibility for the Christian education of covenant children and youth rests upon the parents. Whatever the Church and the State may do or not do, the responsibility for seeing to it that covenant children receive truly Christian education rests ultimately upon the parents. God holds the parents responsible for their discharge of this obligation. At the Judgment Day the parents must give answer for their action in this respect. The faults and failings of the Church and the State will not excuse Christian parents for having neglected to provide truly Christian education for their children.

## **2. What is meant by saying that the primary responsibility for the Christian education of covenant children rests upon the parents?**

This does not mean that the parents must themselves personally conduct and carry out all parts and phases of the education of their children. Under modern conditions of life that would in most cases prove to be impossible, as well as unwise. It is not meant that the parents must undertake the whole task themselves, but that they are responsible for seeing that the task is adequately done. It is clear that in ordinary cases the only practical way for children and youth to be educated is in schools. There are various kinds of schools, such as public (operated by the State), parochial and denomina-

tional (operated by the Church), and private (operated by corporations or voluntary associations). It is the responsibility of the parents to see that their children, whatever school they attend, receive truly Christian education, not modern secular education.

## **3. In what sense is Christian education the responsibility of the Church?**

Subordinately to the primary responsibility of the parents, the Church shares with the home the responsibility for the Christian **religious** education for the covenant children and youth. This is evident from two considerations: (1) the Church has a teaching function with respect to all its members, and since the children are members, the Church must teach them the truths of the Christian faith; (2) the covenant children are to be encouraged and commanded to make a public profession of personal faith in Christ as their Saviour, and to come to the Lord's table; and in order that they may do this in a worthy manner, the Church must teach them in preparation for the privileges and duties of communicant church membership.

## **4. Is Christian general education properly the function of the Church?**

No. While the Church clearly has a function to perform in the Christian religious education of covenant children, we do not believe that Christian general education is properly the function of the Church. Our children should be taught literature and history, science and social studies in a God-centered curriculum from a Christian point of view, but it can hardly be proved from the Bible that it is the function of the Church as an institution to engage in general education, that is, to teach ordinary school subjects such as science and mathematics. For this reason we do not believe that parochial schools (schools owned and operated by a church congregation) are the right answer to the problem of Christian general education. We should recognize, of course, the immense amount of good that has been done by Protestant parochial schools in resisting the trend toward secularism in our country. Still it has not been shown that the Bible warrants the Church as a body carrying on this type of activity.

## **5. Is general education primarily the function of the State?**

Our American public school system has become so much a part of our life that we tend to take it for granted that it is the business of the State to educate our children, without seriously asking ourselves on what grounds this assumption rests. We should realize that almost universal education operated by the State is a comparatively new development in the history of the world, and the supposed priority of the

State in the field of education is neither a teaching of the Bible, nor a self-evident truth of reason. Mere custom and tradition, of course, do not prove anything concerning matters of basic principle.

Certainly the State has a legitimate, and even necessary, function in connection with general education. This may be summarized as follows: (1) the State must see to it that all children in the nation receive education; (2) the State must set proper minimum standards for education, both as to quantity and as to quality, to which all schools, under whatever auspices they may be conducted, are required to conform; (3) where education of children is not provided

for by the parents, the Church or voluntary associations, it is the duty of the State to establish and operate schools for their education.

**6. Does patriotism require that all children attend the public schools operated by the State?**

Of course not. The attempt has been repeatedly made, in various states of the Union, to pass legislation outlawing all private and church schools and requiring all children to attend the public schools. In every case such legislation has either failed of enactment, or has been declared unconstitutional by the Supreme Court of the United States. The United States is still a free country, and patriotism does not require absolute uniformity of education.

### LESSON 31

#### **The Covenant of Grace and the Problem of Christian Education: 3. Attempted Solutions on the Problem**

"Let us remember, then, in every consideration of our own nature, that there is one God, who governs all natures, and who expects us to regard him, to direct our faith to him, to worship and invoke him. For nothing is more preposterous than to enjoy such splendid advantages, which proclaim within us their divine origin, and to neglect the Author who bountifully bestows them." — John Calvin, Institutes of the Christian Religion, Book I, Chap. V, Sec. VI.

#### **Scripture References:**

Prov. 1:7. Genuine education begins with the fear of the Lord.

Prov. 8:32-36. The benefits of the divine wisdom.

Psalms 119: 97-104. True wisdom is attained from the study of the Scriptures.

#### **Questions:**

**1. What confusion has affected many Protestant attempts to solve the problem of Christian education?**

Many earnest people who have been seriously concerned about the problem of Christian education have over-simplified the problem by failing to discern that there are really two distinct problems involved, namely (1) the problem of how the millions of non-Christian children of our country are to be reached with Christian religious and moral teaching; and (2) the problem of how Christian parents are to discharge their obligations in the Covenant of Grace to provide truly Christian religious and general education for their own children. Though these two problems are really distinct, they have often been confused. The first problem concerns the moral and religious instruction of children and youth who are outside the Covenant of Grace;

this is a missionary problem. The other problem concerns the educational obligation of Christian parents toward the covenant children and youth; this is a covenant problem. All attempts to work out a single over-all solution that will solve both of these problems have failed, and must fail. Each problem must be faced on its own merits and the proper solution sought.

**2. What are the principal attempted solutions of the problem of Christian education in the United States?**

Teaching in the home, Sabbath schools, Vacation Bible Schools, Catechism classes, Week Day Church School classes, Bible reading in public schools, Bible teaching in public schools, "Released time" programs, Parochial schools, and Private Christian schools operated by associations of Christian parents.

**3. Why are home teaching and Sabbath Schools not satisfactory solutions of the problem of Christian education?**

Home teaching and Sabbath schools, if truly Biblical in content, are of course commendable and should be encouraged, especially since in the case of many children these are the only sources of religious instruction. They cannot be regarded as adequate, however, because they afford far too little time for teaching. The Sabbath school at best provides 30 to 45 minutes per week for actual teaching. Even if the teachers are competent and the pupils regular in attendance, punctual and attentive (which are far from always being the case!) only a very limited amount of teaching can be done. Sometimes Sabbath school lesson courses lack continuity, and the resulting knowledge of the Bible is vague and incoherent.

Nor can home teaching and Sabbath schools counteract the effect of 30 hours per week of

secular education in the public school. If our children are taught about God 30 minutes a week, and exposed to education without God 30 hours a week, we should not be surprised if they grow up to think that God is not very important for most of our life and activities.

**4. What is the value of Vacation Bible Schools, Week Day Church School classes and "Released Time" programs?**

These various activities, insofar as they are truly Biblical in what they teach, are a help toward reducing the religious ignorance of the children and youth of our land. They bring Christian teaching to many children who otherwise would not come in contact with it. Therefore they should be encouraged and supported by Christian people in the absence of an adequate solution of the problem of Christian education.

But it is a great pity when such efforts as Vacation Bible Schools, etc., are regarded as a real solution of the problem. Efforts of this type have some value, but they do not solve the problem; they are really only makeshifts or stop-gaps devised to mitigate a desperate situation. As long as the curriculum of our public schools is secular and man-centered in character, no plan which merely supplements the public school by adding something to it externally can solve the problem; such schemes are better than nothing, but at best they are only makeshifts.

**5. What can be said in favor of reading and teaching the Bible in the public schools?**

The public schools exist to educate children and youth, and since the fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge (Prov. 1:7), there can be no genuine education that is not God-honoring and God-centered. Any education that leaves God out or regards God as irrelevant is not really education, though it may pass by that name. Since God must be the center and unifying principle of all real education, we conclude that the Bible should be both read and taught in our public schools.

Moreover, the Bible should be taught honestly, in its true meaning. It is possible to select verses from the Bible for reading in schools in such a way as to give a false impression as to the message of the Bible; for example, verses mentioning Jesus Christ may be omitted to avoid offending the Jews. In teaching the Bible, it is possible to present merely ethical lessons and largely leave God out. The pupils may easily be given the impression that the message of the Bible is merely moralism — the idea that people ought to be good. Such reading and teaching of the Bible is not only dishonest, but harmful. It may amount to teaching gross error by omission.

Even when the Bible is honestly and

adequately taught, this does not constitute a solution of the problem of Christian education. What about all the rest of the curriculum? Are the pupils to study the Bible with God, and history without God? Merely adding Bible study to a secular curriculum produces an artificial patchwork, not a unified body of knowledge. Carrying a pocket Testament does not make a man a Christian, and tacking on Bible lessons does not make an evolutionistic, man-centered, secular school system Christian. What is needed is to revolutionize the whole system of our public schools, and especially to revolutionize the whole system and educational philosophy of the teachers' colleges, so that God becomes the center and unifying principle of the whole curriculum. God should be the hub of the wheel, from which all subjects and activities radiate like the spokes of a wheel.

We should favor the reading and teaching of the Bible in the public schools; we should guard zealously against modernistic teaching of the Bible in the schools; and we should realize that reading and teaching the Bible in the public schools is only a step in the right direction, not a solution of the problem of Christian education.

This is not the place to discuss the formidable legal obstacles that may exist to the reading and especially the teaching of the Bible in the public schools. Laws and court decisions are making it increasingly clear that our public school system is becoming more and more rigidly secular. This points to the fact that more than a revolution in the public school system and the teachers' colleges is needed. Something even more basic is required, namely, a Christian commitment on the part of the nation as such. The whole structure of national political life needs to be brought into subjection to the Lord Jesus Christ. Unless this can be done, the status of genuine Bible teaching in the public schools anywhere must remain precarious.

**6. What can be said for parochial day schools and private Christian day schools operated by associations of Christian parents?**

Probably these two types of activity come the nearest to solving the problem of Christian education. In fact, Christian day schools operated not by the Church, but by voluntary associations, would seem to constitute the logical solution of the problem of the Christian education of **covenant children and youth**. We have already registered an objection to parochial or church-operated day schools (see Question 4 in the preceding lesson). Christian day schools operated by associations of parents do not, of course, solve the problem of imparting Christian instruction to the millions of children of non-Christian homes; that is not their purpose. But for their intended purpose, namely, truly Christian education of

covenant children and youth, this type of schools would seem to be ideal. The difficulties do not

concern matters of principle; they concern practical and financial questions.

## LESSON 32

### The Covenant of Grace and the Problem of Christian Education: 4. The Public School and Christian Education

"Thou shalt have no other gods before me."  
— Ex. 20:3.

"Nor will it be sufficient for you to refrain from worshipping any other god, unless you also refrain from imitating certain nefarious despisers, who take the compendious method of treating all religions with contempt. But the observance of this precept must be preceded by true religion, leading our minds to the living God; that being endowed with the knowledge of him, they may aspire to admire, fear, and worship his majesty, to receive his communication of blessings, to request his aid upon all occasions, to acknowledge and celebrate the magnificence of his works, as the sole end in all the actions of our lives . . . . For it is criminal to detract even the smallest portion from his glory; he must be left in possession of all that belong to him." — John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, Book II, Chap. VIII, Sec. XVI.

#### Scripture References:

Psalms 19:1-6. Rom. 1:19, 20. The world of nature is a revelation of God, and cannot be rightly understood apart from Him.

Gen. 3:15. Human history is the age-long conflict between the seed of the woman and the seed of the serpent and cannot be rightly interpreted merely in terms of social development or natural processes.

Eccles. 1:2, 16-18; 12:1, 13. Without God, knowledge and education are vain and meaningless, without real satisfaction or enduring value.

#### Questions:

##### 1. Should the public schools provide Christian education?

Yes. As we have already seen in the preceding lesson, only God-honoring and God-centered education is real education; therefore if the State is to engage in the task of education, it should provide Christian education. Much that is called education today is not really education, for it does not give the pupils any consistent, unified view of life and the world; it inculcates merely an assortment of incompatible viewpoints, fragmentary bits of knowledge and some practical skills or techniques. There is no over-all unifying principle discernible; or so far as there is one, it is a man-centered, evolutionary philosophy of human progress unrelated to the God of the Bible. The pupils emerge from this process with a good

deal of assorted information, and no idea whatever as to what it is really all about. Such is not really education. The public schools, to provide real education, will have to present God as the unifying principle and explanation of it all.

##### 2 What is involved in making the public schools truly Christian?

Making the public schools truly Christian is not a simple or superficial matter, as some suppose. We have already seen that it cannot be accomplished by simply adding Bible reading or Bible lessons to a man-centered, secular course of study. We should not harbor the delusion that slight or easily accomplished changes will turn the American public school system into an ideal instrument of Christian education.

We are discussing, not what is practically attainable under present conditions, but what would be involved in a truly Christian public school system.

To be truly Christian, the public schools would have to have: (1) daily reading and teaching of the Bible according to the faith of evangelical Christianity; (2) a curriculum in which all subjects are taught from a God-centered viewpoint; (3) textbooks and lesson materials prepared by believing Christians with a God-centered approach to their subjects; (4) teachers who are personally evangelical believers in Jesus Christ and who personally hold the Christian philosophy of life and of education.

It may be objected, of course, that such a program is revolutionary and impossible in schools operated by a secular State which does not recognize God in its fundamental law. This is no doubt true. However, Christianity is a revolutionary religion, which was long ago accused of turning the world upside-down (Acts 17:6). We believe that God-ignoring secularism is wrong, both in the State itself and in the schools operated by the State.

##### 3. If it is impossible to make the public schools thoroughly and truly Christian at the present time, should we aim at something more easily attainable, such as the introduction of non-sectarian religious and moral teaching into the public schools?

If by "non-sectarian" teaching is meant simply non-denominational teaching — teaching which avoids doctrinal points peculiar to particular denominations, such as special views about Baptism or the form of church government —

then it will be almost universally agreed that religious and moral teaching in the public schools should be "non-sectarian." Certainly the Church, not the school, is the proper organ for teaching the distinctive principles of a particular denomination.

Unfortunately, however, the term "non-sectarian" is being commonly used in the sense of **doctrinally non-committal**, that is, not taking sides between evangelical Christianity and contrary systems of religion. A widely publicized book on religion in the public schools, for example, speaks approvingly of a textbook for public school Bible teaching which was prepared jointly by a Quaker, a Roman Catholic and a Unitarian — representatives respectively of Mysticism, papal sacerdotalism and denial of the Trinity. Such "non-sectarian" teaching could not be loyal to genuine evangelical Christianity, and at best could rise no higher than a vague moralism or "quest for ethical values."

It is always wrong to lower our ideal to something less than what the Word of God requires. The Christian Amendment Movement could immediately gain wide popular support if it would agree to abandon its effort to get the Lord Jesus Christ recognized in the Constitution of the United States, and compromise the issue by seeking merely for a recognition of "Almighty God." Such a compromise would no doubt be "practical," but it would not be right. With

respect to Christian education in our public school system, we should never give up the high ideal of full conformity to the whole will of God. We may not aim at anything less than the sum-total of what the Word of God requires.

In particular, we should beware of so-called "non-sectarian" religious teaching in our public schools. Some of the most poisonous modernism has been introduced into such programs and their materials in the past. While the decisions of the courts may seem to have made religion in the public schools a closed issue for the time being, this may be changed in the future, and we should be alert to the principles that are involved. If at some future time religious teaching is introduced into the public schools, it may be required that the textbooks and materials used be prepared or approved by the state universities. If this is done, Christian people should be prepared to undertake a thorough investigation of the whole matter, for such textbooks may be expected to be filled with "higher criticism," evolution, humanistic ethics, denial of the real inspiration and authority of the Bible, and other destructive "modern" religious teachings. In the name of "tolerance" the one and only true religion, the historic Christian faith, will be ruled out, while faith in the so-called fatherhood of God and brotherhood of man is represented as being the essential content of Christianity.

### LESSON 33

#### The Covenant of Grace and the Problem of Christian Education: 5. Privately Sponsored Christian Day Schools

"Perhaps the underlying cause in our day of the breakdown of the social order is the false philosophy which is produced by a false explanation. Evolution as an explanation does not and cannot explain things in true perspective. Entrenched in the highest citadel of man's thinking it is known as modernism. It is a hydra-headed monster insidiously wrecking the faith of youth and is undergirding the nonsensical superman or super-race mania. It is a dangerous philosophy which insists on the centrality of man in the universe and human reason as the sole and all-sufficient source of knowledge. It denies the spiritual nature of man and makes Christianity homocentric with evolution as the energy of human progress. In this vicious system God has been humanized, man has been deified and sin ethicized. This commonly accepted system has produced a demoralizing effect in many lands and man is inflated with his own importance." — From the Report of the Committee on the Signs of the Times, Synod of the Reformed Presbyterian Church of North America, 1945 (Minutes, 1945, page 92).

#### Scripture References:

Mal. 4:6. Eph. 6:14. God expects parents

to be concerned about the spiritual welfare of their children.

Prov. 4:1,2; 13:1; 15:5. It is the duty of parents to instruct their children in knowledge.

Deut. 4:9, 10; 11:18, 19. Godly parents are to teach their children the revealed truth of God.

#### Questions:

1. How can Christian day schools be classified?

They can be classified in two groups, namely: (1) Parochial schools, that is, schools owned and operated by a church congregation; and (2) Non-parochial schools, that is, schools not owned and operated by a church congregation.

2. What are the chief religious denominations maintaining parochial schools?

(a) Roman Catholic — 12,593 schools with 3,921,522 pupils.

(b) Lutheran Church, Missouri Synod — 1,404 schools with about 95,000 pupils.

(c) Seventh Day Adventists — 970 schools with 35,219 pupils.

### 3 What are the chief types of non-parochial Christian day schools?

(a) Those of Reformed or Calvinistic faith (affiliated with the National Union of Christian Schools) — 221 schools with 42,980 pupils. (Some of these are in Canada).

(b) Those of Mennonite faith — 35 schools with 2,106 pupils.

(c) Those of other Evangelical groups, affiliated with the National Association of Christian Schools — 168 schools with 20,047 pupils.

### 4. How do these figures for Christian schools compare with the statistics of public school education in the United States?

According to the **World Almanac**, 1959 edition, based on data compiled by the United States Office of Education, the number of public and private elementary and secondary schools in the United States in the year 1953-54 was 152,164, of which 136,512 were public schools and 15,652 were non-public schools.

Taking the elementary schools separately, the total of both public and non-public schools was 122,614 schools, of which 110,875 were public schools and 11,739 were non-public schools.

Taking the secondary or high schools separately, the total of both public and non-public schools was 29,550 schools, of which 25,637 were public schools and 3,913 were non-public schools.

These figures show that almost ten percent of American elementary schools are private or non-public schools, while more than thirteen percent of American secondary schools are private or non-public schools.

Data in the **World Almanac** also show that in October 1957 the total number of pupils 5 to 17 years old enrolled in all schools was 37,601,000, of which 31,145,000 were enrolled in public schools. Thus approximately six and one-half million pupils were enrolled in non-public schools of all kinds. Of course not all of these were enrolled in Christian schools, and the largest single group would be the Roman Catholic. However, the figures certainly show that non-public schools in our country form a significant segment of the educational field, and are far from being the insignificant, microscopic minority that they are sometimes said to be.

Leaving the Roman Catholic schools out of consideration, and combining the figures for Lutherans, Seventh Day Adventists, Mennonites and the schools affiliated with the National Union and the National Association of Christian Schools gives a total of 2,798 schools with 195,352 pupils. While these figures are small in comparison with the figures for public schools and their pupils, they do indicate that Christian day schools are not negligible in number or enrollment. Moreover,

it should be realized, the Christian school movement is making a steady growth in number of schools and in pupil enrollment.

### 5. Where can information and practical advice be obtained by persons considering establishing a Christian day school in their community?

Write to the National Union of Christian Schools, 865 Twenty-eighth Street, S.E., Grand Rapids 8, Michigan. This is a union of schools of the Reformed Faith. They are actively engaged in the production of Christian textbooks, and have a wide range of promotional and other literature, part of which is for sale and part of which is available free to interested persons. Each year the National Union publishes a **Christian School Annual** — a book of 150 pages or more giving the statistics of all their affiliated schools, names and addresses of about 1,600 teachers, addresses delivered at their annual convention, price list of available literature, and other information.

The National Union also publishes an excellent magazine entitled **Christian Home and School**. A sample copy of this monthly can be obtained by writing to the office of the Union.

The address of the National Association of Christian Schools is 10201 South State Street, Chicago 28, Illinois. This organization has as its affiliates many schools of evangelical faith which are not definitely of the Reformed or Calvinistic persuasion. It publishes a periodical called **The Christian Teacher** and a considerable body of educational and promotional literature. Price-list and order blank can be obtained on application to the office of the Association. The doctrinal basis of this organization is similar to that of the National Association of Evangelicals.

### 6. What are some of the more common objections to Christian day schools, and how can they be answered?

(a) It is objected that privately supported Christian day schools make no provision for the evangelization and Christian teaching of millions of children from non-Christian homes in our country.

Answer: This is true, but it does not concern the intended purpose of Christian day schools, which is to provide Christian education for the children of Christian parents. Do we hesitate to provide proper food and clothing for our children, because there are millions of children in the world that are underfed and ill-clad?

(b) It is objected that privately supported Christian day schools are expensive.

Answer: This is true. The real question, however, is one of importance, not of expense. Perhaps most American families would serve God better if they would spend less on luxuries and more on Christian education for their children.

What are the souls of our children worth, in terms of dollars and cents? However, Christian day schools are not so expensive as is sometimes supposed. Representative figures can easily be obtained from the National Union of Christian Schools and the National Association of Christian Schools (addresses given above).

(c) It is objected that privately supported Christian day schools are contrary to democracy.

Answer: Democracy, rightly understood, includes civil and religious liberty, involving the sacred right of parents to have their children educated according to their own faith and conscience. The United States Supreme Court declared unconstitutional legislation which would require all children of a certain state to attend the public schools. This attitude of the Supreme Court shows that private schools are not contrary to democracy. Real democracy is not statism or dictatorship, and does not require absolute uniformity of education, nor does it give the State a monopoly of the educational process.

(d) It is objected that privately supported Christian day schools give their pupils the idea that they are different from other children, resulting in a proud and Pharisaic attitude toward those who attend public schools.

Answer: Certainly Christian people ARE different from those who are not Christians, and believers ARE better than unbelievers or irreligious people. We should carefully inculcate into our children the truth that they, as children of the Covenant of Grace, are different from the world, and to be separate from the world. The lack of this covenant-consciousness has been deplorable in American Protestantism. God's covenant people certainly are better than others. However, this is not due to nature, for by nature all are sinners and totally depraved. That God's children are better than others is due simply and solely to the sovereign grace of God. A truly Christian school will, of course, teach that all men are lost and wicked sinners by nature, and that Christians are saved only by divine grace, for which they themselves deserve no credit whatever. All glory belongs to God. Such teaching will hardly produce a proud or Pharisaic attitude.

(e) It is objected that privately supported Christian schools are small and that they do not impart education of high quality.

Answer: Those who raise this objection have not taken the trouble to ascertain the real facts in the case. Many Christian day schools have hundreds of pupils, fine modern buildings and the best of up-to-date equipment, as well as thoroughly trained, conscientious teachers. Their graduates compare very favorably in educational attainments with the graduates of the best public schools. It is notorious that many public schools of the present day, under the influence of what

is called "progressive education," are turning out graduates who cannot spell correctly, do not speak grammatical English, and whose knowledge of history and geography is woefully deficient. The truth is that the education provided by private Christian schools is not only truly Christian in character, but is also often superior from the academic point of view to that offered by public schools in the same communities.

#### **7. How can properly trained teachers be obtained for private Christian day schools?**

Write to the National Union of Christian Schools or the National Association of Christian Schools (addresses given in answer to Q. 5 of this lesson).

#### **8. What are the principal advantages of private Christian day schools from the standpoint of Christian parents?**

(a) Christian day schools provide daily teaching of the Bible according to the evangelical Christian faith.

(b) They are staffed with teachers who are believing Christians and are concerned about the religious and spiritual welfare of their pupils.

(c) All subjects are taught from a God-centered Christian point of view.

(d) The entire course of study is unified in accordance with Biblical truth.

(e) All anti-Christian teachings such as evolution, modernism, etc., are excluded.

(f) Christian day schools help their pupils to have a sense of belonging to the special, covenant people of God, and of being separated from the unbelieving world.

#### **9. What are some of the cities where large Christian day schools are operated by associations of parents?**

Chicago, Ill., Denver, Colo., Grand Rapids, Mich., Paterson, N. J., among others.

Some large Christian schools are the following:

Grand Rapids Christian High School, opened 1920, has 1165 pupils and 45 teachers. This school is a senior high school (grades 10-12).

Holland Christian High School, opened 1920, has 799 pupils and 27 teachers. This school includes grades 9-12.

Oakdale Christian School, Grand Rapids, Michigan, has 865 pupils and 32 teachers. This school includes Kindergarten through ninth grade. The school was opened in 1892.

Grand Rapids, Michigan, has 19 Christian schools with a total of 8812 pupils and 344 teachers. Denver, Colorado, has two Christian schools with 563 pupils and 26 teachers.

## LESSON 34

**The Covenant of Grace and the Problem of Christian Education: 6. Functions of Home, Church and School**

"Under Christ's government . . . representative responsibility includes natural representation, the result of natural relation. Hence parents are responsible for the education and moral training of their children, and one generation covenants, contracts, and acts representatively for the generations following, whilst remote generations enjoy the fruits of their ancestors' obedience, are credited with their well-doing, or punished for their transgressions." — James Kennedy, in Memorial Volume, 1872, page 54.

**Scripture References:**

Psalms 22:25; 65:1. Eccles. 5:4, 5. We are faithfully to pay our vows to God.

Josh. 24:15. Joshua and his family resolve to serve the Lord.

Isa. 30:20, 21. Godly teachers are a gift of divine grace.

2 Tim. 2:2. The teaching function of the Church.

**Questions:****1. What three institutions perform functions in the education of our children and youth?**

The home, the Church and the school.

**2. Can any one of these institutions carry out the whole task of Christian education?**

No. The task is too great for any one of these institutions. The ideal situation would be harmonious cooperation between the home, the school and the Church in the great task of the Christian education of covenant children and youth. Unfortunately most of our children attend public schools which are practically devoid of Christian teaching, and which often inculcate anti-Christian teaching. So under present conditions, it often comes down to a case of the home and the Church having to carry the whole load of Christian teaching and at the same time having to try to counteract the secular influence and wrong teachings of the public schools. This present condition is of course far from satisfactory, as more and more Christian people are coming to see. However, by the grace of God, the Church and the home together can accomplish much, in spite of the non-Christian influence of the schools. This does not imply, of course, that Christian parents may regard our secular public school system with complacency.

**3. Is the task of each of these institutions identical with that of the others?**

No. While the home, the school and the Church should cooperate in the task of Chris-

tian education, each has its own function to perform, which it can undertake better than the others. To some extent, of course, these functions will overlap; yet each has a distinct character and emphasis.

**4. What is the special task of the home, or the parents, in the Christian education of the children?**

First of all, the parents are the sole teachers of the children in their earliest years, when they are very impressionable. The influence of godly parents and faithful teaching in pre-school years may be very great in after life.

Secondly, the parents should set a godly example by Christian standards of conduct in the home, faithful observance of family worship, regular attendance at church services and prayer meetings, etc.

Thirdly, Christian parents should impress the stories of the Bible and the truths of the way of salvation upon the minds of their children from their early years, as soon as they are able to understand.

Fourthly, parents should exercise firm but loving discipline over their children, not tolerating stubbornness and perverse conduct. When children are allowed by fond but misguided parents to behave just as they please in the home, they will later prove a great problem to pastors and teachers in the Church and school.

Fifthly, parents should provide a supply of sound, attractive, interesting Christian literature for their children, and encourage them to read it, and should guard against the promiscuous reading of worldly books and magazines.

**5. What is the special task of the school in Christian education?**

The school should teach the Bible and elementary Christian truth to the children, in addition to teaching "ordinary" school subjects from a Christian point of view. In Bible teaching, the effort should be made to enable the pupils to acquire a good, coherent knowledge of the historical contents of the Bible. It is a shame that children of Christian families should grow up not knowing that Abraham lived before Joshua, or David before Daniel. In addition to Bible history, there should be teaching of the way of salvation, as well as insistence, in precept and practice, of the Biblical standard of conduct.

The school is not the place for teaching the distinctive principles of a particular denomination (except, of course, in case of a school established and maintained wholly by that de-

nomination). Nor is the school the place for teaching the more advanced aspects of doctrinal truth; these are the province of the Church.

**6. What is the special task of the Church in Christian education?**

While the province of the Church will inevitably overlap to some extent those of the home and the school, still the Church has special functions to perform. These include indoctrination, or instruction in the doctrines of the Christian faith, teaching of the Church's catechisms, and special instruction by the pastor preparatory to making a public profession of faith and being admitted to the Lord's Supper.

**7. What is the general importance of Christian education today?**

It is of exceedingly great importance for the

future of the Church and the Kingdom of God. It may be truly affirmed that the problem of Christian education is THE great unsolved problem of American Protestantism, and that the deplorable, ignorant, run-down, lukewarm condition of many churches is the result of the lack of a consistent and adequate program of Christian education. There is much recognition of the need for revival in America today. But if there is to be a revival with permanent results, there will have to be a solution of the problem of Christian education. Without a substantial knowledge of divine truth, revivals and their results are bound to be transitory. American Protestantism needs to realize the desperate need for adequate Christian education; Christian parents need to re-think this whole question in the light of their obligations in the Covenant of Grace.

## LESSON 35

### The Covenant of Grace and the Completeness of Calvinism

"He has a great and high respect to the covenant. It is the covenant of the great God, with His great and eternal Son, for the honor and glory of His great name; and therefore He cannot but have a great and high respect unto it. His great name is manifested in it; and therefore, when we plead His respect to the covenant, we plead in effect, saying, 'What wilt thou do for thy great name?'"

"He has a dear and lovely respect to the covenant, for it is the covenant of His grace and love, wherein He shows His infinite love to Christ, and through Him to a company of wretched sinners. It is a covenant of kindness, Isa. 54:10, 'My kindness shall not depart from thee, neither shall the covenant of my peace be removed, saith the Lord, that hath mercy on thee'; intimating, His covenant of peace is a covenant of kindness, wherein He manifests His dearest love; therefore He has a dear respect to it." — Ralph Erskine (in sermon on Psalm 79:20, "Faith's Plea Upon God's Covenant").

**Scripture References:**

Isa. 57:15. The majesty and the condescension of God.

James 2:23. Gen. 18:17. Psalm 25:14. Isa. 54:5. Jer. 31:32. The spiritual intimacy between God and His people established by the Covenant of Grace.

Gen. 17:1. Deut. 4:23; 29:9. Psalm 103:17, 18. Heb. 12:22-29. The doctrine of the Covenant of Grace emphasizes man's responsibility to God.

**Questions:**

**1. What objection is often urged against Calvinism, or the Reformed Faith?**

It is often asserted by critics of Calvinism, that this system of theology is very one-sided and

overstresses God, God's glory, God's decrees, God's works, etc., while failing to do justice to other aspects of Biblical truth such as God's loving kindness, man's moral responsibility, man's free agency, etc. Some go so far as to say that Calvinism and Arminianism are simply two sides of the same picture; that both are equally true, each emphasizing a truth which the other neglects; that is, Calvinism stressing God's sovereignty while Arminianism stresses man's freedom and accountability. (Since Calvinism and Arminianism, at the points in dispute between them, are mutually contradictory systems, it is really absurd to speak of them as if they were mutually complementary. It amounts to saying that contradictory statements are both true.)

**2. Is it true that Calvinism is a one-sided system?**

Certainly not. Those who say that it is, either do not grasp the system in its integrity, or else they fail to realize that for each of the doctrines which they say Calvinism over-stresses, there is in the Calvinistic system a complementary truth which prevents one-sidedness. Especially the doctrine of the Covenant of Grace brings out the beautiful, rounded completeness of the system of Christian theology called Calvinism, or the Reformed Faith.

**3. How does the doctrine of the Covenant of Grace bring out the completeness of the Reformed Faith?**

The doctrine of the Covenant of Grace emphasizes certain Biblical truths which serve to complement other truths of Calvinism, thus making the system complete. Of course, the doctrine of the Covenant of Grace is itself a distinctly Calvinistic doctrine. When we think of Calvinism, we should not think only of the so-called "Five Points of Calvinism" (1. Total depravity of man.

2. Unlimited sovereignty of God. 3. Limited or particular atonement. 4. Irresistible or efficacious grace. 5. The perseverance of the saints) — for these “Five Points” are not a summary of Calvinism, but only a list of the five doctrines which distinguish Calvinism from Arminianism. Besides these five points, there are many other doctrines, including the doctrine of the Covenant of Grace, which go to make up the complete system of Calvinism or the Reformed Faith.

**4. How does the doctrine of the Covenant of Grace serve as a complement to other truths in the system of the Reformed Faith?**

(a) In harmony with the Bible, the Reformed Faith strongly stresses the majesty and sovereignty of God. It ascribes all glory to God. Along with this stress on the glory of God, the doctrine of the Covenant of Grace brings out the condescension of God; though He is the high and lofty One, that inhabiteth eternity, yet He is willing to stoop to the level of His creatures, to call Himself the “Friend” and “Husband” of His people — even to humble Himself by becoming man, dwelling among us, and laying down Himself as a sacrifice for our sins on the cross. All this divine condescension and self-humbling is included in the doctrine of the Covenant of Grace; it is one of the doctrines of Calvinism, side by side with the truth of the divine majesty and glory.

(b) In harmony with the Bible, the Reformed Faith emphasizes God’s absolute predestination; it teaches double predestination, including the election of some to eternal life and the reprobation of others to eternal death. This truth is strongly stressed by Calvinism, but not any more strongly than by the Bible itself. But alongside of this strong emphasis on God’s absolute predestination, Calvinism insists on the doctrine of the Covenant of Grace which equally emphasizes God’s love and mercy. The loving kindness of God is brought out by the doctrine of the Covenant of Grace in two ways: first, this doctrine shows that God’s decree of election, while it is sovereign on God’s part, still is not an arbitrary decree; in His eternal decree of election, He has mercifully taken account of family relationships; He has elected believers and their children after them (Gen. 17:7; Psalm 103:17).

Secondly, the doctrine of the Covenant of Grace emphasizes the truth that God sincerely offers salvation to all sinners who hear the Gospel (Ezek. 33:11; Matt. 23:37; 1 Tim. 2:4. This of course involves a paradox or apparent contradiction which human reason cannot solve. It is the strength, not the weakness, of Calvinism that it

does not attempt to solve such paradoxes by human reason, but allows both truths to stand side by side just as the Bible itself does).

(c) Calvinism or the Reformed Faith strongly stresses man’s absolute dependence upon God for every element of his life, faith and salvation. In this respect, Calvinism is eminently Biblical, for according to the Bible God is absolutely sovereign and independent, whereas man, as a creature and a sinner, is absolutely dependent on God and absolutely unable to do anything whatever toward saving himself. It has often been urged against Calvinism that this doctrine of God’s sovereignty cuts the nerve of all human activity or response to the Gospel and leads to fatalism or despair. But this criticism is unjustified, for the doctrine of the Covenant of Grace strongly emphasizes man’s moral accountability to God. It is a very distorted view of things to say that Calvinism teaches God’s sovereignty while Arminianism teaches man’s responsibility. The truth is that Calvinism teaches God’s sovereignty AND man’s responsibility (without attempting to harmonize the two by human logic), whereas Arminianism rejects God’s sovereignty and teaches man’s responsibility alone. No Arminian ever preached man’s responsibility as strongly as Calvinism insists on it, for it is precisely because God is sovereign that man is responsible to God, and Arminians do not believe that God is sovereign.

The doctrine of the Covenant of Grace emphasizes man’s accountability to God, not only by teaching that the sinner is guilty and under the wrath of God for his sin, but also by commanding the sinner to repent and believe on Christ as his Saviour. Yet this does not imply any denial of man’s utter dependence on God. The sinner is commanded to repent and believe; he cannot do so of himself; but by the work of the Holy Spirit God gives to the elect sinner the very repentance and faith which God requires of the sinner (2 Tim. 2:25, 26; Eph. 2:8); hence the sinner’s repenting and believing is no contradiction of his utter helplessness and dependence upon God.

There are several other ways in which the doctrine of the Covenant of Grace serves to bring out the beautiful, rounded completeness of the Reformed Faith, but those that have been mentioned are sufficient for our purpose in this course of lessons. May God grant unto us to see the beautiful, well-proportioned and truly Biblical character of the Reformed theology, and to realize the vital importance, for the Church and the Kingdom, of the doctrine of the Covenant of Grace.

The End

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## *The Inspiration of the Bible*

By J. G. Vos

**Note:** It is our regular practice to publish thirteen Bible lessons in each issue of this

magazine, thus providing fifty-two issues each year, one for each week of the year. Owing to

the series on the Covenant of Grace ending with Lesson 35 there are only nine lessons in the present issue. This study of the Inspiration of the Bible is presented here in lieu of the four additional lessons which would be needed to make thirteen. — Editor.

### The Word "Inspiration" Today

The popular modern usage of the term "inspiration" differs widely from its use in the Bible and in theology. A young girl went to a religious summer camp and returned home saying, "I am simply brimming over with inspiration!" By this she meant, no doubt, religious enthusiasm or emotion.

Someone says, "I like to hear Pastor Blank's sermons because I get so much inspiration out of them." Someone else says "Our former pastor was more inspirational than our present one." This modern usage of the term "inspiration" is subjective — it concerns our reaction to something, how we feel about something or how we respond to something. We call a sermon or a book "inspiring" or "inspirational" if it stirs us up with religious feeling or moves us to action.

But when we speak of "the inspiration of the Bible" we are speaking about an objective quality of the Bible as a book. It has nothing to do with how the Bible affects us, or our reaction to the Bible. The Bible may stir us up with great enthusiasm, or it may leave us as cold as ice. In either case it is the inspired Word of God.

A Bible laid away in an old trunk in the attic along with a bundle of grandmother's love letters is just as truly and just as fully inspired as a Bible that someone carries around and reads every day with great spiritual benefit.

Inspiration is a quality of the Bible in itself. It has nothing to do with how the Bible affects us, nor with our response, or lack of response, to the Bible.

Also the inspiration of the Bible is not the same as the inspiration of genius — the quality which makes great art or great literature. There is such a thing as poetic, artistic or musical inspiration, but this is a very different idea from what is meant by the inspiration of the Bible.

### The Meaning of Inspiration in the Bible

The word "inspiration" literally means "breathing in." However, that is not exactly the meaning in the Bible. We get the word "inspiration" or "inspired of God" from the Latin version of the Bible, where it occurs as the translation of a Greek word, **Theopneustos**, which means literally **God-breathed**. The idea is that Scripture is something which God has breathed out of His mouth. Therefore it is a product of God's activity. When Paul says in

2 Tim. 3:16, "All Scripture is God-breathed" he is saying that every part of the Bible is the product of an activity of God. God has sent all Scripture forth out of His mouth.

It is obvious, of course, that the Bible is a human book. There is not a sentence in it but what it went through some human mind and was committed to writing by a pen in some human hand. We do not need to labor the proof of the human character of the Bible. But when we have said that the Bible is a human book we have not told the whole story. The human side is only one side of the Bible. For the Bible is not only a human book — it is also a divine book. It is not merely the word of man, but also in a true sense the Word of God.

Peter tells us (2 Peter 1:21) that the Scripture did not come in old time by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit. "Moved" in the Greek is "carried along." Men wrote the Bible, but it did not come by the will of man. They were not the originators of the Bible. The real author of the Bible is the Holy Spirit.

"Carried along by the Holy Spirit" — there was a supernatural influence at work as the sacred writers did their work. They may not always have been conscious that this divine influence was working with them and through them. But it was working with them and through them, whether they realized it or not. This influence of the Holy Spirit so guided and controlled the Bible writers that the product of their writing was: (a) exactly what God wanted it to be; (b) wholly free from errors of every kind. Therefore we call the Bible the infallible Word of God, or the inerrant Word of God. The Bible as a finished book is exactly what God intended it to be, and it is wholly free from errors or mistakes of any kind whatever.

### The Verbal or Plenary Inspiration of the Bible

The true doctrine of inspiration, according to the Bible itself, is that not merely the general ideas but the actual, exact words of the Bible are inspired by God and are just what God wanted them to be.

Many people object to this idea today. They say, "I believe in the inspiration of the Bible, but I do not believe in the verbal inspiration of the Bible. I believe that the general ideas of the Bible are inspired, but I hold that the actual words are merely human and may contain imperfections and errors."

A favorite representation today is the analogy of a phonograph record. You play the record and hear the voice of a famous singer, but there is also a certain amount of surface noise. It is said that in reading the Bible you can hear the Word of God, but that there is also a certain

amount of human imperfection and error in the Bible — the surface noise of the record.

Verbal inspiration is the only kind of inspiration that really means anything. Thought is expressed in words. An exact thought requires exact words for its expressions. Change the wording and you change the thought. Did you ever promise something on time payments without reading all the fine print on the contract? Suppose someone were to go to court and say to the judge: "I accept the general ideas of this contract, but not its exact wording. I refuse to consider myself bound by the exact wording of all this small print." The judge would doubtless reply, "How do you know what the general ideas of the contract are except by reading the specific statements of the contract?"

Take away the actual words and you have only blank paper left. It is only through the words that we can reach the ideas. And only through the exact words can we reach the exact ideas.

Objectors reply that verbal inspiration destroys the truly human character of the Bible. If the very words are controlled by the Holy Spirit, it is said, then the human writers such as Moses or Paul must have been mere robots. Or it is said that according to the concept of verbal inspiration the human writers of the Bible were a mere typewriter keyboard operated by the Holy Spirit. It is said that the personality traits of the individual human writers would be suppressed or eliminated if God controlled the exact words used in writing the Bible.

The answer to this objection is that the human element in the production of the Bible is not suppressed or eliminated in any way. This is quite obvious from even a superficial comparison of the language and literary style of one part of the Bible with those of another part of the Bible. What a difference there is, for example, between the Book of Proverbs and the Epistle to the Romans! Or between the Book of Isaiah and that of Amos!

The Holy Spirit worked through the personality of the human writers, not in spite of them or against them. Each of the human writers was chosen and prepared by God for the specific part of the Bible that he was to write. For example, God prepared Moses from the time of his birth for the task of writing the first five books of the Bible. Then when the time came for writing them, the Holy Spirit worked through Moses in such a way that the product of Moses' writing was exactly what God intended, and it was entirely free from errors.

This is called the **organic** view of inspiration, as distinguished from the **mechanical** view which would regard the human writers as mere robots

or tools in the hands of God. The organic view regards God as using the personality of the human writers to produce exactly the right product.

Only the verbal inspiration of the Bible gives us a Bible which is fully the Word of God. Only the verbal inspiration of the Bible gives us a book of which we can say with full confidence, "Thus saith the Lord." Any preacher or writer who claims to believe in the inspiration of the Bible but not the verbal inspiration of the Bible should be suspected of serious deviation from Biblical truth. Such writers want to emphasize the human at the expense of the divine, and it will invariably be found that they believe that the Bible is not wholly true but actually contains errors.

#### Are there Errors in the Bible?

Sweeping statements are often made, such as that the Bible is full of errors and contradictions. When someone makes such a sweeping charge we should pin him down and insist on his giving specific facts. Where can we find one of the many errors? In what book, chapter and verse is it located? It will usually be found that the objector is at a loss to provide specific information. He is merely parroting a baseless charge.

The kinds of errors usually alleged to exist in the Bible are scientific errors and historical errors. We may freely admit that there is conflict between the Bible and some scientific theories — the theory of organic evolution, for example. But we deny that there are contradictions between the Bible and proved scientific fact.

One alleged scientific error that has been brought up is the idea that the earth is flat. No doubt it is generally agreed that it has been scientifically proved that the earth is spherical in shape. But, says the objector, the Bible teaches that the earth is flat. When asked where the Bible teaches that the earth is flat, the objector will sometimes refer to a text which speaks of the four corners of the earth. Needless to say the four corners of the earth are merely points of the compass — north, south, east and west. They imply nothing as to the shape of the earth. Or the objector may mention the text which speaks of "the waters under the earth" and claim that this means that the earth is flat. Of course none of these texts really implies that the earth is flat. The Bible describes things as they meet the eye, not as a scientist would analyze them. We do the same today when we speak of the sun rising and setting, although we know very well that it is the earth turning on its axis that makes this impression.

The Bible nowhere teaches that the earth is flat. But we may go a step further. Did some

of the human writers of the Bible believe that the earth is flat? For example, did Moses believe that the earth is flat?

In answer to this, we may say that very possibly Moses did believe that the earth is flat. Perhaps he did, perhaps he did not. But that is not the point. The point is that Moses nowhere in his writings teaches that the earth is flat. The inspiration of the Bible does not cover all the private opinions and beliefs of the men who wrote it — it covers only what they actually wrote in the Biblical books. We do not hold that Moses was infallible, but only that he was preserved from error in writing the first five books of the Bible. He himself was not infallible, but his writings, produced under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, are infallible.

Another class of alleged errors in the Bible is historical errors. Robert Ingersoll, many years ago, toured the country lecturing on "Some Mistakes of Moses." It is related that a man was selling tickets to hear Ingersoll's lecture, and asked a man whether he would care to spend a dollar to hear Ingersoll on the mistakes of Moses. The man replied, "No sir, I am not interested. But I will give you five dollars to hear Moses on the mistakes of Ingersoll!"

Most of the historical mistakes that Ingersoll claimed to find in the writings of Moses have been completely cleared up by modern research. No one would even mention them today. As a matter of fact a great many alleged historical errors in the Bible have been cleared up by archaeological discovery and historical research. Two of these may be mentioned here, one from the Old Testament and one from the New.

The Old Testament repeatedly mentioned a nation called the Hittites. Critics of the Bible once said that this must be wrong, for there never were any Hittites, or if there were, they must have been an insignificant tribe. They said this because the famous Greek Historian Herodotus did not mention the Hittites. Note the type of thinking involved in this. If the Bible mentions a nation or empire which the Greek historians did not mention, the Greek historians must be right and the Bible must be wrong. It did not occur to the critics that the Bible might be right, and the Greek historians wrong.

But the Bible was right after all. About fifty years ago the civilization of the ancient Hittites was discovered by excavations in Turkey. It was found that the Hittites were a powerful empire for about one thousand years, roughly from 2,000 B.C. to 1,000 B.C., or from the time of Abraham to the time of Solomon. Thousands of written inscriptions of the Hittites were recovered. It was found that they used various languages and kinds of script, all of which have been deciphered and translated. There are mas-

sive volumes of published Hittite documents today — laws, lists of kings, government decrees, and the like. In great universities there are learned professors today who specialize in the science of Hittitology. Yet it was once claimed that the Bible was wrong, because there were no Hittites!

From the New Testament: Luke dates the birth of Jesus by a decree of Caesar Augustus which called for a census throughout the Roman Empire (Luke 2:1-3). He says that "this census was first made when Cyrenius was governor of Syria". Luke was a scientific man trained in the exact thinking fostered by Greek science. He was a physician by profession. Luke was very careful and exact in all his writing. Critics of the Bible have tried very hard to catch Luke in a historical or geographical mistake, but they have not succeeded in doing so.

However some critics claimed that Luke made a mistake about the census taken when Cyrenius was governor of Syria. For it was proved that Cyrenius was governor of Syria at a different time from the time of the birth of Jesus. There was a discrepancy of several years. At first believers in the Bible could not answer this objection. But later research explained the matter satisfactorily, and proved that the Bible was correct after all. The fact was that Cyrenius served two terms as governor of Syria, with an interval between the two terms. One of these terms coincided with the time of the birth of Jesus. So the problem was solved. Luke knew what he was writing about after all.

There still remain some problems of this kind which have not been solved. For instance, 2 Kings 24:8 says that Jehoiachin was 18 years when he began to reign, whereas 2 Chronicles 36:9 says that he was 8 years old when he began to reign. Obviously both of these statements cannot be correct. There is a probable solution of this problem, which the reader can learn by consulting a standard Bible commentary. It is not necessary to take space here to explain the matter.

All literature coming down from ancient times contains problems such as this. It is remarkable that there are so few of them in the Bible. The wise and scholarly attitude is to reserve judgment — "wait and see" — rather than to be hasty in judging the Bible to be in error. Especially in view of the fact that so many problems have already been cleared up, we should never pronounce the Bible wrong. Problems in the Bible are one thing, proved errors are another. It has not been proved that errors exist in the Bible.

To avoid possible misunderstanding, it should be added here that when we say that the Bible

is completely free of mistakes, strictly speaking this applies to the original autographs as written by the original authors, in the original Hebrew and Greek. We hold that the five books of Moses, for example, as **Moses wrote them with his own hand in Hebrew**, were completely free from errors. Actually, there are three kinds of errors which may exist in a printed English Bible such as we use today. These are:

(1) **Typographical or printers' errors.** These are occasionally found in nearly all printed Bibles. They are more common in some of the cheaper printings of the Bible. The obvious remedy is to compare one copy with several others. It will soon become clear which copy has the typographical error. In Bibles printed by the better publishers typographical errors are extremely rare, but occasionally one will be found.

(2) **Errors in copying manuscripts down through the centuries before the art of printing was invented.** The scribes who copied the manuscripts were careful, trained workers, but occasionally one of them made a mistake. Consequently there are slight variations between different manuscripts of the same book. The remedy, again, is by careful comparison and study, according to tried and true principles, by which it is possible to weed out most errors of this kind.

(3) **Errors in translation.** The men who translated the Bible into English were not inspired as translators. We have translations of an inspired book, not inspired translations. No translation is perfect — none is quite as good as the original from which it was made. Translations are progressively corrected and improved, but none is ever completely perfect. The Authorized or King James Version is an excellent translation of the Bible, but it is possible to point out an occasional error in translation in its pages.

Thus there are three possible kinds of errors in an English Bible — printers' errors, copyists' errors and translators' errors. But add them all together and they do not amount to very much. The total is so slight that no doctrine of the Christian faith is affected by them. Many of these errors concern such matters as the number of soldiers in an army, the spelling of proper names, and the like. For all **practical purposes**, the Bible as we have it in English is the infallible Word of God, wholly free from errors. For **theological study** the appeal is to the Bible in the original Hebrew and Greek.

#### **Is the Inspiration of the Bible Important?**

Some people tell us today that we are trying to defend an outworn theory of past times. They say that the inspiration of the Bible is not important today. Only bigoted, narrow-minded fundamentalists, it is said, insist on the verbal inspiration and inerrancy of the Bible today.

This charge can be made to sound very plausible, even pious. Why, we are asked, should we be enslaved by a paper pope? What we need, it is said, is Christ, not the Bible. The Bible is said to be a dead book, while Christ is a living Person. So an antithesis is set up: Not the Bible, but Jesus Christ; not a dead book but a living Person. This seems to pay high honor to Jesus Christ. It sounds very religious. But actually it is both very foolish and downright wicked. This slogan, "not a dead book but a living Person", overlooks two crucial facts, namely:

(1) The Person they are talking about Himself endorsed the book. Jesus Christ accepted the Old Testament which was the Bible of His day. He gave it His fullest endorsement. He said that the Scripture cannot be broken. He said that not a jot or tittle can fall from it till it all be fulfilled. Obviously Jesus held the highest possible view of the inspiration and authority of the Bible. This puts the modern objector in a dilemma. How can he follow Christ and at the same time reject what Christ taught about the Scriptures?

(2) It is only through the Book that we know anything at all about the Person. Jesus Christ is separated from us by nineteen centuries of historical time. He is not visibly present on this earth today. We cannot meet Him on the streets of Jerusalem or the roads of Galilee as men did of old. We would not even know of His existence were it not for the information given us in the pages of the Bible. How foolish, therefore, to regard Christ and the Bible as rivals, or even as enemies of each other, as if we had to choose between them — either Christ or the Bible but not both! Either a living Person or a dead book! We deny that the Bible is a dead book. It claims to be living and active, and sharper than any two-edged sword, and we deny that faith in the Bible takes anything away from our loyalty to Jesus Christ. On the contrary, loyalty to Christ requires that we believe in the inspiration and inerrancy of the Bible.

The Bible is God's answer to the two deepest questions that the human mind and heart can ask. These questions are:

(1) What ought I to believe?

(2) How ought I to live?

They are the question of truth and the question of duty, the question of faith and the question of ethics. Both are answered by the Bible. But only an inerrant, fully inspired Bible gives us a thoroughly dependable answer to the questions What is true? and what is right? Only a verbally inspired Bible can give us a fully trustworthy "Thus saith the Lord." Only a verbally

inspired Bible can be fully depended upon as a lamp to our feet and a light to our path.

If we hold to anything less than a verbally inspired Bible, we will approach the Bible as the typically "modern" scholar does, asking, "What do I say about this book?" "How much of this book is true and how much is mere human error? What do I say about this book?"

But if we hold to a verbally inspired Bible, an inerrant Bible, we will never be so profane as to ask "What do I say about this book?" Instead, we will reverently ask, "What does this Book say about me?"

We need a verbally inspired Bible to live by. Much more do we need a verbally inspired, fully trustworthy Bible to die by. When we go out into the mystery of eternity we do not want a Bible that is marred by human error, a Bible only parti-

ally trustworthy. We want and need a full reliable "Thus saith the Lord."

The Covenanter Church is in a very small minority today in defending the verbal inspiration of the Bible. In almost every large theological seminary in America today for a student to stand up for the verbal inspiration of the Bible means to bring instant reproach — perhaps even ridicule — upon himself. May we never be ashamed of this precious, foundational truth of our Christian faith!

Note: For a recent scholarly defence of the verbal inspiration of the Bible the reader is referred to "**Fundamentalism**" and **the Word of God**, by J. I. Packer. Published 1958 by Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., Grand Rapids 3, Michigan. 191 pages, paper cover. \$1.25. See review in *Blue Banner Faith and Life*, April-June 1959, page 126. — Editor.

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## *Reviews of Religious Books*

The favorable reviewing of a book here is not to be understood as necessarily implying an endorsement of everything contained in it. Within the editorial policy of *Blue Banner Faith and Life* each reviewer is solely responsible for the opinions expressed in his reviews. Please purchase books from your book dealer or direct from the publishers; do not send orders for books to the manager of this magazine.

**WHEN CHRIST COMES AGAIN**, by T. F. Torrance. Wm. B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., Grand Rapids 3, Mich. 1958, pp. 192. \$3.00.

A stimulating and brilliant treatment of various subjects of the Gospel contained in sixteen sermons. Occasionally, however, the author adopts interpretations and makes assertions which, in the reviewer's opinion, are not proper. For example, on page 120, he affirms that John the Baptist was offended by the apparent weakness of Christ, which does seem to be unwarranted extrapolation of the Scripture of Matthew 11. Again, Professor Torrance should recognize that the preacher's task is limited to exposition and application of Scripture, rather than the repeating of tradition, such as the crucifixion of Peter (p. 92.) To cite one more example: "Take one of the really great paintings of the crucifixion of Christ, of Holbein or Gruenewald, which has depicted the crucifixion in all its truth and stark actuality" (p. 189). Actually, this cannot truly be said even of the inspired Gospel records; how much less can it be said of such human fancy. Were such a statement true, we might well ponder that God should fail to give His church inspired painters in addition to inspired authors.

There is no doubt that such faults mar this book, but over all these sermons are very able

expositions of Scripture. They are clear, pointed, and worthy of study.

— Joseph P. Duggan

**SACRAMENTAL TEACHING AND PRACTICE IN THE REFORMATION CHURCHES**, by G. W. Bromiley. Wm. B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., Grand Rapids 3, Mich. 1957, pp 111. \$1.50.

There are two extremes in Protestant circles in regard to the sacraments. There is the High Church position which sets the sacraments above the Word and attaches to them a mystical virtue apart from the Word. This is even indicated by the arrangement of church furniture, and is not confined to Episcopal churches. Perhaps as a reaction to this some regard the sacraments as mere "empty and bare signs," though often associated with this attitude to the Lord's Supper is an over-emphasis on the value of baptism by immersion.

The proper way to correct these misconceptions is to appeal to the teaching of Scripture. This the Reformers did, and they presented very clear and consistent views of the place of the sacraments in the life of the church and the lives of believers. Dr. Bromiley follows their footsteps in this *Pathway Book*, which, though brief, covers the ground very comprehensively and penetrates

to the heart of the subject. Dr. Bromiley evinces a thorough knowledge of the theology underlying the sacraments and of the historical situations and practical problems which arose at the Reformation and are still present in the churches which cherish the Reformation and are still present in the churches which cherish the Reformation heritage.

Though often directed against abuses in his own church, the Episcopal, as well as Romish superstitions, the book should prove helpful to a wider circle. Dr. Bromiley gives much needed instruction on the spiritual significance of the sacraments, and also most helpful advice as to their proper administration. However, he does not fully appreciate their value in connection with maintaining discipline in the church, and advocates a wider participation than is consistent with upholding the purity of the church, which he seeks to maintain.

— W. R. McEwen

**ABSOLUTE PREDESTINATION.** by Jerome Zanchius. Sovereign Grace Publishers, 1124 S. E. First St., Evansville 13, Indiana. 1957 (reprint), pp. 150. \$2.50.

In some circles there is a revival of interest in the Reformed Faith, and an earnest desire to read the classical documents in which it is set out clearly. One of these is the standard work by Jerome Zanchius, a contemporary of Calvin, entitled "Absolute Predestination."

Those who associate Calvin's name solely with this doctrine will be surprised to see how little Zanchius leans upon the great master, and how much he quotes Luther, Bucer, and other Reformers, as well as the great Augustine. Of course his main appeal is to the Scriptures, which were to him the final authority for faith and the end of all strife.

Beginning with the Divine attributes revealed in the Word, he proceeds, by "a regular chain of solid argument," to show the logical necessity of the doctrine of predestination. Of course he does not rest the doctrine on mere logic, but expounds the Scriptures in which it is clearly taught. The matter is well arranged under appropriate divisions, and is presented in a devotional spirit.

This is a translation from the original Latin by the Anglican, Calvinistic Divine, Augustus Toplady. "Translations," says B. B. Warfield, in his article "On the Literary History of the 'Institutes'," "are not ordinarily undertaken by men of high powers of original expression. Such a task is usually left to literary talents of distinctly the second rank. Only when some other and deeper impulse than a literary one is present do men of great gifts of expression turn to such work. This deeper impulse was in operation in the case of the 'Institutes.'" This deeper impulse was also in operation in the case of this translation. For

Toplady was a Calvinist of strong conviction, deep piety and original literary powers who, in his own day, ably contended for the Reformed Faith against the Arminian perversion. So we have here no stilted, wooden translation, but one that pulsates with life and vigor. Toplady makes Zanchius speak English to his own day. His message comes with equal force today.

— W. R. McEwen

**A COMMENTARY ON ZECHARIAH,** by Thomas V. Moore. The Banner of Truth Trust, 78b Chiltern Street, London, W.1, England. 1958, reprint of 1859, pp. 251. \$3.25.

Here is a gem of a commentary on Scripture. It is a reprint of a study published in 1856, and as helpful now as it must have been then. Moore was trained at Princeton Theological Seminary, and served as a pastor in the Southern Presbyterian Church. The authentic Calvinistic piety and scholarship for which Princeton was noted is certainly manifest in this book. Moore's exegesis of Zechariah is at once deeply mystical and highly practical, and the hermeneutical principles with which he unfolds the message of this difficult Scripture are eminently sane.

There are few criticisms which this reviewer would raise concerning this commentary, and they are minor ones. The only question of any import that we ask concerns the application of the promises and threatenings delivered to Israel. In short, what is meant by Israel?

This problem, of course, is not peculiar to Moore. Sincere Christians have been divided on this question for centuries, and still are. Zechariah is replete with prophecies concerning Israel (more specifically, Judah or Jerusalem; this reviewer assumes that these terms are essentially interchangeable), prophecies that are often highly symbolical, and in rapidly shifting contexts, difficult of interpretation.

"Israel" has been variously held to refer (1) to the Church—Jew and Gentile; (2) to the "spiritual Israel" which is the elect remnant of Israel "according to the flesh;" or (3) to the physical seed of Abraham and the nation of Israel. Some would press all mentions of Israel in the Scriptures into one of these molds or another. It is far more likely, however, that the term may carry one (or more) of these connotations in any one place of Scripture, according to the particular historico-exegetical principles involved. The real problem is not to categorize the term in any arbitrary way, but to decide honestly what it means in one place or another.

This is an especially difficult problem in the prophetic books of the Old Testament, inasmuch as the immediate historical situation of Israel described by the prophets, and the grand predictive vista opened up by Jehovah, are often closely

interwoven, and it may require a Solomon to detect which strand is which.

The difficulty becomes even more acute in such a prophecy as that of Zechariah, whose literary style swiftly shuttles from symbolic to historical to dramatic. It may be assumed, for example, that in Zech. 1:12 the angel of the Lord asks concerning the geographical Jerusalem, and the contemporary Judah (but can one, even here, peremptorily exclude a wider reference?). But, as so often in Scripture, the reference quickly enlarges, to embrace a far greater span of history than the prophet's day and the "threescore and ten years" leading up to it, and also seems to proceed from the physical and external to the spiritual and intangible. This progression is especially noteworthy and vivid in 2:1-5.

On the whole, Moore deals judiciously with this problem. He certainly tries to elicit from the immediate context the meaning intended. Generally it may be said that he sees the Church as the object of God's promises, and unconverted, fleshly Israel as the object of His judgments. However, he follows no hard and fast rule, and there are places where the Church is found unfaithful, as well as places where gracious promises are afforded to Israel. In these latter instances, the Israel to which Moses assigns the promises is generally the spiritual remnant of election.

Perhaps Moore is not always right, or consistent. In 2:4, for example, Moore finds the reference "mainly to the Church of which Jerusalem was but the theocratic symbol" (p. 56). A little later, however, he asserts, "v. 12 proclaims the future restoration of the Jews to their ancient relation to God" (p. 59), without explaining why he thinks the reference changes. This is not to say that Moore is wrong in switching from the Church in verse 4 to the elect remnant in verse 12, but only that questions are raised which he himself does not answer.

This problem of "Judah" becomes most acute in Zechariah chapters 12-14, for the atoning work of the Messiah is now brought clearly into view (11:12, 12:10, 13:7 are all quoted in the New Testament as applying to the passion and death of Christ), and the closing portion of the prophecy seems evidently to depict the concomitants of this event, and its result, both immediate and distant.

Moore opens his exegesis of this section with the statement, "The persons referred to are, we believe, the people of God, the New Testament succession of the Theocracy, the Church of Jesus Christ, which is the continuation of the kingdom of God as it existed in the Jewish economy" (pp. 187-8). He blends into this application of prophecies to the Church at large the belief that certain promises are especially given to the Jews:

"There is, however, another great event that is to accompany this mighty struggle, which is, the conversion and restoration of the Jewish people to the Church from which they have been so long separated" (p. 195). This blending controls his interpretation of Zech. 12:10: "This penitence shall pervade the whole Church, but especial prominence is given here to the recovered Jews" (p. 197).

This whole question is considered important enough by the publishers that they have added an Appendix to elaborate on it. This reviewer feels that since this Appendix is really an additional commentary, the name of the person writing it should have been given. One may note, incidentally, that whereas in the exegetical sections of his commentary Moore refers frequently to the Jews, in the sections he calls "Practical Inferences," he invariably applies to the Church the spiritual and moral truths taught.

Only one misprint was noted, on page 89, where Ezek. 16:41 should apparently be Ezek. 16:42.

The Banner of Truth Trust are to be highly commended for their noteworthy contribution to contemporary Christian literature.

— Victor Bucci

**CALVIN'S DOCTRINE OF THE WORD AND SACRAMENT**, by Ronald S. Wallace. Wm. B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., Grand Rapids 3, Mich. 1957, pp.xii, 253. \$3.00.

This excellent book is the result of a careful and comprehensive study of Calvin's works. The language is largely from Calvin's own writings and the extracts are linked together in a manner that is conducive to smooth reading. All extracts have been translated into English.

The title gives some indication of the contents. The first five chapters deal with Calvin's view on revelation, under the Old Covenant and under the New Covenant, its unity of form and uniqueness. Then follow five chapters which deal specifically with the Word of God, the preaching of that Word and the reception of the Word by faith. The remaining eight chapters present Calvin's teaching on the doctrine of the Sacraments.

Each page is supplied with copious footnotes directing attention to the works of Calvin and giving important quotations in Latin and French. Each chapter has a main title followed by a number of sub-headings which present a useful summary of the contents. This in some measure compensates for the lack of an index.

In an age when there is considerable confusion in the use of certain theological terminology, it is gratifying that such a book on the teaching of Calvin should be put into circulation.

The student is compelled to turn to the master himself and thus be left in no doubt as to what Calvin taught.

We heartily agree with the author when he says in the Preface "What is most important in the study of Calvin to-day is to reveal what the Reformer himself actually said, in order that misconceptions about his teaching may be cleared away."

The author also claims that "this work is not a critical study of Calvin, but an attempt to express his teaching as copiously, fairly and sympathetically as possible." In a careful reading of the volume, however, the reviewer felt compelled to put a question mark opposite the following statement: "It would be consistent with Calvin's doctrine of revelation were he at this point to insist that the Word of Scripture also partakes of the same human frailty as the other signs through which God reveals Himself and is also 'flesh'" (p. 113). This remark follows a quotation from a comment of Calvin on Hebrews 1:3 in which he says, "We must allow that there is a degree of impropriety (improprium) in the language when what is borrowed from created things is transferred to the hidden majesty of God." Such a criticism betrays a Barthian tendency and fails to appreciate what Calvin adds in his comment. "But still the things which are evident to our senses are fitly applied to God, and for this end, that we may know what is to be found in Christ, and what benefits he brings to us."

— Alexander Barkley

**THE UNITY AND DISUNITY OF THE CHURCH**, by G. W. Bromiley. Wm. B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., Grand Rapids 3, Mich. 1958, pp. 104. \$1.50.

"After all, the justified sinner may be still a sinner. But he cannot be an acquiescent sinner, abandoning this life to the triumphant fact of sin, because he can appeal in another and higher sphere to the even more triumphant fact of righteousness. And by the same token, the united church may be still disunited, but it cannot be acquiescently disunited, abandoning this life to triumphant disunity because it can appeal in a different sphere to a higher and ultimate unity" (p. 36). In such a manner does the author repeatedly challenge his readers to face the facts of Christian disunity.

This book fulfils a most valuable purpose in so confronting us with perils of intolerance and evils of disunity. Moreover, in chapters 5-7, the author very properly reminds us that true unity is to be found "in the incarnate, crucified, and risen Christ and therefore in the Father and the Holy Spirit" (p. 61). There are several pertinent and vital observations made in these chapters, but lacking concrete application to the

matter of visible unity, they deal only with invisible unity, which, — while primary — is nevertheless but one of the two facets of full Christian unity.

Dr. Bromiley endeavors in the last five chapters to show how this essential unity is to be fulfilled in visible unity. Sadly, however, his formulation seems to lead him to a unity on the basis of the lowest common denominator.

Thus, we are told that "it is Jesus Christ who saves and unites, not our beliefs about Him or the expression which we give to these beliefs" (p. 77). "To confess Jesus Christ as the Truth, as Savior and God, is to be brought into an indestructible unity of confession even though there may be the widest variations in our apprehension of what is involved" (p. 78). It should not be necessary to point out that many are willing to give profession to Christ as Truth, Saviour and God as well as Lord, who actually are enemies of the Gospel. Certainly we shall agree that "to confess Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord is obviously essential. To accept an intricate definition of His relationship to God is not so obviously essential to saving faith, and surely ought not to be imposed as a condition of unity" (p. 79). But, are we to conclude therefore that the Church shall not properly make confessions affirming a Biblical Christology and that she may not discipline those who persist in error?

Actually, in striving for a formula of unity, Dr. Bromiley at one point will permit the Church to assert definitely almost nothing: "The common deposit of faith, e.g., in the Apostles' Creed, is to be accepted, but with no prescription of use or enforcement of rigid conformity" (p. 80). And at the same time he would have the Church embrace almost every view: "Different and even contradictory confessions must be taken into the common body for continual scrutiny, reformation, and attempted reconciliation under the Word of God" (p. 81).

Can the true Church be united only on the basis of a few phrases, without even a mutual understanding among her members as to what these phrases mean? Certainly Dr. Bromiley knows full well that the various parts of the "Apostles' Creed" have been given numerous interpretations, many of which assert dangerous and unscriptural theories. Does he actually mean that there can be the widest variations in apprehension of what is involved in confessing Christ? There are those who affirm the bodily resurrection of Christ, yet deny that our Lord's body was raised; and those that affirm the deity of Christ, yet deny that He was ultimately anything different from other men. Is the Church to embrace such views as permissible — even tentatively for scrutiny?

This reviewer was quite disappointed and

somewhat shocked in reading this book. He hoped to find some firm delineation of an acceptable confession. For a moment he was encouraged when his eyes fell upon the words "ultimate loyalty to Scripture," but actually only learned that the way to overcome doctrinal disagreements "is guided always by an ultimate loyalty to Scripture, so that in the last resort nothing will be demanded but that which is actually written in the terms in which it is written, and this by way of a spiritual rather than an intellectual demand" (p. 80). Does this say anything more than that the Church should require her members to believe generalities and spiritual concepts? Must not we ask how one can have any appreciation at all of spiritual concepts without an intellectual knowledge of what they entail?

The Church that confesses that Jesus is Lord and Saviour is no church at all if she refuses to say that she means one thing only by these words. The true Church cannot be so fearful of heretics that she will not even require her members to assent intellectually as well as spiritually to the Word of God.

— Joseph P. Duggan

**CHILDREN OF THE REFORMATION: THE STORY OF THE CHRISTIAN REFORMED CHURCH — ITS ORIGIN AND GROWTH**, by Marian M. Schoolland. Wm. B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., Grand Rapids 3, Mich. 1958, pp. 142. \$2.75.

Here is the well-written, moving story of the Christian Reformed Church. The writer's father was one of the pioneer professors of Calvin College and Seminary. Marian Schoolland has written many books for children and young people, and this book, with its sixteen illustrations, presents in simple yet impressive style the rise and witness of one of the greatest Reformed bodies in the world.

It is with mixed feelings that we read of the influence of the Psalms in Reformation days, especially in Calvinistic circles. In the early days of the Christian Reformed Church they were used exclusively and joyfully. For it has always been a singing church. But by 1929 hymns were being introduced before the regular service, and by 1934 a Psalter Hymnal was officially in use, and so the Church was no longer exclusively Psalm-singing. "Nothing could stop," says our writer, "a revival of the longing for New Testament hymns" (p. 93). Reformed Presbyterians will find this strange reading when they recall that the only hymns authorized in the New Testament are the Spirit-given psalms, hymns and odes from God's own Word, which are about our Lord Jesus Christ and His Church — Christ is the heart and soul of the Psalms, and so He Himself always interpreted them, and the Apostles invariably follow suit. Historically, this also

makes strange reading, because earlier in the book we are told that Gysbert Haan and his followers broke with the Reformed Church of America in 1856 because of unsound preaching, increasing popularity of uninspired hymns, and the permission of membership in secret societies. And when the Christian Reformed Church came into being, Gysbert Haan and his supporters made purity of worship one of the principles of their witness. Covenanters can only be saddened by this side of a great story. One thing that should be noted is the interest of Christian Reformed members in music, instrumental groups being encouraged. Calvin College has its own fine orchestra. Indeed, the members of the Church have always shown keen interest in practically every branch of art.

It is challenging to read of this Church's Christian schools — a great movement — and of its printed witness and missionary enterprise. We recommend this book to readers of every age; it is especially suitable for young people's study groups.

— Fred S. Leahy

**GOD'S RIVER: EXPOSITION OF ROMANS 5:1-11**, by Donald Grey Barnhouse. Wm. B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., Grand Rapids 3, Mich. 1958, pp. 224. \$3.50.

This is the fourth volume of Dr. Barnhouse's exposition of Romans, dealing with chapter 5 verses 1 to 11. There are twenty-eight chapters, and sometimes the same verse is considered in two or three chapters. The style is straightforward and racy, and the book abounds with illustrations, many of which are to the point and of popular interest. There are some excellent passages in this book, but at times we are confronted with the fanciful, and, what is worse in an exposition, conclusions which are unrelated to the text. This does not often happen in a book which is characterized throughout by a fairly sturdy fundamentalism, but it happens. For example, in one of the expositions of Rom. 5:6 ("For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly"), we are suddenly plunged into the beliefs of modern dispensationalism, and we read such sentences as: "God does not count time while the Jews are not in full possession of the Holy Land, including Jerusalem and the place of sacrifice. When Christ died 483 years had been accomplished" — he is referring to Daniel's seventy weeks — "and God as it were stopped the pendulum of Israel's clock; He has not yet started it going again. Most certainly that seventieth period of seven years will be in earth's future history." Dr. Barnhouse goes on to interpret the phrase "in due time" dispensationally. And dealing with our Lord's resurrection body (p. 186) we find Dr. Barnhouse asserting with great assurance that Christ's resurrection body was bloodless.

that there is no blood in heaven, and the words "flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God" are interpreted in this sense. This reviewer never imagined that there was blood in heaven, but surely such an interpretation of 1 Cor. 15:47-50 misses the whole point of the passage, namely, that our body as **now constituted** cannot inherit the kingdom of heaven, the latter phrase meaning in this context, Christ's kingdom as it is to exist after the resurrection. Paul is simply saying that corruption cannot inherit incorruption.

Because of its easy style, numerous illustrations, flashes of insight and the fundamentalism of which the author is a prominent representative, the book will have a wide popular appeal.

— Fred S. Leahy

**THE EPISTLE TO THE ROMANS: AN EXEGETICAL AND DEVOTIONAL COMMENTARY**, by Floyd E. Hamilton. Baker Book House, Grand Rapids 6, Mich. 1958, pp. 235. \$4.75.

In this exegetical and devotional commentary, we have in one volume a useful study of a great epistle. The writer combined the "grammatico-historical" method of exegesis with the doctrinal and devotional methods. Throughout he is loyal to the inspiration of the Word (in the Biblical sense of inspiration), and he faithfully endeavors to let the Word speak for itself. There is a brief but skilful introduction followed by sixteen chapters which correspond to the chapters of Romans in our Bibles. Each chapter closes with pertinent questions for discussion. There is an outline of Romans running through the book.

The writer is a Calvinist, and quotes from such authorities as Calvin, Hodge, Edwards and Warfield. He makes good use of scholars like Godet, Sanday, Meyer and others.

Mr. Hamilton's exposition of Romans is altogether pleasing, and minister, Bible class leader, student and teacher will all find his commentary well worth the price. We wish it a wide circulation.

— Fred S. Leahy

**TEMPTATION AND SIN**, by John Owen. Sovereign Grace Publishers, 1124 S. S. First Street, Evansville 13, Indiana; Zondervan Publishing House, 1415 Lake Drive, S. E., Grand Rapids, Mich. 1958 (reprint), pp. 322. \$3.95.

This volume contains three important works of "the Prince of the Puritan Preachers" — Dr. John Owen — Mortification of Sin, Temptation, and Indwelling Sin. It is fitting that the writing of this outstanding Puritan should appear among the "classic reprints" of the Sovereign Grace Publishers. The preface of the book is by Dr. Paul K. Jewett of Fuller Theological Seminary. He is quick to point out that Owen's theology is faithful to the Biblical revelation in

its indictment of man as a sinner. The "liberal" doctrine of the innate goodness of the human heart has, writes Dr. Jewett, proven to be an hallucination. He continues: "The record of the Communist party alone, not to mention the crimes, follies and misfortunes of past ages, is enough to confute that naivete which would write off the sinfulness of the race as the accidental by-product of unfortunate social and economic circumstances. Realizing that such a shallow optimism is inadequate to the facts, many in our day are beginning anew to look upon sin as something endemic in man. Hence the relevance of this reprint of Owen's treatise on the Biblical doctrine of indwelling sin." Dr. Jewett says that Owen "weaves into his expose of man's sinful heart, the Scriptural antidote, which is the principle of grace kept up in the believer by the Holy Ghost so that the law of sin in him does not become a law **unto** him; . . . Here is 'existential' theology in the true sense of the word."

A hundred years after Darwin, we have seen and still see the bitter harvest of his philosophy — so naturally espoused by the dictators, and now by the Communists in Russia, and China. A philosophy which is bound by time and sense, which knows nothing of sin in the Biblical sense (e.g., no murders, just liquidation and removal of "contaminated" parts of the body of society!), which sneers at the precepts and principles of Christianity, and which is confessedly trying to smash the main bulwarks of human society as revealed in Scripture, can only be opposed with the full, rich, virile doctrine of grace, such as we find in this book. If the doctrines of the Reformation had not been abandoned in Europe, it would not be in its present predicament, nor, for that matter, would the world.

— Fred S. Leahy

**THE SECOND EPISTLE OF PAUL TO THE CORINTHIANS**, by R. V. G. Tasker. Wm. B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., Grand Rapids 3, Mich. (Britain and Ireland: The Tyndale Press, 39 Bedford Square, London, W. C. 1, England). 1958, pp. 192. \$3.00.

Every serious student of the Bible is interested not alone in what the Bible says but also in what it means by what it says. Therein lies the value of a good commentary, one that is both sound and scholarly. Add to these two characteristics that of easy readability and we have a fair description of the Tyndale New Testament Commentaries of which this is one.

The general editor of the series is Dr. R. G. V. Tasker, Professor of New Testament Exegesis in King's College, the University of London; who, in this case, is also the author of the commentary. As has been said these commentaries are intended for the general public and serve their purpose well.

The method followed is a verse by verse exposition of the meaning. In every case where the sense seems to be in doubt choices of interpretation are provided. These may be represented in the different versions or translations or as they appear to various commentators, the author himself included.

Following the Preface and an introduction of some 21 pages we have the commentary proper (155 pages). This proceeds on the basis of the analysis, which is as follows:

1. Greeting and Thanksgiving. 2. Paul defends his integrity. 3. Paul's apostolic ministry. 4. An appeal for large-heartedness and consistency. 5. Paul's comfort at the news brought by Titus. 6. The collection for the Christian poor in Judaea. 7. Paul's apostolic authority. 8. Conclusion.

As we all know, the author of the epistle himself, as well as his interpretation of the Truth, is an extremely worthwhile topic. Here in Second Corinthians, as in no other of Paul's epistles, interest centers in the apostle, and especially in the emotional life of the inspired writer. As has been said, Paul was great in each of three dimensions and his religion is a synthesis of intellect, feeling and will (Dr. Francis L. Patton.)

As one reviewer says, "the strength and beauty of this volume is that the writer has caught the heart throb and pulse beat of the apostle." And Dr. Tasker himself says, "There can be few readers of this intensely personal and most moving document who remain insensitive to the quick-beating pulse of its writer, however difficult they may sometimes find it to follow his thought. So unsparingly does he unbosom himself, and so freely does he give expression to his changing moods and feelings, that the way lies open to an intimate understanding of the apostle's heart with all its tenderness, its joys and fears."

Paul himself, would be the first to subordinate himself to the greatness of the truth which it was his privilege and duty to proclaim. Consequently here, as everywhere, he avails himself of every opportunity to enlarge upon the truth as it is in God and His Son. Here, as elsewhere, are great passages which often come "as unexpected epistles in the middle of didactic narrative" — passages which live in the memory of all who love the Word of God.

Of these, as dealt with in this commentary, we would choose the following for special mention: (1) The Contrast between the things which are seen and those which are unseen (4:18). (2) The dissolution of this earthly house of our tabernacle and the building of God (5:1 ff.). (3) The standing and state of one who is "in Christ"

(1:20 ff.). (4) "The weapons of our warfare" (10:3 ff.). (5) Paul's special revelation concerning his "thorn in the flesh" (12:7-10).

Also of special interest as well as great importance for the militant believer is the passage in 6:14 to 7:1, which opens with the words "Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers." Whether regarded from a logical or a rhetorical point of view, this statement of the apostle is outstanding.

Two problems arise in connection with it — one of interpretation, the other of application.

It is well to bear in mind that two main aspects of concern for the church at Corinth pervade the epistle. These are the internal-external situation of the church's relation to the heathen and their heathenism and also a very acute internal situation. The major concern of the apostle's work at Corinth from the outset was the deliverance and preservation of the converts from idolatry.

However, a situation had arisen in which "false apostles, deceitful workers" had entered in and gained a following (chapter 13). Their pretensions went so far as to include apostleship itself, which they were evidently promoting in opposition to Paul. In connection with their self-promotion they took advantage of every pretext to downgrade the apostle. Their activities took effect in a radical division among the Corinthian converts and posed a threat of complete disruption of the church. Paul's position was that in every situation where radical division appears the principle of separation must prevail.

So it is no wonder that his "spirit was stirred in him." Paul was and is a notable example of the believer in the intimacy of his personal relation with Christ. He was and is the great exemplar of the mutual love of Christ and the believer. It was a situation which in the depths of the apostle's love stirred him to the highest pitch of feeling. It was productive of a vast concern in the depths of his being, and presented a very acute problem for him in his attitude to his converts at Corinth.

The total impression gained from a close study of Dr. Tasker's commentary is that of questions diligently investigated and conclusions carefully considered. There is also always an element of characteristic regard for divergent opinion.

The work as a whole is found to be rich and satisfying. It is a joy to be able to recommend it to all readers, both pastors and lay people.

— John C. Rankin

MAN IN MODERN FICTION: SOME MINORITY OPINIONS ON CONTEMPORARY AMERI-

CAN WRITING, by Edmund Fuller. Random House, New York, 1957, pp. xvii, 165, \$3.50.

For anyone who views modern fiction, particularly the novel, with something less than wholehearted enchantment, **Man in Modern Fiction** seems a breath of fresh air. The breath may be better described as breezy, even brash at times, yet essentially the author's approach remains an invigorating critical opinion which many, including myself, have felt long overdue. The awe with which mere modernity in contemporary fiction is regarded may be in truth uncritical. Those who are, at various times and in differing places, disappointed, disillusioned, and disgusted by much modern fiction will discover in Fuller's pungent criticism much to confirm them in what is likely their own half-formulated view.

The author realizes his position in the ranks of contemporary criticism, which may have prompted his subtitle. Christians acquainted with modern fiction, either through their own gropings after a broadened outlook or through that which comes their way via the reading habits of the younger generation, may feel that the conservative position has had little voice in recent years. This book meets this need, in part, and ought certainly to prove both enlightening and stimulating.

Mr. Fuller's thesis is that the majority of modern fiction is produced by those who fail to understand the essential nature of man. Therefore, the book is concerned critically with idea and content more than it is with aesthetics, though Fuller admits that the two cannot be totally separated. Nor is Fuller's interest prudery or puritanism. He challenges "a philosophy, a view of man." (p. xvi).

The doctrine of man is basically religious. Fuller arbitrarily divides fiction into three parts, according to its view of man: the Judeo-Christian and Hellenic tradition, in which man "is a created being, with an actual or potential relationship to his Creator," (p. 9) the humanistic viewpoint — "the novel of MAN;" (p. 10) and modern nihilistic fiction — that of disillusionment, which sees man as "collective, irresponsible, morally neuter, and beyond help." (p. 12) Fuller's criticism is chiefly directed toward this last type of fiction, so prevalent today, and he avowedly writes in support of the long-standing tradition in fiction which, he declares, sees man as he is meant to be seen.

The specific points of criticism are concerned with those manifestations of modern fiction which Fuller believes are the most distressing symptoms of the philosophies of determinism and disillusionment. The inverted sentimentality of many recent works of fiction, the paradoxical

search for value by a novelist who admits no objective value, the exaggerated clinical approach to psychological aberration and sexual play which often obliterates the "message" of the modern novel, the "female zombie," the "organization man" and the "hipster" — all these are treated with a mixture of humor, indignation, and satiric judgment. Fuller writes refreshingly well, though at times he strikes one as boisterous and brassy, at times a bit too full of himself. There is never a dull page in **Man in Modern Fiction**.

My chief criticism concerns Fuller's concept of Calvinistic theology. This he discusses in a chapter entitled, "The Revival of Total Depravity." Essentially Fuller's viewpoint of man is colored by high-church presuppositions. That he misunderstands Calvin's teaching of total depravity is seen in the following quotation: "Calvin brought to the Christian teaching about Original Sin and the Fall of Man a dire extremity of interpretation . . . All men were seen as steeped utterly in corruption, totally depraved in all their faculties, to be saved only by faith in the redeeming grace of Christ." (p. 20) This Fuller sets in distinction from "the classical catholic doctrine" that man's moral nature is merely "wounded" by the Fall, and, though redeemed by Christ, is not "totally depraved or intrinsically evil." (p. 20) The author misinterprets *total*, not seeing that it was used first to show man's total constituency corrupted, not merely his mind nor his emotions nor his will alone, and that secondly it was used to indicate totality of direction — man cannot be, in his natural state, going heavenward half the time and to hell the rest.

This confused perception becomes untenable when Fuller cites such modern novels as **East of Eden** and **The Bad Seed** as examples of a variant of Calvinistic total depravity. The principal character of the latter novel, a little girl, is characterized as one of a number of absolutely determined beings: "they were the true inborn criminals that can neither be changed nor modified . . ." (p. 27) This heredity concept, says Fuller, is "fantastic genetic gobbledygook in addition to being a ridiculous concept of the moral nature of man." (p. 27) To equate the doctrine of total depravity with sheer hereditary determinism, in which man has no moral choice, is to make a caricature of Calvinism.

Despite the author's prejudice against Calvinism, I found **Man in Modern Fiction** a rewarding study — a book which made clearer for me the criteria by which a Christian can judge the philosophies concerning man which underlie modern fiction.

— Norman M. Carson

TEACHERS' NEW TESTAMENT WITH

NOTES AND HELPS, edited by John William Russell, Baker Book House, Grand Rapids 6, Mich. 1959, reprint of 1912, pp. xvi, 656. \$3.95.

This work was originally published by Thomas Nelson and Sons in 1912. It consists of the New Testament text in the American Standard Version (of 1901), with notes and comments by the editor, assisted by a panel of twelve associate editors. The present edition is photographically reproduced from that of 1912.

The notes and comments, which are on the lower part of the pages with the Scripture text, provide a great deal of useful information. There is also a brief introduction to each book of the New Testament discussing such matters as authorship, date and original readers. Each introduction also provides an outline of the contents of the book concerned. The theological viewpoint is conservative.

The words of Jesus Christ are printed in bold faced type, although this is not carried out with complete consistency, as the sayings of Christ in Acts 20:35, Revelation 1:17-20 and Revelation 22:16 are printed in ordinary type.

The introduction to the Book of Revelation is by Benjamin B. Warfield, and as might be expected, is a scholarly piece of work which gives recognition to the various schools of interpretation of the book. Warfield's treatment of the nature and literary character of the Book of Revelation should help the student to attain a sound and accurate understanding of the book.

Controversial matters within the field of evangelical Christianity appear to have been avoided, for the most part, by the editors. There is no polemic for any special views on Baptism, or Church Government, or for Calvinism or Arminianism. Here and there, however, a note seems quite improperly to take issue with or tone down some feature of the Reformed interpretation of Christianity. For example, on page 382 a note on Romans 8:28 ("And we know that to them that love God all things work together for good, even to them that are called according to his purpose.") refers the reader to Romans 11:32 ("For God hath shut up all unto disobedience, that he might have mercy upon all"), and adds the statement that "This contradicts the idea that God intends to save some and reject others." Romans 9:18 which teaches the sovereignty of God's mercy is passed by without comment. Repeatedly the statement that it is God's purpose to have mercy on all is universalistically interpreted. This seems to the reviewer a weakness in a good book.

This annotated New Testament will prove of considerable usefulness to the student who can use it with some discernment and with some prior doctrinal knowledge. The apparent desire

of the editors to avoid taking controversial positions results in a certain degree of doctrinal weakness in the notes and comments. Many obscure matters are cleared and much sound information is provided. The convinced Calvinist will be disappointed that many passages that are veritable pillars of the Reformed Faith are passed by without comment or with a weak comment which fails to show adequately how such passages support the Reformed Faith.

— J. G. Vos

THE EPISTLE TO THE ROMANS, A STUDY MANUAL, by Gleason L. Archer, Jr. Baker Book House, Grand Rapids 6, Mich. 1959, pp. 103, paper cover. \$1.50.

The author of this little book is a member of the faculty of Fuller Theological Seminary and is a well known conservative scholar. The book is a brief, popular style study of Paul's Epistle to the Romans. The Epistle is well outlined and the comments are clear, pointed and practical. Greek words are transliterated in roman type.

The parallel and contrast between Adam and Christ in Romans 5 is treated in accordance with the federal or covenant theology. The verb "foreknew" in Rom. 8:29 is correctly stated to mean that God "owned and recognized us as His own from before the beginning of time," and the author explicitly states that God "did not simply know in advance what our response to the Gospel would be (although He did know that)" (p. 53).

On page 61 the author, in discussing predestination and free will, makes the following statements:

"The choice of accepting or rejecting God's grace is made by each individual without prior causation. Since man is created in the image of God and God's own moral choices are not caused by any outside predetermined force, it is fair to conclude that men too retain the prerogative of uncaused choice. But of course, the choice they make is eternally certain and foreknown by the omniscient God. It is false to assume that this bestowal of undetermined free will upon man would run counter to the sovereignty of God; such an assumption betrays an inadequate grasp of what His sovereignty means."

Dr. Gleason's statements in the paragraph just quoted seem to this reviewer to betray an inadequate grasp of what God's sovereignty means. Orthodox Reformed theology holds that man's choice is truly his own choice and yet it was eternally decreed by God — not merely foreknown, but predetermined or decreed. Admittedly this is a paradox which human reason cannot solve. But it is hardly correct to speak of man's freedom as "uncaused choice," for man's will is inevitably determined by his nature, and

since the Fall, man's nature has been totally corrupted by sin, so that, left to himself, he must inevitably choose evil only. It seems incorrect, therefore, to speak as Dr. Gleason does, of man having "undetermined free will," since man's sinful nature has determined his will to evil, and only the supernatural, renewing power of God can determine it to good.

Furthermore, the problem is not clarified by Dr. Gleason's antithesis between "the unconstrained free choice of each moral agent" and "any constraining force from without" (p. 61). For the choices of moral agents — sinful men — are indeed constrained, but not by "any constraining force from without"; rather, they are constrained by factors operating within the personality of the sinner — either the sinner's total depravity, or the regenerating grace of God. In other words, the absence of an **external** constraining force does not imply that sinful man has "undetermined free will" or "unconstrained free choice." The reviewer believes that at this point Dr. Gleason has failed to reckon adequately with the total sinfulness of fallen man, and has done less than justice to the teaching of Romans on the sovereignty of God in human salvation.

On page 31 the author rightly rejects the notion that newborn infants are innocent or sinless, stating that if this were the case, the only way a parent could make sure of his child going to heaven would be by killing the child before it could commit any sins! Rightly rejecting such an idea, he says (commenting on Romans 5:14) "A much sounder view is that God deals with infants according to the response of faith which He foresees they would make if they were permitted to live on to the years of adult decision". This represents God dealing with infants dying in infancy on the basis of a purely hypothetical decision to accept or reject Christ. But all would certainly reject Christ if left to make their own decision without the operation of the efficacious grace of God. The idea that God saves infants on the basis of hypothetical but actually non-existent "response of faith" seems to this reviewer (1) to be foreign to the teaching of the Scriptures, in Romans and elsewhere also; and (2) to obscure rather than to clarify the problem of the salvation of infants in relation to the sovereignty of God.

In dealing with the discussion of the strong and the weak in Romans 14 Dr. Gleason correctly brings out the often neglected fact that the scruples of the weak brother are a "weakness" or fault of immature Christians, not the normal or ideal condition of Christians, as many interpreters have wrongly held.

We have one technical criticism of the book. The running heads on the pages bear only the

words "The Epistle to the Romans" without any indication of what chapter is being treated. The references on the pages, except where a new passage or section is being taken up, give only the verse numbers. Therefore the reader who is looking for help on a particular verse or passage of Romans may have to glance through and leaf over several pages before he finds out what chapter is being treated, and he may have to repeat this process more than once before he finds the place he is looking for. This inconvenience could be eliminated very easily by adding the chapter numbers to the running heads at the top of all the pages.

— J. G. Vos

**THE EPISTLE TO THE GALATIANS, A STUDY MANUAL**, by Floyd E. Hamilton. Baker Book House, Grand Rapids 6, Mich. 1959, pp. 66 paper cover. \$1.25.

This brief exposition of the Epistle to the Galatians is by a former missionary to Korea who is now a pastor in the Southern Presbyterian Church. Dr. Hamilton is a well known Calvinist and has written several books.

With regard to the question of the destination of the Epistle, Dr. Hamilton favors the North Galatian theory — wrongly, in the opinion of this reviewer. The question is of course a difficult one and in any case it is not of crucial importance for an understanding of the Epistle.

The author gives a very well articulated outline of the Epistle (pp. 5-8). His treatment of the Epistle is at once scholarly and simple. We shall give a paragraph as a sample:

**"I do not make void the grace of God, for if righteousness is through the law, then Christ died in vain"**. As Dr. J. Gresham Machen says, this verse is the key verse of the epistle to the Galatians. If as the Judaizers were claiming, obedience to the law was partly necessary for salvation, then the work of Christ in his death was really in vain. As Dr. Benjamin Warfield used to say, if we must put one stitch in the garment of righteousness God has provided for us in Christ's righteousness, then no one will be saved, for all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags. No obedience can be perfect obedience so all our faith must rest in Christ for salvation, and not in ourselves. Trusting in law keeping would make void the grace of God in Christ" (p. 30).

This book is heartily commended to our readers.

— J. G. Vos

**TWENTY-ONE PROGRAMS FOR YOUNG ADULTS**, by John H. Gertsner. Baker Book House, Grand Rapids 6, Mich. 1958, pp 99, paper cover. \$1.50.

Dr. John H. Gerstner is Professor of Church History and Government in Pittsburgh-Xenia Theological Seminary, and is well known for his contributions to the magazine *Christianity Today* and his other activities in promoting orthodox Christianity. Rather interestingly, he has dedicated this little book "To the Pennsylvania Railroad, enjoying the good services of which, and free from the conversations and telephone calls associated with stationary living, I prayed about, read for, thought up, sketched out, and filled in, many of these chapters." Perhaps more of us should travel by railroad regularly — we might get more reading and writing done!

This little book provides outlines and helps for twenty-one discussion meetings of young adult groups. Some of the subjects included are: Religion in the Home, How to Get Along with People, A Bird's-Eye View of Church History, What is the Basis for a Successful Marriage, Is it True that Right and Justice will Triumph in the End? Can Anyone Drink and Harm only Himself? Protestant-Roman Catholic Marriages, What the Different Denominations Teach, Is our Civilization Worth Keeping? You're in the Army Now, the Duty to Relax, Religious Illiteracy, No Dice. These are all live, pertinent questions and well worth discussion among Christians. Dr. Gerstner's book gives needed guidance, so as to avoid having discussion become a mere raising of questions and

airing of opinions without progress toward sound conclusions.

In one of Dr. Gerstner's studies, "Christians Seeking Public Office" (pp.15-18) Dr. Gerstner lists among topics for discussion the Covenanter position of political dissent, in these words: "The Covenanters do not vote because the United States does not recognize the Lordship of Jesus Christ in her constitution. What do you think of this?" No answer is suggested, but in the body of the chapter Dr. Gerstner emphatically states that "a Christian should seek public office" and defends this as a matter of Christian duty. Covenanters will of course hold the contrary view.

The discussion on "What the Different Denominations Teach" is outstanding and this alone would be worth more than the modest price of the book. This study brings out the truth that only the Reformed or Calvinistic denominations are consistently Biblical in their theology.

While this book is simple in its style of presentation, it is not shallow. It is admirably geared to present-day thinking and present-day conditions. Classes and study groups of young adults in our congregations will find it an excellent and dependable help. Agreement with every idea of the author is not to be expected, but this book will stimulate thinking along soundly Biblical lines. It is commended to our readers.

—J. G. Vos

## *Blue Banner Question Box*

Readers are invited to submit Biblical, doctrinal and practical questions for answer in this department. Names of correspondents will not be published, but anonymous communications will be disregarded.

### **Question:**

Please explain the meaning of "My Father is greater than I" (John 14:28) and "Of that day and hour knoweth no man . . . neither the Son, but the Father" (Mark 12:32). How can these statements be harmonized with the doctrine of Christ's deity?

### **Answer:**

The problem presented by these two texts is insoluble except on the basis of the doctrine that Christ was and is God and man in two distinct natures and one Person forever. Christ has two natures, divine and human. The two natures are united mysteriously in one divine Person, but they are distinct, therefore they are not mixed, confused or blended. Because the two natures are distinct, Christ has both a human soul or mind, and also His divine Spirit. Therefore He has two distinct kinds of knowledge, the relation between which must always remain a mystery to us.

As God, in His divine nature and Person, Christ was and is fully equal to God the Father,

and is absolutely omniscient, knowing everything, including "that day and hour." As man, by reason of His human nature, He could truthfully say "My Father is greater than I." We should understand that sometimes the properties of the one nature, and sometimes the properties of the other nature, are attributed to the Person in whom both natures are united.

See the Westminster Confession of Faith, Chapter VIII, Sections 2 and 3 and especially Section 7. When Christ disclaimed knowledge of "that day and hour" (the day and hour of His own second coming) He was referring not to His divine knowledge but to that knowledge which pertained to His human nature. As a divine Person He certainly knew all things.

—J. G. Vos

### **Question:**

Is it wrong to "raffle" some article by selling "chances" and giving the article to the person holding the "lucky number"?

**Answer:**

It has been said that the American people have become infected with a new disease called "Jackpotitis," and there certainly is truth in this. The covetous lust for getting something for nothing, or without giving an equivalent value in return, has spread across our country and even Christian people have difficulty in keeping clear of it. On every hand we are enticed by offers of prizes, chance tickets, drawings and the like. It is surely an unhealthful tendency in our national life.

The raffle is simply a form of gambling and is unquestionably sinful. Many Christians do not understand this, and have participated in raffles without realizing that they were doing wrong. The fact that the article raffled is not of great value, and that the "chances" cost only a few cents each, does not change the principle that is involved, nor make it right to participate. If it is sinful to gamble for thousands of dollars at roulette, it is also sinful to raffle a \$1 box of candy for "chances" sold at 5 cents each. If anyone can tell the difference in value to God between \$1 and \$1000, he may be able to tell the difference in sinfulness between "taking a chance" on winning \$1 and "taking a chance" on winning \$1000.

All gambling is sinful because it is an attempt to gain something without giving an adequate value in exchange. The fact that the parties agree to such a transaction does not make it right. Someone has aptly remarked that gambling stands in the same relation to stealing that duelling does to murder.

Moreover gambling amounts to an attempt to make use of God's providence in order to get something without giving an adequate value in return. Really there is no such thing as "chance" if God rules the universe. What men call "chance" is simply that which cannot be humanly calculated or predicted or controlled. In reality God's providence controls every event, even the smallest, that ever comes to pass. If a coin is flipped, whether it turns out to be "heads" or "tails" was determined by God before the creation of the world. In every raffle or gambling scheme of any kind, it is really God who decides who the winner shall be. Gambling is therefore an attempt to use God for a sinful, selfish purpose. The Christian, having consecrated his life to serving God, may never stoop to the sinful world's level of trying to use God. We should understand that this is wicked, and should leave all forms of gambling strictly alone. The principle of gambling is sinful, regardless of the greatness or smallness of the thing at stake. We are not to be conformed to the world, but transformed to the likeness of Christ.

—J. G. Vos

**Question:**

Do the Jews still regard Jesus as a deceiver and false Messiah, or has their attitude toward Him changed?

**Answer:**

There is considerable evidence that the attitude of leading Jews to Jesus has changed a great deal since the crowd in front of Pilate's court shouted "Crucify him, crucify him!" From rating Jesus simply as a traitor and a deceiver, many thoughtful Jews have come to regard Jesus as a great man, second only to Moses and on a par with the great Old Testament prophets. Some of them would rate Jesus as the greatest Jew of His day and one of the greatest Jews that ever lived, and would add that unfortunately he was sadly misunderstood and unjustly condemned by the Jewish religious leaders of His day. That is to say, some prominent Jewish opinion has veered from regarding Jesus as a bad man who was justly put to death, to regarding Him as a good man who was sadly misunderstood and ill-treated.

While this shift in the thinking of many Jews seems revolutionary, it does not go far enough. They may think much better of Jesus than their forefathers did, but they still do not think highly enough of Him, for they are not willing to believe in Him as the Messiah and they are not willing to confess Him as the Son of God. Were they to do that, they would have to be baptized and become Christians, which they are unwilling to do.

It should be realized that many religious Jews no longer believe in a future personal Messiah, for they hold rather that Israel collectively is God's anointed with a mission to the world. It should also be realized that the Jewish faith as it exists today is largely based on the Talmud and other late Jewish writings, and only in a very limited way upon the Old Testament Scriptures. Judaism today is not only a different religion from the religion of the Old Testament; it is even a member of an entirely different class of religion. For the religion of the Old Testament is the religion of salvation by the free, unmerited grace of God, whereas Judaism today is in its very essence a system of salvation by works of human merit. Though Jews of today may think better of Jesus than Jews of a former time did, this is of very little practical importance since they are still thinking of salvation in terms of human merit and human achievement. They can never see Jesus as He really is until they come to see themselves as they really are — not as righteous persons but as poor, needy, guilty, lost sinners in desperate need of an absolutely gracious salvation. Modern Judaism is utterly self-righteous in its spirit, and Jesus Christ came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.

—J. G. Vos



**BLUE  
BANNER  
FAITH  
AND  
LIFE**

VOLUME 14

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NUMBER 4

**Incline your ear, and come unto me; hear, and  
your soul shall live; and I will make an everlasting  
covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David.**

**Isaiah 55:3**

**A Quarterly Publication Devoted to Expounding, Defending and Applying the  
System of Doctrine set forth in the Word of God and Summarized in the Standards  
of the Reformed Presbyterian (Covenanter) Church.**

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## *From the Poems of George Herbert*

Poor heart, lament.  
For since thy God refuseth still,  
There is some rub, some discontent,  
Which cools His will.

Thy Father could  
Quickly effect, what thou dost move;  
For He is Power: and sure He would;  
For He is love.

Go search this thing,  
Tumble thy breast, and turn thy book:  
If thou hadst lost a glove or ring,  
Wouldst thou not look?

What do I see  
Written above there? Yesterday  
I did behave me carelessly,  
When I did pray.

And should God's ear  
To such indifferents chained be,  
Who do not their own motions hear?  
Is God less free?

But stay! what's there?  
Late when I would have something done,  
I had a motion to forbear,  
Yet I went on.

And should God's ear,  
Which needs not man, be tied to those  
Who hear not Him, but quickly hear  
His utter foes?

Then once more pray:  
Down with thy knees, up with thy voice:  
Seek pardon first, and God will say,  
Glad heart rejoice.

---

Throw away Thy rod,  
Throw away Thy wrath.  
O my God,  
Take the gentle path.

For my heart's desire  
Unto thine is bent:  
I aspire  
To a full content.

Not a word or look  
I affect to own,  
But by book,  
And thy book alone.

Though I fail, I weep:  
Though I halt in pace,  
Yet I creep  
To the throne of grace.

Then let wrath remove;  
Love will do the deed:  
For with love  
Stony hearts will bleed.

Love is swift of foot;  
Love's a man of war,  
And can shoot  
And can hit from far.

Who can scape his bow?  
That which wrought on Thee,  
Brought Thee low,  
Needs must work on me.

Throw away Thy rod;  
Though man frailties hath,  
Thou art God:  
Throw away Thy wrath.

---

Teach me, my God and King,  
In all things Thee to see,  
And what I do in any thing,  
To do it as for thee.

Not rudely, as a beast,  
To run into an action;  
But still to make Thee prepossessed,  
And give it his perfection.

A man that looks on glass,  
On it may stay his eye;  
Or if he pleaseth, through it pass,  
And then the heaven espy.

All may of Thee partake:  
Nothing can be so mean,  
Which with his tincture (for Thy sake)  
Will not grow bright and clean.

A servant with this clause  
Makes drudgery divine:  
Who sweeps a room, as for Thy laws,  
Makes that and th' action fine.

This is the famous stone  
That turneth all to gold:  
For that which God doth touch and own  
Cannot for less be told.

# BLUE BANNER FAITH AND LIFE

VOLUME 14

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NUMBER 4

## *Sketches of the Covenanters*

By J. C. McFeeters

Chapter XXXIX

### **An Extraordinary Service — A. D. 1681**

The severity of the presecution had now driven the Conventicles into the most solitary places. Very few ministers at this period ventured under any circumstances, to preach at the Field-meetings. Cargill survived Cameron a little more than one year. They had been accustomed to attend these meetings together; their fellowship in the ministry of Christ was a mutual joy. They were equally yoked and made a strong team. Where the two preached the people had a great feast. But death had separated them; Cargill keenly felt the bereavement. He was thereafter like a dove mourning the loss of its mate. He preached a touching sermon on the Sabbath after Cameron's death, taking his text from King David's elegy over the death of Abner: "There is a prince and a great man fallen this day in Israel."

Cargill was now seventy years old; grey, worn, and weakened with the terrible experiences that had crowded into his persecuted life. His last year was a fitting climax, the best of all his years in the Lord's service. The notes of his trumpet were always vigorous and decisive; one blast, however, was especially loud, long, and clear, the like of which the world had never heard.

This preacher of righteousness denounced sin with unsparing keenness. He was no respecter of persons; the king got his share of reproof and admonition, equally with the lowliest in the land. He was very jealous for the Lord God of hosts, and could brook no indignity to Christ.

King Charles had done dishonor of the darkest kind to the Lord Jesus. He had grasped at the Crown of Christ, had broken the holy Covenant, had crushed the Church, and had shed the blood of the saints. The sight of such horrible wickedness made Cargill's blood boil, and his sermons arose betimes in passionate eloquence against the guilty king. On one occasion he poured out upon the royal head a triple woe. This could never be pardoned by the crowned murderers of God's people. The king pursued him with vengeful wrath. A price equal to \$1,200 was offered for his head, alive or dead. Twenty years and more the bloodhounds of persecution were on his track. Twenty years, with the sword hanging

over the head, makes a solemn life. Twenty years, amidst the hardships and horrors of persecution, gives a rich experience. Twenty years, in the furnace heated seven times more than it is wont, makes a pure soul. Twenty years, hiding under the shadow of the Most High, makes a powerful preacher. It was said of him, as of his Master, though in a lesser sense, "Never man spake like this man." His voice reached wide circles, resounded across broad glades, and echoed from rugged mountain sides. Thousands were melted by his tender words, and many were swung into line with the Covenant by his forceful logic. He spoke out of deep experience, pleading as a man who stood in the glare of Christ's judgment seat. While he preached, the eternal world seemed irradiant about him. Some of his discourses have been preserved by the press.

Cargill's sermons and prayers were usually short. He once received a gentle reproof for his brevity. He was holding a Conventicle; the people had come a long distance for the preaching; they hungered and thirsted for God and His Word. The great congregation was feasting on the rich abundance of the Gospel, and hanging on the lips of the minister, when he suddenly stopped. He had finished. One of the hearers, who felt that only a slice of bread was given, when a loaf was needed, approached him and said, "Oh, sir, 'tis long betwixt meals, and we are in a starving condition, and it is sweet and good and wholesome which ye deliver; but why do ye straiten us so much for shortness?" Cargill replied, "Ever since I bowed the knee in good earnest to pray, I never durst pray or preach with my gifts; and when my heart is not affected, and comes not up with my mouth, I always thought it time for me to quit. What comes not from my heart, I have little hope that it will go to the heart of others." He was able to distinguish between the product of his own gifts and that of the Holy Spirit. The one is like bubbles on the water for hungry souls; the other like the grapes of Eschol.

The most notable event in the career of Cargill was the excommunication of the king, and six of his accomplices, from the Covenanted Church. These seven men were the chief persecutors at the time. Formerly they had been Co-

venanters, but had abandoned the Covenant, and had fallen into excessive wickedness. The Church had never dealt with their cases; she had lost the power. The Church courts were controlled by the king. But shall discipline, therefore, fail? Can the Church no more sustain her laws, and administer her censures? Is she incapacitated? Extraordinary conditions justify extraordinary methods. Cargill conceived the bold purpose of issuing these cases, and inflicting the censures, solitary and alone, as a minister of Christ Jesus. Not in the spirit of revenge, nor as a vain anathema, but by the authority of God, in the name of Christ, and with profound sense of responsibility did he mete out the spiritual penalty unto these bloodstained and impenitent transgressors. The indestructible vitality of the Church thus reappeared in that dread act.

This action was taken at a Conventicle held at Torwood early in the autumn of 1680. The attendance was large. The people knew not what was coming. Cargill is much animated. After a powerful sermon, he proceeded with the act of excommunication. The form was this:

"I, being a minister of Jesus Christ, and having authority from Him, do, in His name, and by His Spirit, excommunicate, cast out of the true Church, and deliver up to Satan, Charles II, upon these grounds: (1) His mocking of God; (2) His great perjury; (3) His rescinding all laws for establishing the Reformation; (4) His commanding armies to destroy the Lord's people; (5) His being an enemy to true Protestants; (6) His granting remission and pardon to murderers; (7) His adulteries."

Cargill knew that he would be adversely judged, by future generations, for what he had done; many would regard the excommunication as unreasonable and unwarrantable. He, therefore, adventured his reputation and authority on a prophecy, which he uttered in his sermon on the next Sabbath: "If these men die the ordinary death of men, then God hath not spoken by me." King Charles was poisoned; the Duke of York died raving under the sentence; McKenzie died with blood flowing from many parts of his body; the Duke of Monmouth was executed; Dalziel died while drinking, without a moment of warning; Lauderdale sank into dotage through excessive indulgence, the Duke of Rothes passed into eternity in despair. The prophecy had its terrible fulfillment, to the last man. "It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God."

Not much now remained for Cargill to do. A few more Conventicles, the acknowledgement of Christ's supremacy before the judges, a public testimony on the scaffold; then the blood can flow, and seal the truth, which he loved so well to preach. His pursuers at length discovered him. Great was the rejoicing of his enemies

when he was found, and bound, and hastened to prison. His trial was swift, issuing in the death sentence. He was executed quickly. When he came to the gibbet, he placed his back against the ladder, and addressed the throng that had gathered to witness his last struggle. The venerable face beamed with happiness. That morning he had written some of his flowing thoughts. Here is one of them: "This is the most joyful day I ever saw; my joy is now begun never to be interrupted." His soul was stirring with divine raptures; the glory of heaven was breaking around him. The thrill of youthful life again quickened his pulse; he wheeled about and mounted the scaffold, saying, "The Lord knows I go up this ladder with less fear and perturbation of mind than ever I entered the pulpit to preach." Having reached the platform, where the rope was waiting for his neck, he bade adieu to earth, and welcome to heaven. "Farewell," he exclaimed; "Farewell, all relations and friends in Christ; farewell acquaintances and all earthly enjoyments; farewell reading and preaching, praying and believing, wanderings and reproaches and sufferings. Welcome joy unspeakable and full of glory. Welcome Father, Son, and Holy Ghost! into Thy hands I commit my spirit." What was death to a man like that but the beginning of glory! The black scaffold was lighted up with the radiance that streamed through the pearl gates.

How much does the spirit of zeal, courage, witness-bearing, and discipline, stir the descendants of the martyred Covenanters in the present day?

#### Points for the Class

1. What may be said of Cargill's last years of service?
2. How many years of persecution did he suffer?
3. What aroused him against the king?
4. What official act did he perform on the king and six others?
5. What was the nature of this excommunication?
6. How did he protect himself against wrong criticism?
7. Was his prophecy fulfilled?
8. How did Cargill die?
9. What service is much neglected in the Church in our day?

(To be continued)

# *I Love the Lord's Day*

By Robert Murray McCheyne

(Dundee, Scotland, 1841)

Dear fellow-countrymen: as a servant of God in this dark and cloudy day, I feel constrained to lift up my voice in behalf of the entire sanctification of the Lord's day . . . . In the name of all God's people in this town and in this land, I commend to your dispassionate consideration the following

## Reasons Why We Love the Lord's Day

**I. Because it is the Lord's Day.** "This is the day which the Lord hath made; we will rejoice, and be glad in it" (Psalm 113:24); "I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day" (Rev. 1:10). It is ours by example. It is the day on which He rested from His amazing work of redemption. Just as God rested on the seventh day from all His works, wherefore God blessed the Sabbath day, and hallowed it; so the Lord Jesus rested on this day from all His agony, and pain and humiliation. "There remaineth therefore the keeping of a Sabbath to the people of God" (Heb. 4:9). The Lord's day is His property, just as the Lord's Supper is the supper belonging to Christ. It is His table. He is the bread. He is the wine. He invites the guests. He fills them with joy and with the Holy Ghost. So is it with the Lord's day. All days of the year are Christ's but He hath marked out one in seven as peculiarly His own. "He hath made it," or marked it out. Just as He planted a garden in Eden, so He hath fenced about this day and made it His own.

This is the reason why we love it, and would keep it entire. We love everything that is Christ's. We love His Word. It is better to us than thousands of gold and silver. Oh how we love His law! It is our study all the day. We love His house. It is our trysting-place with Christ, where He meets with us and communes with us from off the mercy-seat. We love His table. It is His banqueting house, where His banner over us is love — where He looses our bonds, and anoints our eyes, and makes our hearts burn with holy joy. We love His people, because they are His, members of His body, washed in His blood, filled with His Spirit, our brothers and sisters for eternity. And we love the Lord's day, because it is His. Every hour of it is dear to us — sweeter than honey, more precious than gold. It is the day He rose for our justification. It reminds us of His love, and His finished work, and His rest. And we may boldly say that that man does not love the Lord Jesus Christ who does not love the entire Lord's day.

O Sabbath-breaker, whoever you be, you are a sacrilegious robber! When you steal the hours of the Lord's day for business or for pleasure, you are robbing Christ of the precious hours which He

claims His own. Would you not be shocked if a plan were deliberately proposed for breaking through the fence of the Lord's table, and turning it into a common meal, or a feast for the profligate and the drunkard? Would not your best feelings be harrowed to see the silver cup of communion made a cup revelry in the hand of the drunkard? . . . . "The Lord's day" is as much His day as "the Lord's table" is His table. Surely we may well say, in the words of Dr. Love, that eminent servant of Christ, now gone to the Sabbath above. "Cursed is that gain, cursed is that recreation, cursed is that health, which is gained by criminal encroachments on this sacred day."

**II. Because it is a relic of Paradise and type of Heaven.** The first Sabbath dawned on the bowers of a sinless paradise. When Adam was created in the image of his Maker, he was put into the garden to dress it and to keep it. No doubt this called forth all his energies. To train the luxuriant vine, to gather the fruit of the fig-tree, and palm, to conduct the water to the fruit-tree and flowers, required all his time and his skill. Man was never made to be idle. Still, when the Sabbath day came round, his rural implements were all laid aside; the garden no longer was his care. His calm pure mind looked beyond things seen into the world of eternal realities. He walked with God in the garden, seeking deeper knowledge of Jehovah and His ways, his heart burning more and more with holy love, and his lips overflowing with seraphic praise. Even in paradise man needed a Sabbath. Without it Eden itself would have been incomplete. How little they know the joys of Eden, the delight of a close and holy walk with God, who would wrest from Scotland the relic of a sinless world!

It is also the type of heaven. When a believer lays aside his pen, or loom, brushes aside his worldly cares, leaving them behind him with his weekday clothes, and comes to the house of God, it is like the morning of the resurrection, the day when we shall come out of great tribulation into the presence of God and of the Lamb. When he sits under the preached word, and hears the voice of the shepherd leading and feeding his soul, it reminds him of the day when the Lamb that is in the midst of the throne shall feed him and lead him to living fountains of waters. When he joins in the psalm of praise, it reminds him of the day when his hands shall strike the harp of God—

"Where congregations ne'er break up.  
And Sabbaths have no end."

When he retires and meets with God in secret in his closet, or, like Isaac, in some favorite spot near his dwelling, it reminds him of the day when

"he shall be a pillar in the house of our God, and go no more out."

This is the reason why we love the Lord's day. This is the reason why we "call the Sabbath a delight." A well-spent Sabbath we feel to be a day of heaven upon earth. For this reason we wish our Sabbaths to be wholly given to God. We love to spend the whole time in the public and private exercises of God's worship, except so much as is taken up in the works of necessity and mercy. We love to rise early in the morning and to sit up late, that we may have a long day with God.

How many may know from this that they will never be in heaven! A straw on the surface can tell which way the stream is flowing. Do you abhor a holy Sabbath? Is it a kind of hell to you to be with those who are strict in keeping the Lord's day? The writer of these lines once felt as you do. You are restless and uneasy. You say, "Behold, what a weariness it is!" "When will the Sabbath be gone, that we may sell corn?" Ah! soon, very soon, and you will be in hell. Hell is the only place for you. Heaven is one long, never-ending, holy Sabbath-day. There are no Sabbaths in hell.

**III. Because it is a day of blessings.** When God instituted the Sabbath in paradise, it is said, "God blessed the Sabbath-day, and sanctified it," Gen. 2:3. He not only set it apart as a sacred day, but made it a day of blessing. Again, when the Lord Jesus rose from the dead on the first day of the week before dawn, He revealed himself the same day to two disciples going to Emmaus, and made their hearts burn within them. Luke 24:18. The same evening He came and stood in the midst of the disciples, and said, "Peace be unto you;" and He breathed on them and said, "Receive ye the Holy Ghost," John 20:19. Again, after eight days—that is, the next Lord's day—Jesus came and stood in the midst, and revealed Himself with unspeakable grace to unbelieving Thomas. John 20:26. It was on the Lord's day, also, that the Holy Spirit was poured out at Pentecost. Acts 2:1; compare Lec. 23:15, 16. That beginning of all spiritual blessings, that first revival of the Christian church, was on the Lord's day. It was on the same day that the beloved John, an exile on the seagirt isle of Patmos, far away from the assembly of the saints, was filled with the Holy Spirit, and received his heavenly revelation. So that in all ages, from the beginning of the world, and in every place where there is a believer, the Sabbath has been a day of double blessing. It is so still, and will be, though all God's enemies should gnash their teeth at it. True, God is a God of free grace, and confines His working to no time or place, but it is equally true, and all the scoffs of the infidel cannot alter it, that it pleases Him to bless His Word most on the Lord's day. All God's faithful ministers in every land can bear witness that sinners are converted most frequently on the Lord's day—that Jesus comes in and shows himself

through the lattice of ordinances oftenest on His own day. Saints, like John, are filled with the Spirit on the Lord's day, and enjoy their calmest, deepest views into the eternal world.

Unhappy men, who are striving to rob our beloved Scotland of this day of double blessing, "ye know not what you do." You would wrest from our dear countrymen the day when God opens the windows of heaven and pours down a blessing. You want to make the heavens over Scotland like brass, and the hearts of our people like iron. Is it the sound of the golden bells of our ever-living High Priest on the mountain of our land, and the breathing of his Holy Spirit over so many of our parishes, that has roused up your satanic exertions to drown the sweet sound of mercy? . . . Is it the returning vigor of the revived and chastened Church of Scotland that has opened the torrents of blasphemy which you pour forth against the Lord of the Sabbath? Have your own withered souls no need of a drop from heaven? May it not be the case that some of you are blaspheming the very day on which your own soul might have been saved? Is it not possible that some of you may remember, with tears of anguish in hell, the exertions which you are now making, against light and against warning, to bring down a withering blight on your own souls and on the religion of Scotland?

To those who are God's children in this land, I would now, in the name of our common Saviour, who is the Lord of the Sabbath-day, address a word of exhortation.

## A WORD OF EXHORTATION

**I. Prize the Lord's day.** The more that others despise and trample on it, love you it all the more. The louder the storm of blasphemy howls around you, sit the closer at the feet of Jesus "He must reign till He has put all enemies under his feet." Diligently improve all holy time. It should be the busiest day of the seven; but only in the business of eternity. Avoid sin on that holy day. God's children should avoid sin every day, but most of all on the Lord's day. It is a day of double cursing as well as of double blessing. The world will have to answer dreadfully for sins committed in holy time. Spend the Lord's day in the Lord's presence. Spend it as a day in heaven. Spend much of it in praise and in works of mercy, as Jesus did.

**II. Defend the Lord's day.** Lift up a calm and undaunted testimony against all the profanations of the Lord's day. Use all your influence, whether as a statesman, a magistrate, a master, a father, or a friend, both publicly and privately, to defend the entire Lord's day. This duty is laid upon you in the Fourth Commandment. Never see the Sabbath broken without reproving the breaker of it. Even worldly men, with all their pride and contempt for us, cannot endure to be convicted of Sabbath-breaking. Always remember God and

the Bible are on your side, and that you will soon see these men cursing their own sin and folly when too late. Let all God's children in Scotland lift up a united testimony especially against . . . public profanations of the Lord's day.

1. The keeping open of Reading Rooms. In this town and in all the large towns of Scotland, I am told, you may find in the public reading rooms many of our men of business turning over the newspapers and magazines at all hours of the Lord's day; and especially on Sabbath evenings, many of these places are filled like a little church. Ah, guilty men! how plainly you show that you are on the broad road that leadeth to destruction. If you were a murderer or an adulterer, perhaps you would not dare to deny this. Do you not know, and all the sophistry of hell cannot disprove it, that the same God who said, "Thou shalt not kill," said also, "Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy?" The murderer who is dragged to the gibbet, and the polished Sabbath-breaker are one in the sight of God.

2. The keeping open of Public-Houses. Public houses are the curse of Scotland. I never see a sign, "Licensed to sell spirits" without thinking that it is a license to ruin souls. They are the yawning avenues to poverty and rage in this life, and as another has said, "the short cut to hell." Is it to be tamely borne in this land of light and reformation, that these pest-houses and dens of iniquity — these man-traps for precious souls — shall be open on the Sabbath, nay, that they shall be enriched and kept afloat by this unholy traffic, many of them declaring that they could not keep up their shop if it were not for the Sabbath market-day? Surely we may well say, "Cursed is the gain made on that day." Poor wretched men! Do you not know that every penny that rings upon your counter on that day will eat your flesh as if it were fire — that every drop of liquid poison swallowed in your gas-lit palaces will only serve to kindle up the flame of "the fire that is not quenched"?

Christian countrymen, awake! and, filled by the same Spirit that delivered our country from the dark superstitions of Rome, let us beat back the incoming tide of infidelity and enmity to the Sabbath.

Guilty men! who, under Satan, are leading on the deep, dark phalanx of Sabbath-breakers, yours is a solemn position. You are robbers. You rob God of His holy day. You are murderers. You murder the souls of your servants. God said, "Thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy servant"; but you compel your servants to break God's law, and to sell their souls for gain. You are sinners against light. Your Bible and your catechism, the words of godly parents, perhaps now in the Sabbath above, and the loud remonstrances of God-fearing men, are ringing in your ears, while you perpetuate this deed of shame, and

glory in it. You are traitors to your country. The law of your country declares that you should "observe a holy rest all that day from your own words, works, and thoughts"; and yet you scout it as an antiquated superstition. Was it not Sabbath-breaking that made God cast away Israel? And yet you would bring the same curse on Scotland now. You are moral suicides, stabbing your own souls, proclaiming to the world that you are not the Lord's people, and hurrying on your souls to meet the Sabbath-breaker's doom.

In conclusion, I propose, for the calm consideration of all sober-minded men, the following serious questions.

#### Serious Questions

1. Can you name one godly minister, of any denomination, in all Scotland, who does not hold the duty of the entire sanctification of the Lord's day?

2. Did you ever meet with a lively believer in any country under heaven — one who loved Christ, and lived a holy life — who did not delight in keeping holy to God the entire Lord's day?

3. Is it wise to take the interpretation of God's will concerning the Lord's day from "men of the world," from infidels, scoffers, men of unholy lives, men who are sand-blind in all divine things, men who are the enemies of all righteousness, who quote Scripture freely, as Satan did, to deceive and betray?

4. If, in opposition to the uniform testimony of God's wisest and holiest servants, against the plain warnings of God's Word, against the very words of your catechism, learned beside your mother's knee, and against the voice of your outraged conscience, you join the ranks of the Sabbath-breakers, will not this be a sin against light, will it not lie heavy on your soul upon your death-bed, will it not meet you in the Judgment Day?

Praying that these words of truth and soberness may be owned of God, and carried home to your hearts with divine power, I remain, dear fellow-countrymen, your souls' well-wisher.

—Robert Murray McCheyne

#### Scriptures to be Meditated Upon

1. **Sabbath commanded**, Ex. 16:22-30; 20:8-11; Levit. 19:3-30; Deut. 5:12-15; Neh. 9:14.

2. **A sign of God's people**, Ex. 31:12-17; 2 Kings 4:23; Ezek. 20:12; Lam. 1:7; Heb. 4:9.

3. **Sabbath-breaking punished**, Num. 15:32-36; Levit. 26:33-35; 2 Chron. 36:21; Jer. 17:19-end; Lam. 2:6; Ezek. 20:12-26; Amos 8:4-14.

4. **Day of blessing**, Gen. 2:2,6; Ex. 16:24; Levit. 24:8; Num. 28:9, 10; Isa. 56:1-8; 58:13,14; John 20:1, 19, 26; Acts 2:1 with Levit. 23:15; Rev. 1:10.

5. **Rulers should guard the Sabbath**, Ex. 20:10; Neh. 13:15-22.

6. **Sabbath in Gospel times**, Psalm 118:24;

Isa. 66:23; Ezek. 46:1; Mark 11:27,28; Acts 2:1; 20:6, 7; 1 Cor. 16:2; Rev. 1:10.

—Reprinted from **The Gospel Witness**

## *The Place of Teaching in the Life of Christ*

By the Rev. John C. Rankin

Thus far in our study we have seen something of the progress and development of the public life of Christ. We have marked His contacts and encounters, His initiation to the work of evangelism among the people, His journeys to and fro and up and down the land, and the great expansion of His ministry in the populous north region. The gospel of the kingdom was His message and miracles were the signs of the kingdom, His credentials as the Christ.

Furthermore, some attention has been given to the rising tide of opposition and to certain steps that were taken in reaction to it. There was the calling of the disciples to full-time association and fellowship, and the opening of the floodgates of power and love in healing, life-giving works for the stricken bodies of men, as well as for their souls.

One further step of the kind, taken in view of the changed situation, was a sudden shift in the outward form of His teaching. From the original form of direct and simple statement there was suddenly a transition to the form of parable. This also had a direct bearing on the conflict which was developing between Him and the leaders.

But the very mention of this new phase in Jesus' teaching ministry reminds us that as yet but scant attention has been given to this aspect of the Saviour's work. Consequently in this and succeeding chapters it will be our endeavor to remedy this omission. And even before we survey the content it is important to consider the **place** of Jesus' teaching in His life and work as a whole.

It can be said that Jesus' whole life was a life of teaching. From the cradle to the grave and on beyond it was all one great teaching career. For He taught by example as well as by precept. He was the perfect man and His human nature was a perfect reflection of God at every stage. Especially from the hour of His appearing at the Jordan to the last recorded word heard from Him in the exalted state He was at His great business of teaching. He came to reveal God, to speak for God, and from the beginning to end it was the same. He was **the Word** incarnate; the Word which "was God" and which was made flesh and dwelt among us.

So His life was all teaching, though teaching was by no means all of His life. It was only one of the three major functions of His office as the Christ. It was the prophetic min-

istry, and is not to be belittled in comparison with the other two; that is, the kingly and the priestly ministries. God's only-begotten, well-beloved Son came into the world and became man for the discharge of the three-fold office-work of prophet, priest and king.

It should be observed that all three offices of Jesus as the Christ are completely interwoven; mutually implicated and involved. In view of this it must be said that the teaching of Jesus was more than teaching. It was redemptive revelation. It was all part of God's saving action in and through His Son.

A further insight concerning the teaching of the Lord is that it manifested the kingship of the Christ. "Never man spake like this man." "He taught them as one having authority and not as the scribes." Every word of His mouth, every saying that fell from His lips, was in real nature and effect a royal edict.

Jesus in His nature as divine has ever been and is and shall be King over all the earth. This is His essential kingship, which is His as the same in substance and equal in power and glory with the Father and the Holy Spirit.

There is, however, a subsidiary kingship which pertains to Him as the Son of man sent down from above. It was an especially appointed kingship which was His as the God-man, with which He was invested when He came down from heaven into the world. It has been defined as "His official power to rule all things in heaven and on earth, for the glory of God," in the salvation of men.

As a king He came and lived and wrought and taught. As a king He perfectly performed the will of God for His life and died and rose again. As a king He ascended into heaven. Now as King of kings and Lord of lords He dwells on high, exercises His all powerful sway over the world and sits and reigns as the great Head and King of all His own.

This "mediatorial kingship" must and shall continue to the end "when He shall have delivered up the kingdom of God, even the Father; when He shall have put down all rule and all authority and power. For He must reign, till He hath put all enemies under His feet" (I Cor. 15:24, 25f).

And yet besides all this and in and with and through it all He was a priest. As priest He was born and lived, obeyed and suffered and laid own His life as a sacrifice for sins. He offered Himself in His human nature as it was in the state of His humiliation. He gave Himself for the redemption of sinner-men, an offering and a sacrifice to God for an atonement for the sins of all those for whom He died. As our priest He offered Himself unto God on the altar of sacrifice.

As He was the lamb of God slain from the foundation of the world, so also He ever was and is our great high priest. And as He was, so also He ever must and shall remain. As we read in the Epistle to the Hebrews: "We have a great high priest that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God." And again, "this man because He continueth ever hath an unchangeable priesthood. Wherefore He is able to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by Him, seeing He ever liveth to make intercession for them." (Hebs. 4:14 and 7:24, 25). And in the same book He is identified as being "an high priest forever," not of the order of the sons of Levi, but "after the order of Melchisedec" (Hebrews chapters V, VI, and VII); who, in the story of His life, was called the king of Salem and the priest of the most high God (Gen. 14:18.)

These are some of the deep things in the life of God in Christ. Too often in our perusal of the story our thoughts fail to rise to these great heights and penetrate to these deeper depths of the life of our Lord. Be that as it may, this is the life of Christ, and these are some of the great things in it. It is all of these and more. And when God gives us grace to see and understand and believe we can only exclaim with the Psalmist, "Many, O Lord my God, are Thy wonderful works which Thou hast done, and Thy thoughts which are to usward: If I were to declare and speak of them they are more than can be numbered" (Ps. 40:5).

Though teaching was only one aspect of the Saviour's work yet it seems to have comprised the greater part of the outward form and surface appearance of the life. In the fourfold gospel record it is set forth before us in great detail. For instance we are told that "He taught them many things by parables" (Mk. 5:2). In another place instance we are told that "He taught them many things" (Mk. 6:34), and near the end of His life He said to the disciples, "I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now" (John 16:12).

When we try to think of all the things He taught and bring them together we realize something of their extent and content. The thoughts of the great Teacher ranged high and low, backward and forward, near and far. Everything under the sun and stars and over them are represented here. His teaching stands forth in contrast to the things He did not teach and constitutes a perfect and consistent whole. Its outlook was on every side; in all directions. Its purview embraced all things. Its rich and full variety included every sphere and dimension; illumined every aspect of thought and life. It answers every question that anyone may rightly ask. It gives God's own solution to all the problems of man in relation to his Maker; being and duty, sin and salvation, faith and life, life and death, here and hereafter, heaven and hell.

Through all the ages that had gone before the groundwork had been fully laid. God Himself, the eternal Creator and Lord of all, "God in three persons, blessed Trinity" is the strong and secure foundation. God in Christ, in the person of the second person in the Godhead, present in the flesh, incarnate for the redemption of sinner-men, is the heart and core of all the teaching.

(To be continued)

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## *The Puritan Principle of Worship*

By the Rev. William Young, B. Litt., Th. D.

(Continued from preceding issue)

The Westminster Standards contain the consensus of English Puritan and Scottish Presbyterian judgment as to the Regulative Principle. Whatever difference of opinion there was in the assembly as to Church Government, there was unanimity as to the regulation of worship. Where the English Puritans were more scrupulous than their Scottish brethren in objecting to the singing of a doxology at the close of a Psalm, the Scottish divines were willing cheerfully to give up their time honoured custom for the sake of

uniformity in a matter where they were not called on to sacrifice principle.

The same view of the regulative principle that appears in Knox' argument against the Mass and in George Gillespie's dispute against the English Popish Ceremonies was used by the English Puritans themselves against the Mass and the Ceremonies. (Cf. W. Ames "A Reply to Dr. Morton's general defence of three nocent ceremonies" 1622 and "A Fresh Suit against Human

Ceremonies in God's Worship" 1633, as well as the propositions in the **Medulla**. Ames also wrote a preface to W. Bradshaw's "English Puritanism Containing the Maine Opinions of the rigidest sort of those that are called Puritaines. Cf. also the discussion of the 2nd commandment in Perkin's Golden Chain (1608) and his "Warning against the Idolatrie Of the Last Times." A full discussion of the regulative principle may also be found in John Owen's "Discourse concerning Liturgies."

In his well known **Medulla Theologica** (Eng. Trans., **The Marrow of Sacred Divinity**, London, 1642), William Ames, Professor at Franeker, discusses the principle of worship systematically under the heading, **De Cultu Instituto** (Of instituted worship). The following propositions illustrate the well ordered argument and precise definitions characteristic of Ames' **Medulla**.

1. Instituted worship is the meanes ordained by the Will of God to exercise and further natural worship.

2. All such like meanes ordained of God are declared in the second Commandement, by forbidding all contrary meanes of worship devised by men, under the title of Graven and Image: Which seeing they were of old the chiefe inventions of men corrupting the worship of God, they are most fitly (by a Synecdoche frequent in the Decalogue) put instead of all devises of mans wit pertaining to worship.

10. No worship of this kind is lawfull, unlesse it hath God for the Author, and ordainer of it. **Deut. 4:2** and **12:32 I Chron. 16:13**.

11. That is declared in those words of the Commandment. Thou shalt not make to thy selfe: that is of thine own braine or judgement, for although that particle **to thy selfe**, doth sometimes either abound, or hath another force: yet here the most accurate brevity of these Commandements doth exclude redundancy, and it is manifest that the vanity of mans cogitations is excluded by other places of Scripture pertaining to the same thing. As **Amos 5:26 Numb. 15:39**.

12. The same is also declared by that universality of the prohibition, which is explained in the Commandment by a distribution of the things which are in Heaven above, or in the Earth beneath, or in the Waters under the Earth.

13. For none beside God himselfe can either understand what will be acceptable to him: or can ad that vertue to any worship whereby, it may be made effecull and profitable for us; neither can there be anything honorable to God, which comes not from him as the author of it, neither finally doe we read that such a power was at any time given to any man by God, to ordaine any worship at his own pleasure. **Matthew 15:09**.

14. Hence implicitly and by interpretation of God himselfe, we make him our God, and give the honour due to God to him, whose authority or ordinances we subject our selves unto in religious worship.

15. In this respect also men are sometime said to worship the Devill, when they observe those worships which the Devill brought in. **I Cor. 10:20 Levit. 17:7 Deut. 32:17**.

16. But we must observe that worship which God hath appointed with the same religion, as we receive his word or will, or call upon his name, **Deut. 6:17-18**. and **12:25, 28** and **13:18** and **28:14**.

17. The meanes which God hath ordained in this kind, some of them doe properly, and immediatly make to the exercising and furthering of Faith, Hope and Charity; as publique and solemne preaching of the word, celebration of Baptisme and the Lords Supper, and prayer.

And some of them are meanes for the right performance of those former, as the combination of the faithfull into certaine Congregations or Churches, Election, Ordination, and Ministration of ministers ordained by God, together with the care of Ecclesiasticall Discipline.

18. Those former are most properly the instituted worship of God; yet the rest are also worship, not only in that generall respect, as all things are said to be acts of worship and religion, which doe any way flow from, or are guided by religion, but also in their speciall nature, because the adequate end and use of them is, that God may be rightly worshipped .

19. All these therefore both in generall, and in speciall ought to be observed of us as they are appointed by God; for God must be worshipped by us with his own worship, totally and solely, nothing must here be added, taken away or changed. **Deut. 12:32**.

20. That is a very empty distinction, whereby some goe about to excuse their additions. That only addition corrupting and not addition conserving is forbidden; because every addition as well as detraction is expressly opposed to observation, or conservation of the commands of God, as being a corruption. **Deut. 12:32**.

21. Of like stampe also is that evasion whereby they say there is forbidden only addition of essentials, and not of accidentals: for first although there be accidents or certaine adjuncts of worship, yet there is no worship to be simply called accidentall, because it hath in it the very essence of worship. Secondly, as the least commands of God even to Iotales and Titles are religiously to be observed, **Matt. 5:18, 19**. So additions which seeme very small, are by the same reason to be rejected. Thirdly, **Moses** doth seale

up even those lawes of the place of Divine worship, of the manner, of abstinence from blood, and the like which must needs be referred to accidentall worship if any such be, with this very caution of not adding or taking away. **Deut. 12:32.**

22. This observation is in a special manner called obedience, because by it we doe that which seems right in the eyes of the Lord, although some other may seem righter in our eyes. **Deut. 12:25, 28.**

23. There is opposed unto this instituted worship, and unlawfull, that will-worship which is devised by men. **Matt. 15:9 Col. 2:23.**

24. The sin which is committed in will-worship, is by a generall name called superstition.

25. Superstition is that whereby undue worship is yielded to God. (**Superstitio est, qua Deo cultus indebitus exhibetur.**)

26. For in superstition God is alwayes the object, and the end in some measure, but the worship it selfe is unlawfull.

27. It is called undue worship, either in respect of the manner or measure, or in respect of the matter and substance of the worship. In the former manner the **Pharises** offended about the **Sabbath**, when they urged the observation of it as touching the outward rest, above the manner and measure appointed by God. And they also offended in the latter manner, in observing and urging their own traditions, **Mark 7:8.**

28. Hence superstition is called an excesse of religion, not in respect of the formall power of religion, because so none can be too religious; but in respect to the acts and meanes of religion.

29. This excesse is not only in those positive exercises, which consists in the use of things, but also in abstinence from the use of some things, as from meats, which are accounted uncleane and unlawful, and the like.

33. Religious teaching by Images is condemned, first, because they art not sanctified by God to that end: . . . .”

34. Of like kind with Images, are all those ceremonies, which are ordained by men for mystical or religious signification.

35. For such ceremonies have no determinate power to teach, either by any power put into them by nature, or by divine institution; but they can receive none by humane institution, because man can effect this neither by commanding, seeing it is beyond his authority, nor by obtaining, seeing **GOD** hath promised no such thing to him that asketh.

36. Neither can men take to themselves any authority in ordaining such ceremonies from

that, that it is commanded to all Churches, that all things be done decently, and in order. **I Cor. 14:40.** For neither the respect of order nor decency requires, that some holy things should be newly ordained, but that those which are ordained by God, be used in that manner, which is agreeable to their dignity; neither doe order and decency pertaine to holy things only, but also to civil duties, for confusion and indecency in both are vices opposite to that due manner which is required to the attaining the just end and use of them..”

Further discussion of these outward circumstances is found in Ch. XIV, Secs. 20-27.

In his treatise on Gospel-worship (1648), Jeremiah Burroughs gives the following account of the strange fire offered by Nadab and Abihu:

“But had God ever forbidden it? Where do we find that ever God had forbidden them to offer strange Fire, or appointed that they should offer only one kind of fire? There is no Text of Scripture, that you can find from the beginning of **Genesis** to this place, where God hath said in **terminis**, in so many words expressly, **You shall offer no fire but one kind of fire.** And yet here they are consumed by fire from God, for offering strange fire. I find in the 30 of **Exod.** verse 9 that there they were forbidden offering strange Incense, but I do not find that they were forbidden offering strange fire. In **Levit**, 6:13 and divers verses in that Chapter, we find that God had appointed that they should keep constantly the fire on the Altar burning, and never to let it go out: Now that was it seems Gods intention that therefore they should make use of that fire, and that fire only. God would have them to pick out his meaning: God sent fire down from heaven upon the Altar, so in the latter end of the 9 Chap. God sent down fire from heaven, and gave them a charge to keep that fire on the altar constantly, and never to let it go out: so that it seems God would have them pick out his meaning, that because he had sent down fire from heaven upon the Altar, and gave them power to keep that constantly, God would have them to understand, that what Incense or Sacrifice he would have the use of fire in, it should be only that fire and no other, though God did never say to them directly in these words, **You shall make use of this fire and no other**, but God would have them to understand this. That’s their sin therefore in offering of strange fire.” Gospel-Worship, p.3.

Burroughs proceeds to formulate the regulative principle of worship as follows: “**That in Gods Worship there must be nothing tendered up to God but what he hath commanded, whatsoever we meddle with in the Worship of God, it must be what we have a warrant for out of the Word of God.**” Ibid p.8.

“For this speech of **Moses** is upon occasion of

the Judgment of God upon Aarons sons for offering strange fire: They offered fire that God had not commanded. Hence I say that all things in Gods worship must have a warrant out of Gods Word, must be commanded. It's not enough that it is not forbidden. I beseech you observe it: it is not enough that a thing is not forbidden, and what hurt is there in it? But it must be commanded. I confess in matters that are Civil and natural, there this may be enough; If it be but according to the rules of prudence, and not forbidden in the word; we may make use of this in Civil and natural things. But now when we come to matters of Religion, and the Worship of God; we must either have a command or somewhat out of God's Word by some consequence drawn from some command wherein God manifests his will; either a direct command, or by comparing one thing with another, or drawing consequences plainly from the Words. We must have a warrant for the Worship of God. One would have thought that these **Priests** offering **Incense** to the true God, what hurt was there in taking other Fire? But there was no command for it, and therefore it was not accepted." *Ib.* p.9.

Burroughs adopts the standard Puritan distinction of elements and circumstances of worship, terming the latter "natural and Civil helps." "It's true that there are some things in the **Worship of**

**God** that are natural and Civil helps, and there we need not have any Command: As for instance; when we come to worship God the congregation meets, they must have a convenient place to keep the Air and weather from them: now this is but a natural help, and so far as I use the place of worship as a natural help, I need have no Command." A further important distinction is made between those natural circumstances just described and significant circumstances or ceremonies which require a warrant. Further developing the example of a place of worship, Burroughs writes: "But if I will put any thing in a **Place** beyond what it hath in it's own nature, there I must look for a Command. For if I account one place more Holy than another; or to think that God should accept of worship in one place rather than in another: this is to raise it above what it is in it's own Nature. So that when any Creature is raised in a Religious way above what it hath in it by **Nature**: If I have not Scripture to warrant me I am therein Superstitious. It's a very useful rule for to help you: If any Creature that you make any use of in away of Religion beyond what it hath in its own Nature, if you have not some warrant from the **Word of God** (whatsoever specious shew there may be in it) it is **superstition**." *Ibid.*

(To be continued)

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## *God, Man and Religion*

By J. G. Vos

**"For of him, and through him, and to him, are all things: to whom be glory for ever. Amen"** (Rom. 11:36).

The Greek philosopher Archimedes said: "Give me a place to stand, and I will move the world." Whether we want to move the world, or to understand it, a standpoint or point of view is needed. What is your point of view as you look at life and as you look at religion? You have some point of view even though you may not realize it.

In academic circles there is a good deal of emphasis on objectivity. A scholar is supposed to present truth, not merely his own opinions about it. But really objectivity is impossible. All thinking, all writing, all discussion, is carried on from some point of view, whether this is recognized or not. All thinking is based on assumptions. The question is not whether we shall have basic assumptions, but what our assumptions are and whether we are consciously critical of them or not.

In his preface to the English edition of Windelband's **History of Philosophy** Professor James H. Tufts of the University of Chicago wrote:

"The moment we attempt any serious thinking

in any field, — natural science, history, literature, ethics, theology, or any other, — we find ourselves at the outset quite at the mercy of the words and ideas which form at once our intellectual atmosphere and the instruments with which we must work. We cannot speak, for example, of mind or matter, of cause or force, of species or individual, of universe or God, of freedom or necessity, of substance or evolution, of science or law, of good or true or real, without involving a host of assumptions. And the assumptions are there, even though we may be unconscious of them, or ignore them in an effort to dispense with metaphysics. To dispense with these conceptions is impossible. Our only recourse, if we would not beg our questions in advance, or remain in unconscious bondage to the instruments of our thought, or be slaves to the thinking of the past generations that forged out our ideas for us, is to 'criticise our categories.'" (Copyright 1901; used by permission of publishers, The Macmillan Company).

So a viewpoint is necessary, and this involves basic assumptions which determine what we think and say about other matters.

As we consider the subject of religion, we soon find that there are really only two types of basic

assumption possible, namely, the view which regards God as its highest category and interprets everything in the light of God, and the view which regards man as its highest category and interprets everything in the light of man.

The one view regards God as supremely important, and adjusts its ideas of man and religion accordingly; the other view regards man as supremely important, and adjusts its ideas of God and religion accordingly.

All theologies and all philosophies and all religious systems can be divided into these two basic types; those whose most basic concept is their view of God, and those whose most basic concept is their view of man. A prominent theologian of our own day has said that many people think they are talking about God when in reality they are only talking about man in a loud voice. Dr. Benjamin B. Warfield wrote in one of his reviews:

"The 'problem of God' is to be solved for the twentieth century as for all that have preceded it, not by deifying man and abasing God in his presence, but by recognizing God to be indeed God and man to be the creation of His hands, whose chief end is to glorify God and to enjoy Him forever" (*Critical Reviews*, p. 251).

And the Reformer John Calvin wrote in his famous book **The Institutes of the Christian Religion**:

"So long as we do not look beyond the earth, we are quite pleased with our own righteousness, wisdom and virtue; we address ourselves in the most flattering terms, and seem only less than demigods. But should we once begin to raise our thoughts to God, and reflect what kind of Being he is, and how absolute the perfection of that righteousness, and wisdom, and virtue, to which, as a standard, we are bound to be conformed, what formerly delighted us by its false show of righteousness, will become polluted with the greatest iniquity; what strangely imposed upon us under the name of wisdom, will disgust by its extreme folly; and what presented the appearance of virtuous energy, will be condemned as the most miserable impotence. So far are those qualities in us, which seem most perfect, from corresponding to the divine purity" (I.i.2).

What, then, is our basic viewpoint? Only two positions are really consistent. One is Biblical Theism; the other is Consistent humanism. Between these two consistent philosophies there are numerous inconsistent combinations and compromises which cannot prove permanently satisfactory, but must break down and perish in the end. These mediating views may be predominantly Christian or predominantly humanistic according as they gravitate to the one extreme or the other.

The apostle Paul in Romans 11:36, by inspir-

ation of the Holy Spirit, sets forth the viewpoint of consistent Biblical Theism: **Of God, through God and unto God are all things.** That is to say, God is the source of all things, God is the means of all things, and God is the end of all things. From God all things have their origin, through God all things function, and unto God as their goal all things tend. The origin, energy and purpose of all that exists is God. This means, of course, the true God, the God of the Bible — the triune God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

The exact antithesis of the Biblican Theism is consistent Humanism, which asserts, in effect, that "Of man, and through man, and unto man, are all things: to whom be glory forever."

We might suppose that a third view is possible, namely that view which regards the impersonal universe of nature as ultimate, and would say, in effect, "Of nature, and through nature, and unto nature, are all things." But this naturalism, inevitably tends to shift into Humanism, for man is personal, and that which is personal is higher than that which is impersonal. In practice the naturalist becomes a humanist, for he sees nature as a construct of the human mind, as capable of manipulation by human intelligence, and as existing for no other reason than to serve man's desires and purposes.

So we come down in two consistent but mutually exclusive and irreconcilable viewpoints, namely Consistent Theism and Consistent Humanism. The issue is simply this: Shall God be God or shall man be God? Biblical Theism says God shall be God. Humanism says that man shall be God. The first humanist was Eve, who believed the serpent when he said, "Ye shall be as God."

Let us consider the three affirmations of Romans 11:36 as they are viewed, first, by consistent Biblical Theism; second, as they are viewed by consistent Humanism; and third, as they are viewed by what we may call inconsistent Theism, the type of compromise viewpoint which stands somewhere between consistent Theism on the one hand and consistent Humanism on the other.

We shall consider these three viewpoints not as they are related to the physical universe or the world of nature, though that might be a worthwhile study, but rather as they are related to the field of religion, and in particular to man's salvation from sin and suffering.

The most basic concept of consistent Theism is **God Unlimited by Man.** The most basic concept of consistent Humanism is **Man Unlimited by God.** The most basic concept of the middle-of-the-road view in its typical and common form is **God Limited by Man.**

Each of these philosophies or viewpoints tends to interpret everything in terms of its own most

basic concept. Thus consistent Theism interprets everything in terms of its most basic concept, God unlimited by man. Consistent Humanism interprets everything in terms of its most basic concept, Man unlimited by God. And the typical form of the middle-of-the-road view interprets everything in terms of its most basic concept, God limited by man.

Consistent Theism regards God as supreme over all. God is limited only by His own perfect nature. Nothing outside of God Himself imposes any limitations on Him. He is the source of all that exists and of all possibility of existence.

Consistent Humanism regards God as non-existent. This is pure atheism. If the existence of God is admitted at all He is said to be merely an idea in the mind of man, having no objective existence outside of the human mind.

The middle-of-the-road view regards God as limited by man's free will. It is said that when God created man with free will, He limited Himself, and today, to quote a well-known evangelist, "God's hands are tied." He can only wait for man's free will to make the important decisions. This involves the notion of God giving up that which is essential to His being God. That is, it involves the notion of God giving up His attribute of being **unchangeable**. This view regards God after creating man as different from God before creating man.

### I. The Source of Salvation

"Of him are all things" — all things, including man's salvation.

1. According to Biblical Theism man's salvation was planned by God in eternity. You will find this teaching stated with unmistakable clearness in the whole Bible — Old Testament and New — but especially in the Gospel according to John and the Epistles of Paul.

Sometimes called "election" or "predestination," it is set forth in the first chapter of Paul's Epistle to the Ephesians, where we read that "he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love: having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will, to the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved" (Eph. 1:4-6).

God in eternity elected particular persons to eternal life. According to Biblical teaching salvation was planned by God the Father, purchased by God the Son and is applied by God the Holy Spirit.

God the Father in eternity elected persons to eternal life; God the Son in human history pur-

chased their salvation by His sufferings and death on the cross; God the Holy Spirit gives them new spiritual life and works repentance and faith in them so that they eventually participate in the benefit that was planned for them in eternity and purchased for them on Calvary.

2. According to Consistent Humanism, man really does not need anything that can rightly be called salvation. Humanism holds that man was not created by God but is a product of natural evolution in a world either of blind chance or blind fate. According to Humanism, man has never fallen and is not sinful. His defects are only signs of immaturity; his sufferings are only growing pains. He is evolving to higher and better things. Neither man's nature as a whole nor his will has been corrupted by sin. He is completely the master of his own destiny, as is shockingly asserted by that utterly humanistic poem **Invictus** by William Ernest Henley:

Out of the night that covers me  
Black as the pit from pole to pole,  
I thank whatever gods may be  
For my unconquerable soul.

In the fell clutch of circumstance  
I have not winced nor cried aloud.  
Under the bludgeonings of chance  
My head is bloody, but unbowed.

Beyond this place of wrath and tears  
Looms but the Horror of the shade,  
And yet the menace of the years  
Finds and shall find me unafraid.

It matters not how strait the gate,  
How charged with punishments the scroll,  
I am the master of my fate;  
I am the captain of my soul.

3. According to the third viewpoint, namely inconsistent Theism, the source of man's salvation is a decision of man's free will, foreseen by God from eternity. God has elected to salvation those whom He foresaw, from eternity, would by their free will decide to accept His offer of salvation in Christ.

This view regards salvation as made **available** by God but made **actual** by man. God is the source of what is called "a chance of salvation," but man's free will is the source of the actual experience of salvation. As stated by the evangelist above referred to, God's hands are tied; He can only wait for man to make the decision. This viewpoint regards God as limited by man's free will. It is therefore an implicit denial of the sovereignty of God — indeed, of the Godhood of God.

### II. The Means of Salvation

1. According to Biblical Theism, salvation is wholly a work of God, not at all a work of

man. "It is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure" (Phil. 2:13). Even those parts of the process of salvation in which man is consciously active are really the working of God in man.

Our repentance, our believing, our praying, are truly our own acts, yet in a deeper sense they are at the same time God working in and through us. And apart from that working of God they would not exist at all. For man is a fallen being. He has fallen into sin, and this has corrupted his nature so that he loves evil rather than good. This sinful condition is called "total depravity" — a term which has often been misunderstood. It does not mean that any human being is absolutely evil, nor that any man is as wicked as he could become, nor that anyone in this life is as wicked as he will be in hell.

Total depravity means that man as a total personality has been damaged and corrupted by sin. The word "total" concerns the extent of man's sinfulness, not its degree. There is no element of the human personality that has not been corrupted, distorted and defiled by sin. All parts of man's nature have been damaged by sin, **including his will.**

Therefore man in his sinful condition cannot make a decision in favor of God and righteousness — he cannot originate a love for God and for righteousness in his own heart, because he is sinful by nature and his will is enslaved to sin.

"Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots?" (Jer. 13:23). No, for they are part of his nature, and he cannot change his own nature. Only God can do that. The Bible therefore describes man as being "dead in sin" (Eph. 2:1) — not "sick in sin" but "dead in sin." And this condition of deadness includes man's free will. It is therefore impossible for man to initiate the process of salvation in himself by using his free will.

Consistent Biblical Theism, therefore, regards the accomplishment of salvation as a work of God. It is partly a work of God **for** man, and partly a work of God **in** man. When Christ died on the cross to pay the just penalty for our sins, that was a work of God **for** man. When the Holy Spirit gives us a new heart, that is a work of God **in** man.

Even where man is active about his own salvation, both the impulse and the power of performance are the working of God in man's personality. The Bible plainly so teaches. In fact, even our good works, the Bible says, were fore-ordained by God that we should walk in them (Eph. 2:10).

2. According to consistent Humanism, the beginning, middle and end of man's salvation is by his own works and efforts — if indeed it

can be called "salvation" at all. For Humanism does not believe that man is really lost in sin or that he really needs salvation in the proper sense of the term. What the Humanist really believes in is individual and social improvement by ethical culture, moral enlightenment and socialization. Man builds his own ladder and climbs on it to ever greater heights of attainment, according to Humanism.

3. According to the middle-of-the-road view, or inconsistent Theism, man has fallen and is sinful, but not entirely so. This view affirms that man's nature in general has been corrupted by sin, but there is one part of his nature that has somehow escaped this general corruption and breakdown, namely, man's will.

While God is regarded as the source and means of salvation in general — that is, of the availability of salvation, or of "a chance" for salvation — still it is held that man is the source and means of salvation at the one crucial point, namely the initial decision to forsake sin and accept Christ. God, it is held, saves men from all kinds of sin except one, namely **unbelief**. From that one sin, unbelief, man must first save himself by a decision made by his own free will. As soon as man makes that all-important decision, God goes into action — His hands are no longer tied. He forgives the person's sins, causes him to be born again with a new nature, and adopts the person as a member of the family of God. But man's free will must make the decision first.

Further, inconsistent Theism fails to do justice to the truth that every stage and step of the process of salvation from first to last is a work of God — the truth that "It is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure." Salvation is often looked upon as a sort of fifty-fifty affair, and it is said that "God does his part and we must do our part." This is a failure to recognize that repentance, faith and all Christian graces are actually gifts of God and that we do not and cannot provide them of ourselves. As Augustine said long ago, we never have even a single good thought except by the grace of God working in our life. He prayed, "Give what thou commandest, and command what thou wilt." This prayer is eminently Christian and Biblical, but it greatly irritated and disturbed Augustine's opponent Pelagius, who was a promoter of the middle-of-the-road view in a form leaning heavily toward Humanism. Pelagius held that we should pray for all kinds of blessings except virtue; we need not and should not pray for virtue, because, he said, we can provide this of ourselves by our own free will.

### III. The End of Salvation

1. According to consistent Theism, the end or purpose of salvation — the supreme end or

purpose of it, that is — is the manifestation of God's attributes and perfections, especially His love and His righteousness. The salvation of man is not intended primarily for man's benefit, though it certainly involves man's highest benefit, but for God's glory. Consistent Theism has a God-centered view of the purpose of man's salvation. Man is saved for the glory of God, not primarily for the benefit of man.

2. According to consistent Humanism, the end of our purpose of man's salvation is simply the progress of the human race. Humanity, it is said, exists for its own sake. The reason for everything human lies within the human personality. Man exists for man, not for God, just as God is said to exist for man, not for God.

It is this Humanist viewpoint that is back of the proposal to plant the human race, if and when space travel makes this possible, on other planets. Scripture tells us that God ordained this earth as the home of the human race — "The heaven, even the heavens, are the Lords: but the earth hath he given to the children of men" (Psalm 115:16). There are Humanists who would like to seed the vast reaches of outer space with the stock of mankind — this fallen, corrupted, selfish, covetous, lustful, discontented, never satisfied, unhappy humanity — because they know nothing and no one higher than man, and regard the progress and self-gratification of humanity as the ultimate goal and purpose of existence. "He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh: the Lord shall have them in derision" (Psalm 2:4). Nothing has aroused human pride more than the incipient success of man's efforts to conquer space. We recall the pride of the king of Babylon, who said in his heart: "I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God . . . I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will be like the most "High" — but God said to him, "Thou shalt be brought down to hell" (Isaiah 14:13-15).

3. According to inconsistent Theism, the end or purpose of man's salvation — the supreme end or purpose of it, that is — is human happiness and welfare. This view is not always clearly or consciously held; there are variations. But the middle-of-the-road view always tends to place its emphasis on man's happiness and welfare

rather than on the manifestation of the perfections of God, as the reason for salvation. It is sometimes said that God's objective is to seek the greatest good of the greatest number for the longest time. This is inadequate as a view of the end or purpose of salvation because its center of gravity is in man rather than in God. Note that Romans 11:36 teaches that "**unto God are all things**" — therefore the supreme purpose of human salvation must be for God rather than for man.

### In Conclusion

The present headquarters of consistent Humanism is the Kremlin of Moscow, and the out-reaching arms of this poisonous, idolatrous man-worship are found in the subtle instruments of Communist propaganda throughout the world.

Even apart from thoroughly consistent Humanism, the leavening influence of Humanistic thought has influenced much of the thinking and religious life of the Free World. Pure Christianity, characterized by consistent Biblical Theism, is not dominant nor flourishing today. The weakened, inconsistent views are more popular and certainly easier to accept. But they cannot stand permanently. In the end the battle is sure to be drawn between the two mutually exclusive but consistent philosophies of life — Biblical Theism and anti-Biblical Humanism.

It is hard to hold the position of consistent Biblical Theism. Because it concerns the relation between the infinite God and finite man it is bound to baffle our human reason — the more so because our reason has been weakened and darkened by sin. Consistent Biblical Theism provides no easy solutions of the great problems of existence. But it has one tremendous advantage — it is TRUTH and the victory of the eternal future must belong to it.

More than half a century ago Horatius Bonar noted the trend toward a man-centered view of life and wrote a poem entitled **The Coming Creed** which highlights the shift from Biblical religion to man-flattering, man-centered Humanism. Bonar's poem is even more relevant today than when he wrote it. It is fitting that this study be closed by quoting this poem which manifests such a true insight.

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## *The Coming Creed*

By Horatius Bonar

The creeds have gone, so speaks the age,  
The era of the sects is past.  
Forward! In spite of saint or sage,  
True freedom has begun at last.

The Christ of God is now no more;  
The Christ of man now sits supreme;  
The Cross is part of mystic lore,  
The resurrection morn a dream.

The age's progress fears no God,  
 No righteous law, no Judge's throne;  
 Man bounds along his new-found road,  
 And calls the universe his own.

Not faith in God, but faith in man  
 Is pilot now, and sail, and oar;  
 The creeds are shrivelled, cold and wan;  
 The Christ that has been is no more.

Old truth, which once struck deep in hearts,  
 Fights hard for life, but fights in vain;  
 Old error into vigor starts  
 And fable comes to life again.

Old mischief now becomes earth's creed;  
 The falsehood lives, the truth has died;  
 Man leans upon a broken reed,  
 And falls in helplessness of pride.

He spurns the hands that would have led,  
 The lips that would have spoken love;  
 The Book that would his soul have fed,  
 And taught the wisdom from above.

The ever-standing cross, to him,  
 Is but a Hebrew relic vain;  
 The wondrous birth at Bethlehem  
 A fiction of the wandering brain.

He wants no Saviour and no light;  
 No teacher but himself he needs;  
 He knows not of a human night,  
 Save from the darkness of the creeds.

Eternal Light, hide not Thy face:  
 Eternal Truth, direct our way;  
 Eternal Love, shine forth in grace;  
 Reveal our darkness and Thy day.

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## *The Divine Trinity*

By J. G. Vos

The subject of this article may perhaps seem dry and abstract, or of little practical importance for the Christian life. But really there is no truth of the the Christian faith that is more important for the Christian life and the way of salvation. Christianity stands or falls with the doctrine of the Trinity; where this truth has been abandoned, Christianity soon disappears. It is the landmark of the Christian faith.

The divine Trinity is a mystery in two senses. It is a mystery in the Biblical sense; that is, a truth that we could never have known if God had not revealed it to us in the Bible. And it is also a mystery in the ordinary sense, for it is a truth which baffles our understanding and transcends our power to comprehend. "The Lord hath said that he would dwell in the thick darkness" (II Chron. 6:1). God is clothed with impenetrable mystery; He can never be comprehended by finite beings. We should not expect to be able to rationalize the truth of the Trinity.

For the present discussion we shall assume that there is a personal God, that this God has revealed Himself in the Bible, and that God can be known from His revelation in the Bible. These assumptions may be established by their proper evidence, but we shall not discuss them in this article. We shall consider, first, what the doctrine of the Trinity means; second, the Bible proof of the doctrine of the Trinity; and third, the practical value of the doctrine of the Trinity.

### **What the Doctrine of the Trinity Means**

First of all, we should realize that the background of the doctrine of the Trinity is the truth that **there is only one God**. If we define God as the Supreme Being, it follows necessarily that

there can be only one God. Also the Bible teaches this truth from cover to cover. We should always remember that any idea of God which loses sight of His **unity** must be false.

In the divine Being there exist three Persons, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. When we say "three Persons," we do not mean exactly the same thing by the term "Persons" as we do when speaking of human beings. The word "person" is just the nearest approach, in our common speech, to what the Bible teaches about the distinction between the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. In the one God there exist side by side three centers of self-consciousness, each different from the other two. Each can call the others "Thou" or "He" and can speak of Himself as "I" or "Me." Thus there is a true distinction of Persons in the divine Being.

Philip Schaff, in his "History of the Christian Church," in discussing the doctrine of the Trinity, says: ". . . the term **person** must not be taken here in the sense current among men, as if the three persons were three different individuals, or three self-conscious and separately acting beings . . . . The word **person** is in reality only a make-shift in the absence of a more adequate term."

Schaff also says: "There is **only one** divine **essence or substance**. Father, Son and Spirit are one in essence, of consubstantial. They are in one another, inseparable, and cannot be conceived without each other." "The three persons are related to the divine substance not as three individuals to their species, as Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, or Peter, John and Paul, to human nature; they are only one God. The divine substance is absolutely indivisible by reason of its simplicity. . . . the whole fulness of the one undivided essence

of God, with all its attributes, is in all the persons of the Trinity . . . The church teaches not **one** divine essence **and** three persons, but **one** essence **in** three persons. Father, Son, and Spirit cannot be conceived as three separate individuals, but are in one another, and form a solidaric unity."

We should not suppose that each of the three Persons possesses a **part** of the divine nature and attributes. That would seem the natural and logical explanation to us, but it is not true to the Biblical data. On the contrary, each of the three Persons is truly God and possesses **all** of the divine nature and attributes. Just how each of the three Persons can possess all there is of God is something we cannot hope to understand; it baffles our human intellect. But the Bible teaches just that. As John Gray wrote in his poem "On the Holy Trinity":

"Equal, and none  
Can make but one;  
One are the three;  
Yet what it be  
That triple spirit only knows."

Though this truth is indeed a mystery, still it does not involve a contradiction as has often been alleged against it. It would be a contradiction if we were to say that God is one and God is three **in the same sense**. If that were the doctrine of the Trinity, no reasonable person could believe it. But the doctrine of the Trinity affirms that God is one and three in **different** senses; He is one **in substance** and three **in personality**. We admit the mystery, but we deny the contradiction.

The three Persons of the Trinity are equal in power and glory. So far as their nature is concerned, no one of them is subordinate to any of the others. If there were any personal subordination, they could not all three be truly God. There is a certain kind of **functional subordination** in connection with the working out of the plan of salvation for the human race. Because of His state of humiliation on earth, the eternal Son could say, "My Father is greater than I." But in their nature none of the three Persons can be subordinate; all are equal in power and glory, just because they are the same in substance.

All three Persons co-operate in every work, yet certain works are attributed more particularly to each. Thus we think of God the Father as most prominent in the work of creation, yet the Gospel of John tells us concerning God the Son that "without him was not anything made that was made." The purchase of our redemption was particularly the work of God the Son, and the application of our redemption is more particularly the work of God the Holy Spirit. Yet it is all part of one great plan in which all three Persons co-operate at all times.

All comparisons fail to do justice to the doc-

trine of the Trinity. Many people have sought to find illustrations for this truth in the realm of nature or in human life. Some of these illustrations may help us a little, but none of them is really adequate. Really even the reciprocal terms "Father" and "Son" used in the Bible itself do not mean the same as "Father" and "Son" in the ordinary sphere. They are just the nearest conceptions in human speech and human thought to suggest the relations between the first and second Persons of the Trinity.

One illustration that has been suggested is that of water, which exists in the three forms of liquid, vapor and ice; yet always has the same chemical composition of two atoms of hydrogen to one of oxygen. This illustration is faulty because water is not liquid, vapor and ice all at the same time; when it becomes one it ceases to be another. But God exists as one substance in three Persons at the same time and continuously.

Another suggested illustration is that of the sun; the matter of the sun to represent God the Father; the light of the Sun to represent God the Son; and the heat of the sun to represent God the Holy Spirit. This is a better illustration than that of water, for heat and light are distinct from the matter of the sun, yet inseparable from it. The sun is the sun; light is light; heat is heat; yet the sun is continually radiating light and heat through the universe. But the illustration breaks down, because matter, light and heat are not **the same in substance** as the Persons of the Trinity are. It may be that modern physics has shown that matter, light and heat are made of electrons, and so may be said to be **similar in substance**. But the three Persons of the Trinity are not merely **similar** in substance, they are identical in substance, each of them possessing **all** of the **one** divine substance.

While these and other illustrations may help us a little in understanding this baffling concept, none of them is really adequate, because material things and forces of nature cannot represent relations between **persons** and especially not between the Persons of the divine Trinity. For the divine Trinity is really unique and has no parallel in the created universe; it is truly a mystery.

#### **Bible Proof of the Doctrine of the Trinity**

The Trinity has not been revealed in nature. Nature does indeed tell us of the existence, power, glory and moral law of God, but it is silent concerning his existence in three distinct Persons. Our knowledge of this truth is derived entirely from the pages of the Bible.

The doctrine of the Trinity is revealed gradually in the Bible. The Old Testament has only dim suggestions of it. It was not until the second Person of the Trinity came to earth, when our Saviour was born in Bethlehem, that the full doctrine began to be revealed. Consequently it is in the Gospels and Epistles of the New Testament

that we find the fullest presentation of this doctrine. In the Old Testament we find certain foreshadowings of it; for example, the plural pronoun in the first chapters of Genesis, as in Genesis 1:26, "And God said, "Let **us** make man in **our** image after our likeness . . ." Again, in Psalm 110, "The Lord said unto my Lord . . .", a verse which presents two divine Persons. But these are rather suggestions than clear proofs. For the full proof we must turn to the New Testament. The formal proof may be summarized as follows:

1. The Bible teaches that there is only one God. Many texts might be cited; for example, I Cor. 8:4. "There is none other God but one."

2. The Bible speaks of each of three Persons as God. (a) The Father. II Cor. 11:3, "The God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which is blessed for evermore . . ." (b) The Son. Rom. 9:5, "Whose are the fathers, and of whom as concerning the flesh Christ came, who is over all, God blessed for ever." (c) The Holy Spirit Acts 5:3, 4, "But Peter said, Ananias, why hath Satan filled thine heart to lie to the Holy Ghost, and to keep back part of the price of the land? Whiles it remained, was it not thine own? and after it was sold, was it not in thine own power? Why hast thou conceived this thing in thine heart? thou hast not lied unto men, but unto God."

3. Since the Bible teaches that there is only one God, and yet speaks of three Persons as God, we conclude that this one God exists in three Persons, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. This is the only inference that we can draw without making the Bible contradict itself.

4. By teaching that there is only one God and that each of the three Persons is God, the Bible teaches that the three Persons are identical in substance; each of them possesses the one, undivided substance called "God".

5. The Bible teaches that the three Persons are truly distinct, by the way each of them speaks to or of the others. (a) The Father speaks of the Son, Matthew 3:17, "This is my beloved Son". (b) The Father speaks of the Holy Spirit, Acts 2:17, "I will pour out of my Spirit upon all flesh." (c) The Son speaks of the Father, Matthew 11: 27, "All things are delivered unto me of my Father: and no man knoweth the Son, but the Father; neither knoweth any man the Father, save the Son. . ." (d) The Son speaks of the Holy Spirit, John 14:26, "the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name . . ." (e) The Holy Spirit speaks of the Father, Hebrews 3:7, "as the Holy Ghost saith, Today if ye will hear his voice . . ." (f) The Holy Spirit speaks of the Son, John 15:26, "the Spirit of truth, which proceedeth from the Father, he shall testify of me."

6. "It is proper to the Father to beget the Son, and to the Son to be begotten of the Father, and to the Holy Ghost to proceed from the Father

and the Son from all eternity" (Larger Catechism 10); Heb. 1:5, 6, 8; John 1:14, 18; John 15:26; Gal. 4:6.

### THE PRACTICAL VALUE OF THE DOCTRINE OF THE TRINITY

The Trinity is exclusively a Christian conception of God. Christians, Jews and Mohammedans are monotheists, but only Christians believe in the Trinity of one God in three Persons. To reject the Trinity is to reject Christianity and renounce the God of the Bible.

The doctrine of the Trinity is intertwined with the doctrine of salvation by grace. The plan of salvation is based on the concept of the Trinity. Salvation is ordained by God the Father, purchased by God the Son, and applied by God the Holy Spirit. The Bible represents the plan of salvation in the form of a covenant between these three divine Persons. If we give up the doctrine of the Trinity, the plan of salvation falls to the ground. If we hold a false belief about the Trinity, we are certain to hold erroneous views about the plan of salvation.

The doctrine of the Trinity is a safeguard against wrong ideas about God. It shows why God is complete in Himself, always self-sufficient, having no need of any created being, because each of the divine Persons has the other two as an object to love and to know.

The doctrine of the Trinity also emphasizes the fact that the God of the Bible is a **personal** God, not a mere power, force or influence.

Jesus commanded to make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in (or rather, into) the name of the Father, of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. We should note that it was into the **name**, not the **names**, showing the unity of God along with the distinction of the Persons. Baptism is a "sign and seal" of a covenant relationship with the Triune God in the plan of salvation.

At the baptism of Jesus we see the Trinity disclosed. Jesus Christ is the second Person, God the Son. The third Person, God the Holy Spirit, descended in visible form as a dove and abode on Him. At the same time God the Father spoke from heaven, saying, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased."

Many people today talk about belief in God in a very vague, general sort of way; but is the God they believe in the God of the Bible? Not unless He is the Triune God; and they do not really come to Him unless they come through the second Person of the Trinity, Jesus Christ, for He is the only way by which sinful man can approach God the Father. "Whosoever denieth the Son, the same hath not the Father" (1 John 2:23); Jesus said, "I am the way, the truth, and the life; no man cometh unto the Father, but by me" (John 14:6). The person who really comes to God by

## *The Theology of Norman Vincent Peale*

By the Rev. W. R. McEwen

One of the most popular preachers in America today is Dr. Norman Vincent Peale, minister of Marble Collegiate Church, New York. His books also rank as best-sellers in the U.S.A., and are widely read throughout the world. One could afford to ignore this man if it were not for the extent of his appeal and the fact that he is typical of many modern preachers who read his books and copy his techniques. Then, he posed as an evangelical in co-operating in the Billy Graham New York Crusade, appearing on the platform and commending the Crusade to his congregation, and Dr. Graham returned the compliment by commending him.

There is no doubt about the width of his appeal and influence. And this is understandable. He has a sympathetic understanding of the personal problems which trouble many people. As well as preaching and writing on such subjects as worry, unhappiness, grief, anxiety, loneliness, love, marriage, and depression of spirit, he has set up a clinic in his church where, with a psychiatrist, he interviews and advises people who come to consult them. Undoubtedly he is anxious to help people in their mental and spiritual troubles, and many seem to feel that they have been helped by his ministry.

### A RECENT BOOK

However, he must be judged by his teaching to see if he has the authentic answer to the problems of today, lest people be led astray. "By thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned" (Matt. 12: 37). And we are not left in the dark as to what he has said. Perhaps as good a sample as any of his teaching is found in the book, "Faith Is The Answer", in which he collaborates with the psychiatrist, Smiley Blanton, M.D., in discussing various spiritual problems. Dr. Blanton gives the psychological approach, while Dr. Peale is supposed to deal with the spiritual, though he is also a bit of a psychologist.

From the psychological point of view he states many things which are both true and helpful. He also quotes the Bible, advocates prayer and Bible reading, speaks of conversion and being "born again" and of surrendering to Jesus Christ, and claims still to believe "in the old Victorian ideas of religion". There are illuminating insights and a warmth and earnestness in his approach which might well account for his popular appeal, and it is possible to understand how he might be taken for an evangelical by the undis-

criminating. He certainly does not denounce the fundamentals of the faith like some modernists. His emphasis is on "positive thinking", as he would put it. It is not so much what he says as what he doesn't say to which exception may be taken. However, there are expressions which reveal his basic attitude and show that he is far from the evangelical position.

### ATTITUDE TO THE BIBLE

Although he quotes and commends the Bible, his attitude towards it is very unsatisfactory. "Go read your Bible," he recommends, "and you will find religion is a medicine for every human ill" (p. 80). "A man has a good book in his hand when he turns the pages of the Bible," he states. "Why does the Bible retain its hold on humanity after hundreds of years?" he asks. "The answer, of course, is that the Bible contains more than any book ever written, the most astute insight into, and knowledge of, human beings" (p. 53). No mention here—or anywhere else—of the Bible being the inspired Word of God, revealing His character and His purposes for lost men.

### ESTIMATE OF HUMAN NATURE

Nor does he present the Biblical insight into human beings. He starts from the Pelagian position that man is basically good. "Whether you are prepared to admit it or not," he declares, "you are a good person basically" (p. 54). "Youth," he says, "is fundamentally decent and square shooting" (p. 105). He refers to the Prodigal Son as a Biblical example of "a man, ruining himself not because he was wicked, but because he was ignorant about himself" (p. 53). How different from the Prodigal's estimate of himself when he confessed, "I have sinned against heaven" (Luke 15: 18, 21)!

"If a man's life is said to be wicked, that really means," according to Dr. Peale, "it is stale and thin, it is in a state of grief" (p. 152).

Not having the proper diagnosis of man's real malady, it is not surprising that Dr. Peale does not prescribe the correct cure. According to him, what is needed is for us "to become aware of our innate goodness" (p. 54). "Religion," he says, "may be regarded as the formal statement of an instinctive good in human nature which is as natural as hunger" (p. 110). So, for him, Christianity is regarded "as possessing the surest techniques for helping people realize themselves" (p. 54). Thus man virtually saves himself, if there is any need, on Dr. Peale's showing, for his saving.

"Habitually send in thoughts of an elevated nature," he exhorts, "and the unconscious will inevitably return attitudes and actions of a corresponding quality" (p. 58). Here is no man such as Paul describes, "dead in trespasses and sins" (Eph. 2:1), and under the just condemnation of a holy God, but one who may accept of Christ's way of life as his own (see p. 62).

### CONSCIENCE AND THE SENSE OF GUILT

Ignoring man's guilty condition, as well as his helpless condition, it is also not surprising that he misses the real problem of reconciling God and man. Although there is a chapter on "Conscience and the Sense of Guilt," his main emphasis upon guilt is to deny it. "In order to control conscience and be free from the burden imposed by a sense of guilt, we must practise the good," he advocates (p. 104). "A man must know he can look his sin full in the face and tell it he is finished with it, and that he is forgiven, and then be able to go about his business of living with a light heart," he says (p. 107). But as to how a just God can forgive a guilty sinner he is entirely silent.

The nearest approach to an explanation—and it is not the Biblical one—is this: "A man's haunting sense of guilt set over against timeless glaciers and great silent snowcapped mountains serves to show how small our sins are compared with the greatness of God; how foolish it is to allow memory of them to destroy our peace and shatter our powers. In this environment we become aware finally that the chief thing about us is not the wrong we have done, but the greatness in us that responds to the greatness of nature" (p. 122). This is to miss the real issue and to heal the hurt of the human heart but superficially. It is not the greatness in us or in nature or even the greatness of God that dispells the sense of guilt in a convicted soul, but the grace of God in Christ.

Dr. Peale appeals to the Psalmist who "had committed many sins," and quotes from Psalm 121, "I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills, from whence cometh my help," and adds, "His help, he said, came, 'from the Lord who made heaven and earth'" (p. 123). It would have been more appropriate if Dr. Peale had quoted in this connection, like the apostle Paul, Psalm 32, where David faces the real problem caused by sin and declares: "Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered. Blessed is the man unto whom the Lord imputeth not iniquity" (see Rom. 4:6, 7). Paul, like David and the patriarch Job, recognized the problem, "How can man be just with God?" (Job. 9:2), and in his epistle to the Romans he shows how God, through the atoning work

of Jesus Christ can "be just and the justifier of him that believeth in Jesus" (Rom. 3:26).

Dr. Peale passes over this fundamental problem and its Divinely provided solution. Instead, he merely says: "Suppose you did do a wrong, you are sorry; ask God to forgive you. Then forget it. The important thing is not that you did something wrong. Though it was wrong, you did it. You cannot undo it. But you are infinitely more important than one mistake, or, for that matter, many mistakes. Climb up higher and get a view of yourself. See what it is in you to be. How utterly ridiculous to allow your mind to harp on a wrong once done, until your mind can deal with nothing else and everything centres around this now unimportant matter! You are bigger than your sin, no matter how big it may be or seem. God has forgiven you if you have sincerely besought Him to do so. He sees you and your possibilities rather than the sin. You must forgive yourself as God has forgiven you. Say to your timorous frightened mind: 'Yes, I sinned. I was wrong, and I confessed it and I straightened it out with God who forgives me.' Your sense of guilt cannot stand that sort of treatment" (pp. 123, 124). Thus Dr. Peale seeks to relieve the conscience of sin-burdened souls by minimizing sin. And there is no word here about the atoning work of Jesus Christ on the Cross, whereby a guilty sinner can be reconciled to a holy God; and no mention of the precious blood of the Son of God by which the penalty was paid to redeem the soul from death. Instead, the sinner straightens the matter out himself with God and forgets all about it. How different from the cry of the Psalmist: "My sin is ever before me" (Ps. 51:3), and the testimony of the apostle John: "Unto Him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in His own blood" (Rev. 1:5). Dr. Peale ignores "the blood of the covenant," and guilty sinners are being deceived as to the ground of their acceptance with God.

### CHRISTIAN EXPERIENCE

Dr. Peale also misunderstands, or misrepresents, Christian experience. Paul's experience is explained as follows: "Paul became a religious man, which is to say he put his life in God's hands. He tried to live according to the highest idealism as taught by Christ. He never compromised from that time on with what he knew to be right. He found in religion the key to a pleasant relationship with himself. He discovered that if he lived according to the principles and spirit of Christ, he would have peace of mind because his mind was clear" (p. 102). It is almost incredible how a person, with the New Testament in his hands, could so misunderstand Paul. Paul was a religious man before his conversion. He already tried to live according to the highest idealism he knew. It was not a matter of getting new principles but of being "reconciled to God by the

death of His Son" (Rom. 5:10), and becoming, "in Christ, a new creature" (2 Cor. 5:17). And even after his conversion the conflict did not cease, as he testifies in Romans 7. But he was indwelt by "the Spirit of Christ", i.e. the Holy Spirit, and is sure of ultimate victory. It should be noted that Dr. Peale speaks of the "spirit of Christ", which is a very different thing from the third person in the blessed Trinity, whom he completely ignores. He fails to see the part that all three Persons play in man's salvation.

Indeed, Christ is presented rather as an example of faith than as the object of faith, and that is to bring Him down to the level of a mere man. "When we go back and analyse the life of Jesus, the source of his power, and of his Divine energy, we are impressed by his faith in God. He believed God was near him, using him. He believed in God with the faith of a child. He kept in close contact and communion with God and as a result he was an open channel for the Divine energy" (p. 130). This is to misunderstand both the nature of Jesus and the nature of Christian experience.

As Dr. J. Gresham Machen makes so abund-

antly clear in his masterly book, "What is Faith?", are enjoined in the New Testament not only to have faith in God like Jesus had, but to have faith in Jesus. It is refreshing to turn from the vague sentiments of Dr. Peale to the strong, clear, Scriptural presentation of Dr. Machen. "The Lord Jesus," says Machen, "came into the world not primarily to say something but to do something; He came not merely to lead men through His example out into a 'larger life', but to give life, through His death and resurrection, to those who were dead in trespasses and sins; we are Christians not because we have faith in God like the faith in God which Jesus Himself had, but because we have faith in Him" ("What is Faith", p. 113). This is the faith which is the answer to the soul's greatest problem! But this answer is not found in this book by Dr. Norman Vincent Peale.

**Note:** The foregoing analysis of the theology of Dr. Peale is reproduced here from **Evangelical Action** (Australia). The author is the editor of **Evangelical Action** and is a minister of the Reformed Presbyterian Church (Ireland.)—Editor.

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## *The Reformed Faith We Profess*

By J. G. Vos

**Note:** This series of articles, which is being published by request, is intended to tell what the various teachings of the Reformed Faith are, in simple, non-technical language, and to show as pointedly and clearly as possible how they differ from other views which are widely held at the present day. The purpose of these studies

is not argument nor even the establishment of Scriptural proof for the various doctrines, but simple exposition. At the end of each instalment the reader will be referred to literature in which the case for the Reformed doctrines is argued and in which the Scriptural proof is marshalled and displayed.—Editor.

### Chapter III

#### The Eternal Purpose of God

"The decrees of God are, his eternal purpose, according to the counsel of his will, whereby, for his own glory, he hath foreordained whatsoever comes to pass" (Shorter Catechism, 7).

Several terms are used in dealing with this subject, such as God's purpose, His counsel, His decree or decrees, His decretive will, His foreordination. All of these refer, with different shades of emphasis, to God's determination, from eternity, of all that comes to pass in time. More specific terms are predestination, which means God's determination, from eternity, of the final destiny of His creatures, and election, which means God's choosing, from eternity, of particular angels and men to inherit eternal life.

Many difficulties in connection with this subject arise from the mistake of thinking of God as if He were a temporal being—as if God existed within the sphere of time. Because we are temporal beings and our minds, in this life at

least, are inevitably geared to the time-sequence of past-present-future, it is impossible for us to understand God, who has no past and no future, but lives in an eternal present. Distinctions between past, present and future do not apply to God. These distinctions are applicable to God's creatures but they have no meaning in relation to God himself. As Augustine pointed out in his **Confessions**, the question, "What was God doing before He made the world?" is really a meaningless question. When you say "before" you assume "time" — something which does not apply to God.

God's purpose is eternal; that is, His decrees are prior to everything in time. Time began with the creation of the universe—"in the beginning"—but the background of time is God's eternity, in which there is no before or after, no yesterday or tomorrow, no past or future, only an eternal NOW which is utterly different from what we call "time" or "history."

There may indeed be a logical relationship between one part of God's eternal purpose and another part. For example, God's decree that Jesus Christ should be born in Bethlehem is subordinate to His decree to provide a Saviour for sinners. But we should realize that the relationship is **logical**, not **chronological**. It is not that God first decreed to provide a Saviour for sinners, and then afterward decreed that the Saviour should be born in Bethlehem. Both of these decrees are eternal, and neither of them is "before" the others. If something is eternal, it is eternal; things cannot be "before" or "after" each other and still be eternal. To speak of one of God's eternal decrees being "before" or "after" another of His eternal decrees is to speak of God as if He were a temporal being like ourselves.

It is hard to guard against thinking of God in terms of time. Yet if God is really God He is above all time. God's eternal purpose must always be mysterious and baffling to us because it involves something completely foreign to our human experience. We can never hope to understand or explain the relationship between the Infinite One and that which is finite—between the Eternal One and that which is temporal. Just because God is God, He will always transcend everything created (including time) and will always baffle our finite, time-gear'd minds.

An evangelist once said to an inquirer: "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and God will elect you unto eternal life." This evangelist unwittingly committed the error of speaking of God's decree of election as if it took place in time. (He also committed the error of speaking of God's election as if it were a consequence of man's faith). God's decree of election is eternal. Every element of God's decrees is prior to everything in time. This could not be otherwise if God is really eternal.

#### **For the Manifestation of His Glory**

Whatever God does, is for His own glory. This does not mean that the created universe or anything in it can add anything to the glory of God, for God has in Himself all glory from eternity. He is perfect, and nothing He does can make Him more perfect. But God's eternal decrees, which He implements by His works of creation and providence, manifest or display the glory of God. By the "glory" of God we mean His infinite perfections, such as His wisdom, power, goodness, justice and other attributes. The created universe and everything that happens in it was planned by God from eternity to manifest or display these perfections.

This truth is contrary to the idea of "a democratic God" which is popular today. We believe in democracy as a desirable form of civil government, but we do not believe in

democracy as the relation between God and the universe. Yet many people naively assume that God exists for the benefit of the human race. They even speak of man learning how to use God, as if God were a force at man's disposal like electricity or magnetism.

Many people take for granted that God must treat all people exactly alike, and that what He gives to one He is bound to give to all. They seem to think that God must fit the pattern of modern democracy and that the ultimate aim of His actions must be the manifestation of democratic impartiality. They fail to realize that the ultimate aim of God's actions is the manifestation of His own glory. We live in a man-centered age, and humanistic, man-centered thinking has affected us all to some extent. But if we are to think aright about God, man and the universe, we must have a God-centered view of existence.

#### **God's Purpose is All-Inclusive**

According to the Reformed (and Biblical) view, God's eternal purpose is absolutely all-inclusive. It includes all events that take place in the created universe; it is without limits as to either time or space. The rise of an empire, the fall of a sparrow, the number of hairs on a person's head — all of these have been determined by God from eternity. Not only the great events but the seemingly trivial events, and all the complex web of relationships between them, have been determined by God from eternity.

The inclusive purpose of God includes all events which result from natural forces. For example, today's weather was decreed by God from eternity, and so was the weather of every day unto the end of time.

God's inclusive purpose also includes what we call "chance" events — the outcome of throwing dice, or tossing a coin, or drawing what some people call "a lucky number." The decision was not made by "chance" but by the eternal decree of the infinite God. His eternal purpose also includes the whole field of what are commonly called "accidental" events. To God nothing is accidental. To man it may be accidental, but not to God. He not only knew it from eternity, but He decreed from eternity that it would happen just when and where and how it actually does happen in time.

God's eternal purpose also includes all the free decisions made by His rational creatures, such as angels and men. Moreover, it includes the **sinful** decisions and acts of His creatures. We are here face to face with deep mystery, about which something more will be said later in this article. At this point it is merely in order to assert that the eternal purpose of God includes the free, and even the sinful, acts of His creatures.

For example, the betrayal of Jesus by Judas and His crucifixion by Pilate were eternally decreed by God.

Only because God's eternal decree is absolutely all-inclusive can there be such a thing as real predictive prophecy in the Bible. For predictive prophecy to be dependable, the future must be pre-determined in the mind and purpose of God. Otherwise there would always be the possibility that things might turn out differently from what was revealed to the prophets of old.

#### **Includes Eternal Destiny of Creatures**

The term "predestination" refers to God's eternal purpose as it affects God's creatures, particularly angels and men. God "hath, from all eternity, determined the final state of all his creatures," and it is erroneous to say "that God created any thing without determining what should be its final end and condition" (Reformed Presbyterian Testimony, VI, 1 and Error 1). "By the decree of God, for the manifestation of His glory, some men and angels are predestinated unto everlasting life, and others foreordained to everlasting death. These angels and men, thus predestinated and fore-ordained, are particularly and unchangeably designed, and their number is so certain and definite, that it cannot be either increased or diminished" (Westminster Confession of Faith, III. 3. 4).

With regard to the human race, those individuals whom God has predestinated unto eternal life are redeemed by Christ, and by the work of the Holy Spirit they come to believe on Christ unto salvation. The rest of mankind God has passed by — that is, He has not predestinated them unto eternal life — and has predestinated them to suffer eternal punishment as the just penalty of their own sins.

#### **God's Purpose is Sovereign**

God's eternal purpose is sovereign; that is, it is not determined by anything outside of God Himself. This idea may be expressed by saying that God's purpose was formed "according to the counsel of His own will." Both the Reformed creeds and the Bible also express the idea of the divine sovereignty by the formula "It pleased God" (to decree certain things). When we say that God's eternal predestination is sovereign, we mean that God was completely free to act as He might choose; He was not under any external influence or pressure to do as He actually did. As a matter of fact, God chose Abraham to be the father of the chosen people, but He could have chosen Lot instead of Abraham, had He wished to do so. Even God's decree to create the universe was a sovereign decree. God was not under any obligation or necessity to create a universe. And just as His decree to create the universe was sovereign, so all His decrees as to what happens in that universe are sovereign. God acts as He

chooses. He is bound by nothing except His own wise and holy nature.

The idea of God's sovereignty is greatly misunderstood and misused at the present day. Many use this term who mean by it only that God is the most powerful of all beings. Such people will say that they believe in the sovereignty of God, and in the next breath they will say that man's eternal destiny depends ultimately on his own free will. Others will say that they believe that God was originally sovereign, but when He created man He limited Himself to make room for man's free will. Those who speak thus should not claim belief in the sovereignty of God. The real sovereignty of God means that God's eternal purpose, which includes every particular fact in the universe, is unaffected by anything outside of God Himself.

#### **Not Based on Foresight of Events**

A very common misunderstanding of God's eternal purpose is that it is based on His divine knowledge of future events. According to this notion, God decreed that certain things would happen because He knew that they would happen anyway. God knew from eternity, it is said, what persons would repent and believe on Christ; accordingly, He elected and predestinated those persons to eternal life. Needless to say, this eliminates the sovereignty of God and reduces His eternal purpose to a sort of rubber-stamp ratification of the decisions of His creatures. This idea is definitely rejected as erroneous by the Reformed Faith: "Although God knows whatsoever may or can come to pass upon all supposed conditions, yet hath He not decreed anything because He foresaw it as future, or as that which would come to pass upon such conditions" (Westminster Confession of Faith, III. 2); "it is not on account of the foreseen faith, or goodness of any man, that God predestinated him to everlasting life" (Reformed Presbyterian Testimony, VI, 3). This error is often supported by a superficial handling of such Scriptures as Romans 8:29 — "For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate." It should be noted that this verse does not say "For those concerning whom he foreknew that they would believe on Christ," but "WHOM he foreknew . . .". The object of the foreknowing is not a fact about people's future decisions, but PERSONS. The correct idea is that God knew these persons as His own from eternity.

#### **Not Contrary to Man's Freedom**

The relation between God's eternal purpose and man's free agency must remain mysterious. We cannot analyze this so as to remove the difficulty that is involved. Nevertheless the Reformed Faith strongly affirms the free agency and moral responsibility of human beings. Our decisions and our acts were decreed by God from eternity, yet they are truly our own decisions and

our own acts, and we are responsible for them. Man is a being of such a nature that his acts are foreordained by God and yet they are free acts of man's own personality. This is clearly taught in the Bible. Many people fail to realize that the Reformed Faith teaches and insists upon human free agency and moral responsibility. Such people jump to the conclusion that the Reformed Faith holds that man is a mere machine or robot possessing no true freedom. Such statements have often been noted in school and college textbooks by learned authors who should know better. Actually the Reformed Faith holds both the sovereignty of God and the true freedom of man, while admitting that the relation between these two truths is a paradox or mystery which man's reason cannot solve.

#### **Does not Make God the Author of Sin**

It is often charged that the Reformed Faith makes God the Author of sin. Admittedly we are here again faced with deep mystery, for if we say that God has foreordained the sinful acts of men, it seems a necessary consequence that God is the author of sin. The Reformed Faith, however, specifically states that God is not the Author of sin (Westminster Confession, III, 1). God decreed to permit sin, and to order it to His own glory in the end (Westminster Confession, VI, 1). God did not Himself cause sin, nor does He ever approve of sin. His decree to permit sin rendered it certain that sin would be committed, yet God does not commit the sin nor does He cause the sinner to commit the sin. Only the sinner is guilty of the sin; God is perfectly righteous in His relation to the sin.

#### **Does not Eliminate Second Causes**

It is a common misunderstanding of God's eternal decrees that they eliminate the functioning of all second causes, as if God's decrees themselves produce the final results without the use of any means. Thus, it is said, if God has decreed that I am to be in New York on the first day of next month, His decree will place me in New York — there is no need for me to travel there by train or automobile. Or it is said, if God has predestinated me to go to heaven, I am sure to go there — there is no need for me to repent of my sins or become a Christian believer. Or it is said, if God has decreed that a person with acute appendicitis will recover, he will recover — there is no need for him to undergo surgery to remove the infected appendix. All this kind of reasoning is contrary to the Reformed and Biblical teaching about God's eternal decrees. The truth is that God's decrees, being all-inclusive, include both the final result and all the means that contribute to bring that final result about. God has decreed both the means and the end, and He has decreed that the means shall produce the end. If He has predestinated me to go to heaven, He has also foreordained the means thereto — that I should repent, believe the Gospel, etc. The eternal (God's

decree) does not cancel the reality and functioning of the temporal (the chain of causes which contribute to bringing the final result to pass). Rather, the eternal decree includes and provides for the reality and functioning of the temporal.

#### **A Mystery not Solvable by Reason**

Almost all objections raised against the Reformed view of God's eternal purpose proceed, not from study of the Bible, but from human reasoning or philosophizing. The objector seldom undertakes to prove that the various elements of the Reformed view are not taught in the Bible. Rather, he proceeds by reasoning to say: "If A is true, then B cannot be true. But I know that B is true. Therefore A cannot be true." ("If God has foreordained what comes to pass, then man cannot be free and responsible. But I know that man is free and responsible. Therefore God has not foreordained what comes to pass"). The **rationalistic** character of this type of objection should be noted. It amounts to saying this: "I will not believe two ideas that seem contrary to each other, unless my reason can grasp the relation between them" — or more bluntly stated, "I will not believe anything which I cannot fully understand."

When we remember that the ideas in question concern the profoundest of all subjects — the Infinite God and our relation to Him — we will realize, perhaps, that the rationalistic attitude mentioned above is in reality **irreligious**. It really comes down to a refusal to believe more about God than the human mind can understand. As a matter of reverence and religious faith, we should be prepared to believe much about God that transcends the power of human reason to explain. And especially, we should not cancel or deny the real sovereignty of God in the interest of safeguarding the freedom and dignity of man. For denial of the real sovereignty of God leads inevitably away from the theology of the Bible, toward a humanistic, man-centered religion and philosophy.

#### **Some Questions to Ponder**

1. What are some of the terms used to refer to the eternal purpose of God?
2. What is the meaning of the terms "predestination" and "election"?
3. What is the relation of God to time?
4. What is the relation of God's decrees to time?
5. What is the ultimate reason for all that God does?
6. What is wrong with the idea of "a democratic God"?
7. What different kinds of events are included in God's foreordination?

8. What is the bearing of predictive prophecy on the question of God's eternal purpose?

9. What is implied by the expression "It pleased God . . . " ?

10. How is God's sovereignty often misunderstood?

11. Why is it incorrect to say that God's foreordination is based upon His divine knowledge of future events?

12. What is the meaning of the word "paradox"?

13. What does the Reformed Faith hold concerning man's freedom and responsibility?

14. What, according to the Reformed Faith, is the relation between God and the existence of sin?

15. What is meant by "second causes"? What does the Reformed Faith teach concerning second causes?

16. Why are the common objections to God's foreordination rightly regarded as rationalistic?

17. Why is a rationalistic attitude toward God's foreordination really an irreligious attitude?

#### Some Literature on this Subject

The Westminster Confession of Faith, Chapter III; Chapter VI, Section 1.

The Reformed Presbyterian Testimony, Chapter VI.

The Westminster Larger Catechism. Q. 12, 13.

Blue Banner Faith and Life, Vol. I No. 3 (March, 1946), pages 44-49.

Blue Banner Faith and Life, Vol. 11 No. 1 (January-March, 1956), pages 9-13.

The Reformed Doctrine of Predestination, by Loraine Boettner (Wm. B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., Grand Rapids 3, Mich.).

The Doctrine of God, by Herman Bavinck, pages 337-407 (English translation published by Eerdmans, address given above).

## Religious Terms Defined

**NICOLAITANS.** A sect of heretics mentioned in Rev. 2:6, 15, who taught that Christians are free to indulge in the lusts of the flesh.

**OATH.** "A lawful oath is a part of religious worship, wherein, upon just occasion, the person swearing solemnly calleth God to witness what he asserteth, or promiseth; and to judge him according to the truth or falsehood of what he sweareth". (*Westminster Confession of Faith*, XXII. 1)

**ORDINANCES OF GOD.** Those institutions or practices which are of divine authority in human society, such as the family, the church and the state; baptism; the Lord's Supper; church government and discipline; etc.

**ORDINATION.** The act of setting a person apart to office in the church by prayer and the laying on of hands. (The ordained officers of the New Testament Church are ministers (pastors, bishops or teaching elders), ruling elders, and deacons). According to the Presbyterian form of church government, ordination is the act of a "presbytery" or plurality of presbyters (teaching and ruling elders).

**ORTHODOXY.** Literally, "straight teaching"; that religious doctrine which conforms to a fixed and recognized standard. The true standard of orthodoxy is the Word of God, by which all teachings are to be tested and measured. Subordinate standards of orthodoxy, such as Confessions of Faith and catechisms, are valid and proper in so far as they are in accord with God's revelation, the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments.

**PAGANISM.** The religious belief and practice of those who worship false gods.

**PANTHEISM.** The false system which holds that everything is divine, or that God is the soul of the universe, and that God attains personality and self-consciousness only in man.

**PARABLE.** A story told for the purpose of teaching or emphasizing a point of religious truth.

**PARADISE.** The garden of Eden, which was the home of the human race before the Fall. Also used to mean heaven (Luke 23:44).

**PARDON.** That act of God, included in justification, by which the guilt of the sinner is remitted, that the corresponding penalty be not inflicted.

**PASSION OF CHRIST.** Our Saviour's sufferings, culminating in His death upon the cross.

**PATIENCE.** "That calm and unruffled temper with which a good man bears the evils of life" (*Buck's Theological Dictionary*).

**PATIENCE OF GOD.** God's longsuffering or forbearance, by reason of which He waits long before visiting His judgments on men, that they may have opportunity to repent, or be left without excuse.

**PATRIARCHS.** Heads of families, especially those who lived before the time of Moses, as Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.

**PATRONAGE.** The practice, which caused long controversy and great evil in Scotland, by

which a Christian congregation is deprived of the right of choosing its own pastor, the minister instead being appointed by some person holding the right of patronage pertaining to that congregation.

**PELAGIANS.** A heretical sect which arose late in the fourth century after Christ, which denied the doctrines of original sin, total depravity, and salvation by free grace alone. (Founded by Pelagius, a British monk; opposed by Augustine, bishop of Hippo in North Africa).

**PENTATEUCH.** The five books of Moses, namely, Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy.

**PENTECOST.** A feast of the Jews, celebrated fifty days after the Passover (Levit. 23:15).

**PERJURY.** The taking of an oath in order to tell or confirm a falsehood.

**PERSEVERANCE OF THE SAINTS.** The doctrine that "They, whom God hath accepted in His Beloved, effectually called, and sanctified by His Spirit, can neither totally, nor finally, fall away from the state of grace: but shall certainly persevere therein to the end, and be eternally saved" (Westminster Confession of Faith, XVII.1).

**PHARISEES.** A sect of the Jews in the time of Christ which held with zeal to "the traditions of the elders," regarding these as of equal authority with the Scripture itself. They were characterized by religious earnestness and zeal, accompanied by legalism, formalism and hypocrisy.

**PIOUS FRAUDS.** "Those artifices and falsehoods made use of in propagating the truth, and endeavoring to promote the spiritual interests of mankind" (Buck's Theological Dictionary). (Pious frauds are forbidden by Scripture: Rom. 3:8).

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## *Some Noteworthy Quotations*

Better go swimming and wet through our waters than drown by the way: especially now when truth suffereth, and great men bid Christ sit lower and contract Himself in less bounds, as if He took too much room.

— Samuel Rutherford

The bush has been burning these five thousand years, and no man yet saw the ashes of that fire.

— Samuel Rutherford

There cannot be a more humble soul than a believer. It is no pride in a drowning man to catch hold of a rock.

— Samuel Rutherford

We cannot understand God's providence till He hath done His work; he is an impatient spectator that cannot tarry till the last act, wherein all errors are reconciled.

— Thomas Manton

Thou darest not pray, Lord, let me have my worldly comforts, though they damn me; let me not be afflicted, though it do me good; and if thou darest not pray so, wilt thou murmur when God ordereth it so?

— Thomas Manton

Nothing can go amiss to him that is found in the way of duty.

— Thomas Manton

We cannot be saved by a dead Christ, who undertook but could not perform, and who still lies under the Syrian sky, another martyr of impotent love. To save, He must pass not merely to but through death. If the penalty was fully paid, it cannot have broken Him, it must needs have been broken upon Him. The resurrection of

Christ is thus the indispensable evidence of His completed work, of His accomplished redemption.

— B. B. Warfield

Men no longer cast us to the lions when we proclaim Jesus the only Saviour the world can know; His name the only name under heaven given among men wherein they must be saved. But the world of today endures with no more real patience than that older world two thousand years ago the arrogance of such lofty claims. This is above all others that have preceded it the day of eager and appreciative study of other faiths; and equally with the others that have preceded it, the day of indifference, if not hostility, to the high claims of Jesus.

— B. B. Warfield

The whole earthly career of Christ, including his death, was obedience in one aspect and suffering in another. Inasmuch as it was suffering, it expiated the sins of his people; inasmuch as it was obedience, it merited for them the coveted reward of eternal life.

A. A. Hodge

It is certainly as impious, and perhaps more foolish, to refuse to see clearly what God has revealed clearly, as it is to attempt to understand in detail undefined facts which God has seen fit to leave upon the verge of our horizon.

— A. A. Hodge

A believer of the nineteenth century knows much more than a believer of the tenth or third century could know, but that additional knowledge is ever dug from the selfsame gold mine; and that former generations stood behind in wealth of knowledge, can only be explained by

the fact, that in those times the working of the mine was not so far advanced.

— Abraham Kuyper

Many of our Calvinistic preachers do not feed God's people. They believe in election, but they do not preach it. They think particular redemption true, but they lock it up in the chest of their creed, and never bring it out in their ministry. They hold final perseverance, but they persevere in keeping quiet about it. They think there is such a thing as effectual calling, but they do not think they are called effectually to preach it. The great fault we find with many is, that they do not speak right out what they do believe. You could not know if you heard them fifty times what were the doctrines of the gospel, or what was their system of salvation. And hence God's people get starved.

— Charles H. Spurgeon

The abandonment of the name "Theology," and the substitution in its room of the name of "Science of Religion," was nothing but the honest consequence of the fundamentally atheistic point of view which was held.

— Abraham Kuyper

Religion, in all its manifestations, waits, like

all other human functioning, on the operation of ideas: here too the line of action is from perception, through emotion, to volition. And nothing can be more certain than that if the theology of the Bible is discarded, the religion of the Bible is discarded with it. We shall certainly have religion: we cannot avoid that: man is a religious animal. But our religion will not be the religion of the Bible unless — among other elements of it — our religious conceptions, that is, our theology, be the religious conceptions, that is to say, the theology, of the Bible. It is the gravest kind of self-deception to imagine — to bring the matter to its sharpest point — that we can discard the religious conceptions of Paul, or of Jesus, and remain of the same religion as Paul or Jesus, because forsooth we feel that we too, like them, are religious beings and function religiously. Christianity is not a distinctive interpretation of a religious experience common to all men, much less is it an indeterminate and constantly changing interpretation of a religious experience common to men; it is a distinctive religious experience begotten in men by a distinctive body of facts known only to or rightly apprehended only by Christians.

—B. B. Warfield, *Critical Reviews*, pp. 325-6.

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## *An Introductory Study of Religions*

This series of lessons is intended to deal, from a distinctly Christian and Biblical point of view, with the origin, nature and development of religion, the Christian missionary approach to people of non-Christian faiths, and the principal features of some of the great non-Christian religions of the world. It will be endeavored to bring out clearly the difference between "modern" views of religion and the Biblical view. The

description of some of the non-Christian faiths is intended to enable the student to have a better understanding of the problems and difficulties faced by the Christian missionary enterprise throughout the world. An intelligent interest in Christian missions requires some understanding of the non-Christian religious systems of the world, from which the Church seeks to win converts to Christ.

### LESSON 1

#### Religion as a Fact of Human Life

##### What is Religion?

Everyone has some idea of what religion is, yet religion is one of the hardest things in the world to define. Here are some suggested definitions:

"Religion is the quest for the values of the ideal life."

"Religion is the recognition on the part of man of a controlling superhuman power entitled to obedience, reverence and worship."

Obviously religion is extremely difficult to define. If we define it in terms of what we regard as religion, our definition will be too narrow.

Historically Buddhism at its beginning was

pure atheism. Yet it was certainly a religion. Confucianism in its pure form is at best only agnostic concerning the existence of God. Yet it has usually been called a religion.

We must bear in mind, too, that the word "religion" is used in an objective sense and also in a subjective sense. When we say "Mohammedanism is a monotheistic religion", we are using the term "religion" objectively. In this sentence "religion" signifies an objective reality, just as when we say "Asia is the largest continent," the noun "continent" signifies an objective reality.

On the other hand, when we say "Religion is characteristic of mankind everywhere," we are using the term "religion" in a subjective sense. In this sentence "religion" is something which

can be attributed to the human personality. In this subjective sense, religion is not a complex of doctrines, worship, organization, laws, temples, sacrifices, and the like, but a fact of the human consciousness. We might perhaps express the distinction between the objective and the subjective sense by saying that in the subjective sense we speak of **religion**, while in the objective sense we speak of **religions** or of **some particular religion** (as Buddhism, or Mohammedanism.)

Another suggested definition of religion is: Religion is man's response to what he believes to be the ultimate meaning of life.

What about those who say, "Let us eat, drink and be merry for tomorrow we die?" Is this attitude to be regarded as their religion? Does their conduct reflect what they believe to be the ultimate meaning of life?

Of course, a definition of **true religion** would have to be much narrower. True religion would have to be defined as **man's proper response to the revelation of the true God**. But in seeking for a general definition of religion, we are not limiting ourselves to **true religion**; we are considering **religion as such**, religion as a phenomenon of human life, regardless (for the time being) of question of truth or value.

#### The Universality of Religion

It has been said that "man is a religious animal." Another common statement is that mankind is incurably religious. It is a fact that religion in some form or other is universal in the human race.

Sometimes the statement has been made that **paleolithic man** (man in the "old stone age") was non-religious. This however is not a proved fact but merely a speculative theory. Because the anthropologists have not found evidence proving that paleolithic man was religious, some jump to the conclusion that he was non-religious. The truth is that we know very little indeed about paleolithic man, and an argument based on silence or lack of evidence is dangerous. I might say, "There are no foxes in Beaver County. I know this to be true for I have lived a year

in Beaver County and have never seen a fox." The fallacy in such a statement is obvious.

As a matter of fact, religion is not only universal in the human race, but also persistent. Forty years of atheistic and anti-religious propaganda and pressure in Soviet Russia have not succeeded in eliminating religion from the life of the people there.

Missionaries and anthropologists report that religion, in some form, is universal among mankind at the present day (whatever some may assert about paleolithic man). The philosopher David Hume, though himself a sceptic, is reported to have said on one occasion: "Look out for a people entirely devoid of religion, and if you find them all, be assured that they are but a few degrees removed from the brutes." But even Hume did not say that such a non-religious people can be found.

#### Questions

1. Why do you think "Religion" is difficult to define?
2. Give a sentence using the word "Religion" in the subjective sense.
3. Give a sentence using the word "Religion" in the objective sense.
4. How may **true religion** be defined?
5. How may religion in general (or religion as such) be defined?
6. Are these suggested definitions adequate? If not, how can they be improved?
7. What can be said about the universality of religion?
8. Of what kind of people has it been claimed that they were non-religious?
9. Why can this claim not be regarded as proven?
10. What illustration can be given to show the persistence of religion as a part of people's life?

### LESSON 2

#### The Origin of Religion

Views as to the origin of religion can be divided into (1) Naturalistic views, and (2) the Biblical view.

Naturalistic views of the origin of religion have resulted from the application of the theory of evolution to the concept of religion. It is held that not merely man's physical organism and his mind are products of evolutionary development, but that man's religion has gradually developed

by an evolutionary process, from very primitive beginnings to the great monotheistic religions (Judaism, Christianity, Islam) which exist at the present day.

Those who hold this evolutionary theory of religion differ among themselves as to the details of the process, but they are agreed in the central idea that human religion developed gradually by a natural process. This idea of evolution is re-

garded as applicable both to religion in the subjective sense (i.e., to man's religious nature) and to religion in the objective sense (the various religious faiths and systems).

Among those who hold the evolutionary theory of the development of religion, the origin of religion is variously regarded. Some have held that religion originated as a device of chiefs or rulers to keep people in subjection to themselves. This is a form of the Communist notion that religion is "the opium of the people"—something invented and promoted by a certain social class as a way of keeping the mass of the people quiet and contented and obedient. This theory is very unrealistic, for it assumes that people had organized government before they had religion—certainly a very doubtful assumption.

Another notion is that religion originated from fetish-worship. This means the worship of inanimate objects—a piece of bone, a bird's claw, a stone—which somehow were regarded as sacred and as possessing special powers. This of course does not explain the **origin** of religion; it only asserts that the more developed religions sprang from something less developed. The question of the origin of fetish-worship is left hanging in the air without an answer.

Another notion is that religion originated from spirit-worship, or from ancestor-worship. It is held that mankind naturally conceived the idea that the spirits of the dead were influential in human life and must be feared or placated. Still another idea attributes the origin of religion to a primitive form of nature-worship. As we shall see later in considering the Biblical view, this last is closer to the truth than the other theories. Yet it is not the whole truth by any means.

None of these evolutionary theories explains the real **origin** of religion. Evolution means the development of something already existing into something else. It necessarily has to start with something which is regarded as already in existence. Therefore evolution cannot really explain the **origin** of anything. A theory of how things developed does not explain how things got there in the first place.

Evolutionary anthropologists attempt to solve this problem by having recourse to vast periods

of time. When asked how religion could develop from a non-religious condition, they reply that that was a very gradual development which took vast ages of time. But the mere lapse of time does not explain anything. The lapse of time is not itself a cause of any effect. What is needed to solve the problem is not ages of time, but **an adequate cause** for the origin of religion. As someone has aptly remarked, "All eternity is not sufficient to complete that which has not yet been begun."

All the evolutionary views of the origin of religion assume that man (or man's hypothetical pre-human ancestor) was once non-religious, and gradually man became a religious being. But the **a priori** nature of this type of thinking is evident. Such a "non-religious" man has never been discovered or proved to exist, either at the present day or at any time in the known past.

Such evolutionistic anthropologists regard the evolutionary theory as a fixed and determined matter, and then they proceed to outline the (supposed) history of the development of religion in terms of that theory. This is really unscientific, for it approaches the actual phenomena of human religion with a ready-made theory in mind and proceeds to impose that theory upon the facts.

1. Into what two categories can views of the religion be divided?
2. Why is the theory that religion was invented by chiefs or rulers to keep people in subjection an unrealistic theory?
3. Why can no evolutionary view really explain the **origin** of religion?
4. Why can the origin of religion not be explained by saying that it was a gradual process which took vast periods of time?
5. What is meant by fetish-worship? Why is it not satisfactory as an explanation of the origin of religion?
6. What other ideas of the origin of religion have been advocated?
7. Why is the evolutionistic attempt to explain the origin of religion unscientific?

### LESSON 3

#### The Origin of Religion According to the Bible

We shall now proceed to consider **the Biblical view of the origin of religion**.

The Bible teaches that man was created a religious being, and that the original religion of the human race was monotheism. Before man's

fall into sin, man enjoyed communion with God and was in a covenant relationship with God.

The background of man's original religion was God's revelation in nature. This includes both (1) Nature outside the human personality — what

we ordinarily call "the world of nature", and (2) Nature inside the human personality — what we ordinarily call "human nature."

The external world bore witness to Adam and Eve of the existence and power of the true God, and this external testimony was confirmed by the testimony of their own hearts. The revelation of God was written upon the human personality. Man found within himself a witness to the existence of the true God. Man instinctively believed in the true God.

This natural revelation of God, however, was not sufficient for the enjoyment of the fullest religious communion of man with God. Man could not attain the full religious destiny for which he had been created on the basis of natural revelation alone. The natural revelation — outside and inside man's personality — was good and it was a true witness to the true God. But it was not sufficient for the highest religious attainment of man.

Therefore God took the initiative and added "special" or **supernatural** revelation. God spoke to man, not only by the voice of God in nature, but by the clearer voice of God's Word. (When we say "Word", we do not mean **Scripture**, at this early stage of human history, but merely a special message from God to man, **distinct from the witness in nature**.)

The distance between God and man being so great — God being infinite and man finite — the highest religious communion could be established only by God taking the initiative in **an act of condescension**. Man could not build a ladder to reach God, but God could and did stoop to man's level. This act of condescension on God's part is called in theology a **covenant**. It was an act of God by which man was brought into relation of religious communion with his Maker.

We are considering the early period, before man fell into sin. God revealed Himself to man, bringing man into a covenant relationship with God. This covenant took the form of a probation

or test of man's willingness to obey the will of God. The record is found in Genesis chapters 2 and 3.

God dealt with man very simply, by object lessons, as it were. The scene was the Garden of Eden. Four great principles were symbolized in a way that man could grasp. The **principle of life** was symbolized by the tree of life. The **principle of probation or testing** was symbolized by the tree of knowledge of good and evil. The **principle of temptation** was symbolized by the serpent. The **principle of death** was symbolized by the return of man's bodily organism to dust.

If man had obeyed God, the outcome of the test would have been that the human race would have been confirmed in moral uprightness and happiness; sin and death would have become impossible; and the entire history of the human race would have been radically different from what it actually has been.

#### Questions

1. According to the Bible, what was the original religion of the human race?
2. According to the Biblical view, what is the background of man's original religion?
3. What two parts did this background include?
4. Besides God's revelation in nature, what was needed for men to enjoy religious communion with God?
5. What is meant by God's "Word" at the beginning of history?
6. Who took the initiative in bringing man into a religious relationship with God?
7. Why was this an act of "condescension" on God's part?
8. Name the elements in the covenant which provided for a probation or test of man in the Garden of Eden.
9. What would have resulted if man had obeyed God perfectly?

### LESSON 4

#### Religion After Man's Fall into Sin

We should realize that man never existed without a **super-natural** revelation from God. Even before man sinned, God's witness in nature was never sufficient of itself for man's religious needs. The revelation in nature (including human nature) was only the background for the revelation of God by His Word.

But man fell into sin, and with this fall his religion was greatly changed. Before the fall there had existed only **true** religion; after the fall religion branches into two kinds, true and false. True religion after the fall becomes **redemptive**; that is, it became predominantly a mat-

ter of redemption from sin. The divine program of redemption, which was first announced to mankind at Genesis 3:15 in the promise that there would be a Seed of the woman who would ultimately destroy the serpent, took the form of a progressive historical development.

First God allowed human sin to develop with comparatively little restraint, to give an object lesson, once for all, in what sin really is and does. This was the character of the period from the Fall to the Flood.

With the call of Abraham the implementation of the program of redemption began to make rapid

progress. The period from Abraham to Christ was a period of preparation for the coming of Christ and for His redemptive work. The period from Christ to the end of the world is the period of application of redemption to the world and its people. This redemptive religion was **essentially** (though not in its external forms) the same in both the Old Testament and the New. In the Old Testament it was the religion of Israel; in the New Testament period it is Christianity.

We shall now consider the Biblical view of the rise and development of **false** religion. The Biblical teaching on this subject is found most fully stated in Paul's Epistle to the Romans, chapter 1 verses 18 to 32 and chapter 2 verses 14 to 16. In this section of Paul's letter to the Romans we have placed before us a terrible picture of human sinfulness. First of all, Paul tells us about God's attitude toward human sinfulness: "For the wrath" of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness" (Rom. 1:18). The Greek word here translated "hold" (**katechontoon**) means **hold down, withhold or restrain**. It may well be translated **suppress**. The implication is that mankind is guilty of suppressing the truth of God.

Paul goes on to discuss the effects of sin in the human race. He speaks first of the **religious** effects of sin and then of the **moral** effects of sin (contrary to the order that many people would prefer today because of the man-centered rather than God-centered character of our time). Human sin resulted in a wicked life and bad conduct. Finally the wicked life ends in the divine sentence of death.

The revelation of God in the book of nature was terribly misused by men. Instead of leading men to reverence and worship God, to glorify God and be thankful to God, it became twisted and distorted, resulting in the **false religions of the world**. In Rom. 1:21-23 Paul tells us the real origin of the world's false religious systems. They originated from perversion of God's revelation in the book of nature. God's revelation in nature was itself clear, but something had happened to the human race which affected man's spiritual vision. In Paul's words. "They became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened. Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools."

If we look through amber-colored glasses, everything we see will be amber colored; if we look through blue glasses, all we see will appear blue. God's revelation in the book of nature was itself clear and plain, but mankind had fallen into sin, and thereafter men looked at the book of nature through colored glasses, as it were. What man saw was distorted and misinterpreted.

Man's fall into sin not only affected man's moral sense, making him wicked; it also affected his intellect, making him foolish. The fall damaged man's ability to interpret God's revelation in

nature aright. Man could no longer see straight or think straight in matters of religion. He looked in his heart, and then he looked out on the world of nature, and then he became an idolater. Seeing the sun, he became a sun-worshipper. Seeing the moon, he became a moon-worshipper. Seeing the stars, he began to worship them instead of their Creator. He worshipped the heavens instead of worshipping the God who had created them.

Taking another look at himself, man became a man-worshipper. He "changed the glory of the uncorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man" (Rom. 1:23). Man had been created in the image of God, but after the fall he sought to reverse the order, and began to make himself gods fashioned in the image of man. The old myths of Greece and other countries show us what kind of gods man invented for himself. The gods reflected the moral corruption of the human heart — they were a copy of the character of their makers. There was no kind of wickedness or crime that the Greek gods and goddesses were not involved in. Decent people in ancient Greece were ashamed about some of the old stories about the gods.

Idolatry — the worshipping of false gods and images — is the most degrading practice that the human race has ever engaged in. The Bible says concerning the worship of man-made idols: "They that make them are like unto them; so is every one that trusteth in them" (Psalm 115:8). Idolatry drags man down until he becomes a slave to falsehood, superstition and fear. Some people consider the pagan religions quaint and romantic, with their interesting customs and their strange temples and rites. They should see these religions at closer range, and they might perhaps reconsider their opinion of them in the light of their results.

But false religions are not limited to the age-old false religions of the world. The outstanding false religion of the present day is **Communism**. For Communism, in spite of its boasted atheism and its claim to be against all religion, is itself really a religion, for it claims **absolute and supreme devotion** of all its adherents. People are even willing to die for their devotion to Communism. A faith that can call forth such loyalty and such sacrifices is certainly a religion.

Another false religion of the present day is **Humanism**, which is the religion of **faith in man**, or, as someone has said, the religion of **faith in faith**. This exists in various forms, but in all of them humanity rather than God is regarded as the object of religious devotion, loyalty and hope.

#### Questions:

1. Why is it incorrect to say that supernatural revelation is needed only because of sin?

2. What changes took place in religion when mankind fell into sin?

3. What change took place in **true** religion when man fell into sin?

4. What is the first promise of redemption in the Bible? In what book, chapter and verse is it found? Who is the Speaker? Who is addressed? What does the verse mean? How has it been fulfilled?

5. What was the moral character of the period from Adam to Noah? What reason may be assigned why God allowed this?

6. What event in early Bible history marks the point where God's program of redemption began to make rapid progress?

7. What was the main purpose, in God's plan, of the period from Abraham to Christ?

8. What is the main purpose, in God's plan, of the period from Christ to the end of the world?

9. What two forms has the true religion of redemption had in the course of history?

10. Where is the Bible's teaching on the origin and development of false religion most fully stated?

11. What truth about God's attitude to false religion is taught in Romans 1:18?

12. What is the true meaning of the word translated "hold" in Romans 1:18?

13. What two kinds of effects of sin are described in Romans 1 and 2?

14. Which kind is described first? How does this differ from the common order today?

15. What is the Bible's teaching as to the origin of the false religions of the world?

16. What is shown by the old myths of Greece and other nations?

17. How can we explain the immorality of the Greek gods and goddesses?

18. What does the Bible say about idolatry?

19. What is the effect of idolatry on people?

20. What is wrong with the romantic attitude toward pagan religions?

21. What is the outstanding false religious system of the modern world? How can it be shown that it is really a religion?

22. What is humanism? What is its status today?

## LESSON 5

### The Good Elements in False Religions

It is obvious that no religion is wholly false. There are elements of truth in all religions, even though as systems they must be regarded as false. How can this fact be explained?

According to the evolutionary theory of religion, the differences between religions are only a matter of degree. Some religions may be regarded as better than others, but there is no absolute or essential difference between them, it is said. This view of course follows from the notion of a gradual development from the most primitive to the most advanced. All religions are regarded as mixtures of good and bad features, only the proportions of good and bad vary in the different religions.

If we do not accept the evolutionary theory, we must seek another explanation of the good features in the false religions. The Christian explanation is that these good features are products of God's **common grace**. "Common grace" means God's grace given to all people of the world, apart from salvation in the Christian sense. This "common grace" does not save people's souls, but it does have an influence for good on the human level, and it has a restraining effect upon sin and evil. This results in the good features of the various false religious systems of the world.

Moreover, the good in the false religious systems is only a **relative** good. It is not good in the highest sense. Buddhism and Christianity, for example, both teach that it is wrong to steal. As to the formal statement that stealing is wrong, Buddhism and Christianity are identical. But if we go a step further and ask **why** stealing is wrong, the two religions diverge. Christianity teaches that stealing is wrong because it is contrary to the will of God; Buddhism has no such insight.

Again Buddhism and Christianity both teach that it is a duty to relieve the distress of the poor by giving alms or charity. In this respect the two are identical. But when we inquire **why** this is a duty, we again face divergence. The Christian, if properly informed, gives alms to the poor from a motive of love for God. He is expressing his thankfulness to God for grace and salvation received from Him. But the Buddhist has no such motive. His motive is usually a selfish one — to gain a certain amount of spiritual merit or "credit" for himself. His motive is not compassion for the poor, nor love for God, but a desire to obtain personal merit.

For something to be good in the highest sense, according to Christian teaching, three things are necessary: (1) It must be something

required by the will of God; (2) it must be done with a motive of love for God; (3) it must be done by faith. When measured by this test, it will be seen that many of the resemblances between Christianity and the false religious systems are merely formal and superficial, while in the essential content, beneath the surface, there is a wide divergence.

We are discussing elements of good in the false religions, not elements of good in the lives of their adherents. It is certainly true that people may be better than their creed, just as they may be worse than their creed. Some who profess to be Christians are very poor advertisements for Christianity. And some who profess what we regard as false religious systems may exhibit in their lives many good and noble traits.

For example, a man who does not know or love the true God may sacrifice his life in an attempt to save another human being from drowning or from perishing in a burning building. Certainly such an action must be regarded as "good" as contrasted with the opposite action, namely allowing your neighbor to drown or burn to death without making an effort to save his life.

But when we describe such actions as "good" we must remember that this is not the highest kind of goodness. Such actions, and the attitudes that lie back of them, are good in a relative and limited sense. They are good, we might say, on the human level. So long as we are considering only the horizontal dimension of life—our relationships within human society — such actions must be classed as "good." But when we take in the vertical dimension of life, and consider also our relationship and obligation to God, we must say that no attitude or action which disregards Him or which is not done out of love for Him, is truly good in the highest sense.

In considering the various religious systems, we must avoid two extremes. We must avoid the extreme of saying that they are all good and differ only superficially from Christianity, and

we must also avoid the extreme of saying that they are all bad and contain nothing that can truly be called "good." Both extremes are wrong. We should seek to attain a judicial and balanced attitude toward the various religious systems.

When we say that the good features in the false religious systems are "good" only in a relative and limited sense, this is not a reflection on the sincerity of the adherents of those systems. We can regard the people with respect, even when we are compelled to pronounce their beliefs false. The people may be not only sincere in their profession of their religion, but, by the common grace of God, they may in their personal lives be much better than the religion which they profess. But we must remember that this does not amount to salvation in the Christian sense.

#### Questions:

1. According to the evolutionary theory of religion, what is the difference between religions?
2. What is the Christian explanation of the good features in false religions?
3. What is meant by God's common grace, and what effect does it have?
4. Why is the good in false religious systems not good in the highest sense?
5. What is the common motive of the Buddhist who gives alms to the poor?
6. What should be the motive of a Christian in helping the poor and needy?
7. What is necessary for an action to be good in the highest sense?
8. Give an example of something good done by someone who is not a Christian?
9. What two extremes must be avoided in considering the world's religious systems?
10. Why is it not a reflection on people's sincerity to say that the good in non-Christian religions is not good in the highest sense?

## LESSON 6

### The Christian Approach Toward Adherents of the Non-Christian Faiths

Christianity is a missionary religion. It cannot rest satisfied with merely perpetuating itself among its own adherents, but must seek to win all the world to its faith. This missionary aim is based on Christ's "Great Commission" to go into all the world and make disciples of all nations (Matt. 28:18-20). But what should be Christianity's attitude toward the non-Christian faiths? Opinions on this question have varied widely.

One extreme which has existed is to regard all non-Christian faiths as simply the works of

the devil and condemn them absolutely and without reservation. This is an attitude of simple and absolute condemnation, accompanied by a call for repudiation of all non-Christian faiths. In its extreme form, however, this attitude fails to recognize that there are elements of relative good in the non-Christian faiths. While they call for separation from false religions is certainly Biblical, and the demonic character of pagan religions is taught in Scripture (1 Corinthians 10:20, 21; 2 Corinthians 6:14-18), still it is also true that elements of limited, relative good exist in these religions. While it is true that they are demonic

in character, it is also true (and Scriptural) that they are products of man's distorted interpretation of God's revelation in nature. Even though they may be works of the devil, still they are not **simply** works of the devil, but partly products of God's common grace and partly products of sinful man's abuse of God's revelation in nature. True scholarship and sound thinking should always be on guard against too-simple answers to difficult questions and too-simple solutions of baffling problems.

Another attitude may be described as the attitude of co-operation. It regards the proper relationship between Christianity and the non-Christian faiths as an attitude, not of competition or rivalry, but of mutual helpfulness. Christian missionaries and churches are to co-operate with the forces of the non-Christian faiths in a great effort to make this world a better place to live in.

This attitude was exemplified some years ago (in the early 1930's) by the Laymen's Appraisal Commission for Foreign Missions. This organization, after extensive surveys and investigations of the great foreign mission fields in Asia and Africa, published a book entitled **Rethinking Missions**, in which the attitude of co-operation with the non-Christian faiths was advocated. The position taken was that missionaries should not attempt to win converts from the non-Christian faiths. Instead, they should recognize these as allies in the great modern struggle against secularism and irreligion. Thus Christianity was to be soft-pedalled in order to further the cause of "religion."

In practice, the adoption of this proposal would lead to a strong emphasis on the humanitarian aspect of missionary work — such as medical work, agricultural work, social work — and a corresponding lack of emphasis on the evangelistic phase. The aim would not be to win converts but to help the non-Christian faiths and generally to promote the interests of religion rather than to promote Christianity.

The publication of **Rethinking Missions** stirred up a great amount of discussion and controversy at the time. Orthodox Christians and churches generally rejected the principal proposals of the Laymen's Appraisal Commission. It became evident that back of these proposals lay not orthodox Biblical Christianity, but a type of Liberalism which regarded the non-Christian faiths as essentially good and valid.

Another attitude may be described as the round-table attitude. This is exemplified by Dr. E. Stanley Jones' book **Christ at the Round Table**. The idea is that every religion can contribute something to the religious life of man. No doubt the Christian religion can contribute more than others, but all can contribute something. The missionary aim should be, not so much to win converts, as to lead non-Christian people to see the

good points and values in Christianity and to accept these, even though they do not come out and receive baptism.

The late Mr. Gandhi of India was a good example of a non-Christian who nevertheless had come to admire Jesus Christ and had come to accept certain features and values of Christianity. By his own explicit statement, Gandhi was an adherent of Hinduism. He made no claim of being a Christian. Yet he accepted certain elements of Christianity.

Needless to say, such a missionary aim is much easier to attain than that presented in Christ's Great Commission. The adherent of Hinduism or Buddhism can admire Jesus Christ and adopt certain values of Christianity without any special difficulty. But as soon as he comes out openly and receives baptism in obedience to Christ's command, he has to start bearing the cross for Christ's sake. He must endure persecution and reproach for Christ's sake. Dr. Albertus Pieters, a life-long missionary to Japan, says:

"In countries like India or Japan, no one is greatly concerned over the doctrinal belief of another. A son or daughter may say that he or she believes in the Lord Jesus Christ, and may pray or read the Bible at home. Father and mother are usually quite unconcerned about this, and perhaps rather inclined to be pleased with it, especially if, as often happens, this coincides with some improvement in the conduct of the said son or daughter. But let the young person propose to be baptized, and at once the storm breaks. Nothing of the kind can be tolerated, and if it takes place, it not infrequently leads to expulsion from the home and ostracism from all polite society. Mr. Gandhi is at present the idol of all India, and he may praise Jesus Christ to his heart's content; but all India would spit in his face tomorrow if he were baptized." (**Why We Baptize Infants**, page 22; written before the death of Gandhi).

The Biblical aim of missionary work, of course, is not merely to get the non-Christian peoples to appreciate Christianity and adopt some of its teachings and values, but to win them personally to be disciples of Jesus Christ, as He commanded in the Great Commissions.

Still another attitude may be described as the "fulfilment" attitude. According to this idea, the non-Christian religions are good as far as they go, but they are incomplete, and therefore they cannot fully satisfy man's needs, Christianity, it is said, provides something extra which is needed to make them complete. They are regarded as the stones in an arch, which is incomplete until the keystone is put in place at the top of the arch.

Missionaries having this approach will tell the people of China, for example, that Confucian-

ism is fine — it has a noble philosophy and wonderful teachings, but unfortunately it lacks something — it is not complete. They must add Jesus Christ to the teachings of Confucianism. Missionaries with this type of message have been quite popular among the Chinese people. But whether they are loyal to the truth of the Gospel is another question. For this type of approach fails to reckon with the elements of evil and falsehood in the various religions. And these elements of evil are really **dominant**. A faith such as Buddhism or Confucianism is not mostly good, with a few minor faults; it is mostly bad, with a few features that can be called good in a relative sense. As is clearly seen in the Book of Acts, the Apostles of Christ did not represent Christianity as merely the keystone of the religious arch. They called upon people to repent of past false beliefs and to embrace Christianity as the one and only true religion (Acts 17:30; Acts 14:15, 16).

What, then, should be the true missionary aim and attitude to the non-Christian faiths and their adherents? First of all there can be no compromise of the command of Christ to confess Him publicly before men, becoming His disciple and receiving baptism. The person who refuses to take this step and bear the reproach which it involves is simply not a Christian. We may regard him with great sympathy, but we cannot recognize him as a Christian.

It goes without saying that every missionary should be a diligent student of the faith of the people among whom he works. Only by being accurately informed can he present the Christian message effectively. It is not enough that a missionary have a good knowledge of the Bible and of Christian theology. He must also have a good knowledge of the non-Christian faith which exists in his field. He should be familiar with its history, its principles, and its practices and results.

It should go without saying that ridicule, satire and denunciation are not proper methods for a missionary to use in speaking of a non-Christian faith. A sober exposition of the errors or evils of a religious system may be in order, but no man's religious beliefs should be subjected to ridicule.

In past times some missionaries have shown an unfortunate tendency to identify Christianity with European or American culture. This was more common 100 years ago than today, but it still continues in some places. A missionary among American Indians in the U. S. Southwest was heard telling Sabbath School children in New Jersey that we must send missionaries to the Indians, because the little Indian children do not even know how to use a knife and fork when they eat! Some missionaries in the past have

assumed that their converts should adopt European customs and costumes. But the whole idea is a mistake. Christianity is one thing; western culture is another. No doubt the adoption of Christianity in Asia or Africa will produce cultural changes. But it is no part of the missionary task to ask people to copy the cultural pattern of Europe or America. For instance, there is no reason why the Gothic style of architecture should be used for church buildings in China or Japan. We could easily think of numerous other examples.

### Questions

1. Why is Christianity necessarily a missionary religion?
2. What should be the Christian attitude toward governments which prohibit Christian work among non-Christians (I. e., seeking to limit evangelization and Christian education to those already professing to be Christians)?
3. Why is it incorrect to say that pagan religions are simply works of the devil?
4. What attitude toward non-Christian faiths was advocated by the Laymen's Appraisal Commission for Foreign Missions?
5. What would be the long-term result of general adoption of the proposals of the book **Re-thinking Missions**?
6. What is meant by the "round table" attitude toward non-Christian faiths? How may this attitude be criticized?
7. What was Gandhi's attitude toward Christianity?
8. What did Dr. Albertus Pieters say about Gandhi's attitude toward Christianity?
9. What is the "fulfillment" attitude toward non-Christian faiths? How does this attitude fall short of the Bible's teaching?
10. What should be thought of a person who refuses to receive baptism?
11. Why should every missionary be a diligent student of the faith of the people in his field?
12. Why is ridicule not a proper method of dealing with the errors of a false religion?
13. What is meant by identifying Christianity with American or European culture? Why is it wrong to make this identification? What harm may result from doing so?

## LESSON 7

## Hinduism, the Major Religion of India

Throughout its long history, the great sub-continent of India has been quite fertile in producing religious ideas and systems. In general, the people of India have been pre-occupied with the things of the mind and the spirit, regarding material things as of minor importance, if not actually unreal. Indian religion has sought union with the real and eternal beyond what is regarded as the illusory and transitory world of matter and the senses.

India was early inhabited by dark-skinned aborigines. About the time that the Israelites were undergoing oppression in Egypt (1500 B. C.) India was invaded from the northwest by people known as Aryans. These Aryans were closely related to the ancient Persians, who appear in Old Testament history. They spoke a language related to Latin, Greek and most of the languages of Europe. They were a cattle-herding people, and possessed horses, sheep, goats and dogs. Gradually they dominated most of India, reducing the earlier inhabitants to a subordinate status. This was the beginning of the rigid social class structure of India, called the "caste system."

The oldest religious book of India is the Rig-Veda, a book of hymns or praises. The word "Veda" means "knowledge," and comes from the same root as the English words "wit," and "wisdom." The Rig-Veda contains over a thousand hymns. It was first written down in the eighth century before Christ — about the time of Isaiah in the Bible — but the hymns are much older than that. The religion of the Rig-Veda is a polytheistic (having many gods) kind of nature-worship, with gods of the sky, storms, war, sun and others. This religion was essentially similar to the early religion of the Greeks and the Romans, who were, indeed, remote kin of the ancient Aryans of India. It was also more or less similar to the ancient heathen religion of our own ancestors in northern Europe and the British Isles.

Though the early religion of the Indo-Aryans was an unsophisticated polytheism, Hinduism moved more and more in the direction of **pantheism** — the idea that only God exists, and all is God. The religious outlook of the Rig-Veda is optimistic and cheerful, but Hinduism became more and more pessimistic as time passed, until it became almost totally pessimistic about human life and the world of sense experience.

Among the important later religious books of India are the Upanishads, which come from about 700-300 B. C. The name means "sittings near a teacher." These books raise the question, What is reality? They grapple with the problems of the meaning of human life and of the world.

Is the world of everyday life real, or is it only an illusion? It is the expression of something invisible which is truly real? And how did human life and experience come to be?

The answer given to these questions is that the only true reality is a being called Brahma. Brahma is regarded as impersonal, though some of the later writings seem to ascribe a kind of personality to Brahma. Brahma is self-existent, infinite, omnipresent, and real, while the physical universe is unreal, a mere illusion. By profound meditation the Hindu mystics sought union with Brahma, the truly real. Such a state would be the highest possible spiritual experience; it would be beyond all ordinary consciousness in which a person is aware of external objects and of his own thoughts.

A prominent idea of Hinduism is **reincarnation**, sometimes called "transmigration of souls." The most desirable outcome of death, from the Hindu viewpoint, would be the absorption of the human personality into Brahma. This, however, is not the ordinary outcome of death. The person who dies is re-born and lives another life, either on this earth, or in one of several heavens or hells. The life into which the soul is re-born may be human, or it may be vegetable, animal, or even insect life.

What kind of life the person is re-born to depends on the working of the law of Karma (the word means "deeds"). The totality of a man's deeds during his life determines the kind of re-birth he will have after death. The ordinary person must face the dismal prospect of thousands of re-births, most if not all of these being to a life of misery and suffering. This belief has cast a pall of unhappiness and pessimism over the emotional life of the people of India. Theirs was a religion almost without hope.

Belief in Brahma as the only reality tended to cut the nerve of individual human initiative, and fostered a fatalistic attitude on the part of the people. It also tended to undermine the moral life of man, for if the world and the individual human life are after all unreal, there can scarcely be any strong motivation against evil and for righteousness. Belief in the law of Karma induced deep depression in thoughtful people, although the common people, being absorbed in the endless task of earning a living, were not so deeply affected by it.

At a later period Hinduism became somewhat more practical. Today Hinduism recognizes three ways of salvation, namely, (1) The Way of Works, (2) The Way of Knowledge, and (3) The Way of Devotion.

The Way of Works prescribes sacrifices to the gods, study of the Vedas, begetting of offspring for the benefit of the spirits of one's ancestors, and extending hospitality to one's fellow men. These good works would add merit to the person's karma, so that the next re-birth might be a better one rather than the contrary. Besides the good works mentioned above, there are numerous others of a legalistic nature. It is believed that a widow who remarries will be re-born as a jackal. To millions of people in India these barren works represent their only hope and comfort.

The Way of Knowledge is based on the Upanishads. According to this view, ignorance is the cause of human misery and all evil. Especially the kind of ignorance that consists in believing in one's real, individual existence apart from Brahma, the all. Man's individual life, it is held, is like a drop of water dashed up by an ocean wave, which presently falls back into the ocean again and loses forever its apparent individual identity. The Way of Knowledge seeks salvation by the attainment of insight or intuition following deep meditation.

The Way of Devotion consists in loving and worshipping a particular god or goddess. This "way of salvation" appealed to many people for whom the Way of Knowledge was too intellectual. It also appealed to the people's religious nature in a way that the barren, legalistic Way of Works could not. Hence the Way of Devotion has been immensely influential in Hinduism. And it naturally has fostered idolatry, for the devotion is not to the true God but to the gods and goddesses of Hinduism. There are many gods and goddesses in Hinduism. Among the greatest are Shiva, the Destroyer, and Vishnu, the Preserver.

The common man may know very little of Hindu philosophy and theology, and usually worships the gods in a traditional and uncritical manner. There are pilgrimages to holy places, especially the sacred river Ganges, which is held to flow from the feet of the god Vishnu in heaven.

There have been efforts to purify Hinduism of idolatry and to combine it with the teachings of Jesus, as well as to abolish some of the notorious evils such as suttee (burning of widows), child marriage and polygamy. While this movement has had some influence it has not changed the character of Hinduism on any large scale. Christian missions, modern secularism, western science, communism and modern communications have all affected India and its people. Yet Hinduism remains essentially unchanged, and also dominant. There are however prominent leaders in India who seek human betterment rather than absorption of personality in the all

as their goal. What the future will be, no one can say.

How shall we appraise Hinduism from the Christian standpoint? In the first place, it is obvious that at its best Hinduism is a serious, earnest effort to come to grips with some of the problems of human existence. It affords a very clear example of the helplessness of human thought apart from special divine revelation. The human mind is darkened by sin and after the most earnest reflection it arrives at false answers. Among many other things, Hinduism is lacking in:

1. A belief in a personal, almighty God, creator and ruler of all things, who is Himself distinct from the universe.
2. A belief in the doctrine of creation, which is basic to any true understanding of the universe.
3. A true conception of moral obligation, or moral law.
4. An adequate and true conception of human sinfulness and guilt. It seeks to save from unreality rather than from moral evil.
5. A Saviour who gave Himself as a sacrifice to atone for the sins of men, died and rose again.
6. A true belief in personal immortality and eternal life.

The real hope of India, we may properly conclude, lies not in reforms or adaptations of Hinduism, nor in missionary work of the "social gospel" type, but in the clear, faithful proclamation of the true God, the Holy Bible, and Jesus Christ and Him crucified as the only salvation of sinners — the Way, the Truth and the Life, without whom none can come to God.

#### Questions:

1. What has been the predominant attitude or tendency of Indian religion?
2. About when did the Aryans enter India? What was going on in Bible history at that same time?
3. What resulted from the contact of the Aryans with the earlier people of India?
4. What is the oldest religious book of India? When was it written? What is its character?
5. What was the nature of the early religion of the Aryans of India?
6. What is meant by saying that the tendency of Indian religion has been from polytheism to pantheism?
7. What are the Upanishads? What problems do they deal with?

8. What is the nature of Brahma according to Indian thought?

9. Describe the Hindu belief in reincarnation.

10. What is the meaning of the word "Karma"?

11. What is the effect of belief in Karma on the ordinary person in India?

12. What three "ways of salvation" are recognized in Hinduism?

13. How has it been attempted to purify or reform Hinduism?

14. What does Hinduism show as to the limitations of the sin-darkened human mind?

15. Name six cardinal truths which Hinduism lacks, but which are found in Christianity.

## LESSON 8

### Buddhism, the Quest for Escape from Misery

Buddhism, the most important religion of Asia, originated in India, although there are very few Buddhists in India today. It began in the sixth century before Christ — about the time of Daniel and the Babylonian Captivity in the Bible. A son named Siddhartha Gautama was born in 560 B. C. to a chief or petty king of a district in northern India. While still in his 'teens he married a "princess." According to legend, his father tried to shield him from all contact with sadness, sickness and death. But one day the young man rode forth and saw in succession a feeble old man, a sick man, a corpse and an ascetic monk. According to some forms of the story these were seen on different days. Gautama resolved to leave his home and follow the life of an ascetic monk. This is called "The Great Renunciation." He took one last look at his sleeping wife and infant son, and rode away into the night. For six years he sought salvation by extreme asceticism or self-mortification. So severe was his self-denial that he almost died of starvation. At the end of six years he was bitterly disappointed, for he had found no spiritual enlightenment or peace of soul.

Following this disappointment, Gautama renounced his extreme asceticism as a failure. Five disciples who had been his companions thereupon left him. Sometime later Gautama had an experience which is called "The Great Enlightenment." This came to him while he was sitting under a tree called the Bo (knowledge) Tree. The insight which came to him was that the real source of human misery and unhappiness is **desire**. If one could only rid himself of all desire, he would have spiritual peace. The way to Nirvana would then be open. (Nirvana means the loss of all individual consciousness and existence by absorption in the impersonal all).

Following this experience Gautama was called "the Buddha" (the Enlightened One). Strictly speaking, "Buddha" is a title, not a personal name, but it is often used as a name. Buddha was tempted to keep his newly found secret to himself, but he overcame this temptation and resolved to share his insight with the world. His five disciples returned to him, becoming the

first Buddhist converts, to be followed in later ages by countless millions of souls.

Buddha founded an order of monks. He went about northern India preaching his new doctrine. He issued ten precepts, which are: 1. Refrain from destroying life. 2. Do not steal. 3. Do not be unchaste. 4. Do not be untruthful. 5. Abstain from intoxicants. 6. Eat in moderation, and not after noon. 7. Avoid viewing dancing, listening to singing, and seeing dramatic performances. 8. Use no garland, perfumes, jewelry or cosmetics. 9. Do not sleep on broad or high beds. 10. Do not accept gold or silver.

All ten of these precepts were to be kept by the monks, but the lay members of the Buddhist religion need keep only the first five.

Gautama Buddha finally died, of food poisoning, at the age of 80 years, after 45 years of active work in the promotion of the Buddhist faith.

Unlike many of the great thinkers of India, Buddha had no interest in speculative philosophical problems. He was interested, rather, in what is today called psychology, and he sought a psychological remedy for man's troubles. He held that man's basic trouble does not lie in his thinking but in his emotions, especially in his desires when they are not strictly controlled. He did not believe in any real God, and held that prayer is utterly useless. The Vedas and the priestly rituals of India he pronounced to be worthless.

Buddhism as taught by Gautama Buddha is pure atheism, and it is absolute self-salvation. Man is saved, not by God or the gods, but by a strict regimen of psychological self-culture. Therefore in the strictest sense, man is his own saviour. This is nothing more nor less than religious humanism. Man saves himself by his own powers and efforts intelligently directed toward ridding himself of desire.

Buddha took over the Hindu doctrine of Karma, but he modified it. Where Hinduism looked for thousands of re-births, Buddha held that it is possible to escape from the law of

Karma in one individual lifetime. This means that it is possible in a single lifetime to reach the end of the chain, so that there will be no re-birth.

Buddha taught the duty of love for all men. But it must be impersonal, a love for mankind in general, not for any particular person or persons. Further, he outlined "The Four Noble Truths" and "The Eightfold Path" as the way of salvation, by which the serious Buddhist can escape the otherwise endless process of re-birth. The "Four Noble Truths" are:

1. The Noble Truth of Suffering.
2. The Noble Truth of the Cause of Suffering: Desire.
3. The Noble Truth of the Cessation of Suffering: It ceases when desire comes to an end.
4. The Noble Truth of the Eightfold Path which leads to the Cessation of Suffering.

The Eightfold Path is:

1. Right belief. 2. Right purpose. 3. Right speech. 4. Right conduct. 5. Right means of livelihood. 6. Right effort. 7. Right thinking (controlled thoughts). 8. Right meditation or absorption, which assures entrance upon Nirvana at death.

Though Gautama was really a psychologist who did not believe in God, after his death people began to worship him, deriving comfort more from Buddha as a person than from his difficult teachings. He came to be regarded as "the compassionate" as well as "the enlightened one."

Buddhism spread rapidly after the death of Buddha. In the first three centuries there were no less than sixteen different sects or denominations of the Buddhist faith. A king in India named Asoka who reigned about 250 B. C. spread Buddhism far and wide, sending Buddhist missionaries to the island of Ceylon and even as far as to Syria, Egypt and Greece.

The Buddhism of Southern Asia — Ceylon, Burma, Thailand (Siam), Cambodia — is called Hinayana Buddhism. The word "Hinayana" means "Lesser Vehicle." This type of Buddhism is closest to the original teachings of Gautama Buddha. It holds that Buddha has entered Nirvana and no longer exists as a human individual — he is beyond all becoming and ceasing to be. This southern Buddhism emphasizes salvation through strict self-discipline and self-culture, as taught by Buddha. It has also acquired some religious features, such as reverence for relics of the Buddha.

The temples of Hinayana Buddhism contain immense images of Buddha. In theory these are merely statues, but in actual practice they are

idols, and the ordinary Buddhist worships them. The common people believe that prayers offered before these images will be answered.

The other great form of Buddhism is called Mahayana Buddhism ("Mahayana" means "Greater Vehicle"). This originated somewhat later, about the time of Christ. In this new form of Buddhism psychological self-culture is no longer the main thing. It has been replaced by distinctly religious ideas and features. Gautama Buddha himself is worshipped as divine; it is held that he came to earth to help suffering mankind. Many myths grew up around the person of Buddha. It came to be held that Gautama was not the only Buddha, but one of many, some of which came to this earth, while others remained in heaven. Salvation was no longer regarded as completely a matter of self-discipline, for it was held that there are divine beings with boundless reserves of merit which they will gladly bestow on needy, suffering men.

Mahayana Buddhism proved immensely popular in Northern Asia. It grew and prospered in China, Korea and Japan. It is the most idolatrous form of Buddhism, worshipping great numbers of divine and semi-divine beings. There are said to be whole classes of divine and semi-divine saviours for mankind. At the heart of the universe is a Buddha-essence or "love-behind-things-that-produces-Buddhas." This Buddha-nature is in every man, and can be fostered and cultivated.

The most extreme form of Buddhism is called Lamaism. This is the Buddhism of Tibet and Mongolia, which believes in a "Lama" as a living reincarnation of the Buddha.

A Christian scholar has called Buddhism "the will-o-the-wisp of the Far East." This system, in one form or another, has gained an amazingly strong grip on many, many millions of people in the world's largest and most populous continent. How shall we account for the success of Buddhism? Perhaps by noting that Buddhism addresses itself to a very real and universal human problem—the problem of pain or suffering. Where people do not have the Lord Jesus Christ and His salvation, Buddhism is the best they know. It certainly provides a kind of peace and calm to distressed minds and hearts. The suffering and anguish of the millions of Asia is past comprehension of people who have lived all their life in Europe or America. The strength of Buddhism is in its seeming promise of relief from endless misery. But, alas, it is a false promise and can only bring disillusionment in the end.

For Buddhism, in spite of its appealing features, is essentially a false system. First of all, Buddhism is concerned about the wrong problem—it starts with the problem of suffering, not with the problem of sin or moral evil which is the

real cause of suffering. Christianity preaches salvation from sin, Buddhism proclaims relief from suffering.

Secondly, Buddhism has no clear and true idea of God. And without knowing the true God man can never have real peace. As the great Augustine said, "Thou hast made us for Thyself, and our heart is restless until it rests in Thee." In its original form Buddhism is an atheistic psychological discipline; in its later forms it is polytheistic and idolatrous beyond all limits. Of the living and true God it knows nothing.

Thirdly, Buddhism has essentially false views of salvation and of human destiny. It is without Jesus Christ and His atoning blood. It has many "saviours" but lacks the true Saviour of sinful mankind. And Buddhism regards man's ultimate destiny as extinction of individual personality by absorption in the ocean of Nirvana. It is here that its difference from Christianity is most clearly seen. According to Buddhism, the continuation of individual human life and consciousness is an evil to be rescued from. Non-existence is the ideal goal. But according to Christianity, human life is the good gift of God, and an individual human life was created to live forever. The individual life can be purified of selfish and evil desires, and all pure and holy desires shall be satisfied, fully and forever. Thus where Buddhism seeks the extinction of desire, Christianity envisions the satisfaction of desire on a higher plane. Buddha promised suffering men Nirvana, but Jesus Christ said, "I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly." Christ brings, not the vanishing of life but the fulfilment of life.

#### Questions:

1. When and where did Gautama Buddha live?
2. What, according to legend, induced him to become a monk?
3. What was "The Great Renunciation?"

4. What was the result of Gautama's six years of self-denial?
5. What was "The Great Enlightenment?"
6. What temptation did Buddha overcome?
7. What are the Ten Precepts enunciated by Buddha?
8. What is the essential character of Buddhism as taught by Gautama Buddha himself?
9. What change did Gautama Buddha make in the Hindu doctrine of Karma?
10. What did Buddha teach about love for mankind?
11. What are "The Four Noble Truths"?
12. What attitude did the Buddhists adopt toward Gautama Buddha after his death?
13. To what countries did the Indian king Asoka send Buddhist missionaries?
14. What is Hinayana Buddhism? In what countries does it exist?
15. What is the attitude of the ordinary Buddhist to the images of Buddha in the temples?
16. How is Mahayana Buddhism different from Hinayana Buddhism?
17. In what countries did Mahayana Buddhism prosper?
18. What is the special belief held by Lamaism? In what countries is it the dominant form of Buddhism?
19. How can we account for the success of Buddhism?
20. Explain what is meant by saying that Buddhism starts with the wrong problem.
21. What is wrong with the Buddhist idea of God?
22. How does the Buddhist idea of human destiny stand in contrast to the Christian view of eternal life?

## LESSON 9

### Confucianism, China's Form of Faith in Man

When Siddhartha Gautama, who later became the Buddha, was a boy of nine or ten years old, a child was born far away in northern China who was also destined to have an immense influence on later generations. The time was about 551 B.C.—the time of Daniel in the Bible. The place was the old province of Lu in the Shantung peninsula. The family name was K'ung. ("Confucius" is a Latinized form of K'ung-fu-tzu, which means "Master K'ung"). His father died while Confucius was still in his infancy. His mother made sacrifices so that her son could get

an education. He studied under a village tutor, taking up poetry and music. He learned to play the lute and sing old Chinese songs. When he was fifteen years of age he became more seriously interested in his studies and decided to devote himself to the life of a scholar. He was also fond of hunting, fishing and archery. It is recorded that in these sports he always maintained a gentleman's attitude of good sportsmanship.

Before Confucius was twenty he entered upon

government service, becoming a tax collector in his native province. This position he resigned after his mother's death. After over two years of mourning for his mother, he became a private teacher, instructing pupils in such subjects as literature, history, political science, music and divination. Soon he had a circle of disciples, some of whom admired him greatly and remained with him for many years. His aim was that his good pupils should accept high political office, in order to effect needed reform in Chinese society.

At the age of fifty he is said to have become a cabinet official under the Duke of Lu, finally rising to the post of Prime Minister. His conduct of government business was so honest and incorruptible that he began to have political enemies. Finding it impossible to continue in this post without compromise of his high ideals, he resigned.

Following this Confucius became a wandering free-lance teacher and political expert. It was his hope to find a government position where his counsels would really be taken seriously and put into practice, but he found none. Sometimes he was persecuted, and on one occasion he was actually jailed. At the age of 67 he came home to the province of Lu, where he spent his last years in retirement. He died in 479 B.C. at the age of 73 years, expressing deep discouragement at the apparent failure of his life's work. His disciples found him saying over and over to himself:

"The great mountain must crumble,  
The strong beam must break,  
The wise man must wither away like a plant."

To his disciples he said: "No intelligent ruler arises to take me as his master. My time has come to die." A week later he died quietly, without prayer, without expectation of immortality, and apparently without fears.

Our main sources for the teachings of Confucius are **The Five Classics** and **The Four Books**. The former writings are partly by Confucius himself, and perhaps partly from before his time. **The Four Books** contain teachings and sayings of Confucius recorded by his disciples, though they also contain a good deal of material from later than the time of Confucius. The modern Western reader of these ancient Chinese writings finds in them some sage, common-sense wisdom, together with a good deal that seems boringly repetitious and even trivial. It is remarkable, however, that in the entire body of the Chinese Classics there is not a single sentence that could not be read without embarrassment in any company. This is in sharp contrast to much literature coming down from the ancient world.

Confucius regarded himself as a transmitter of the values of the past, not a creator or in-

novator. He said "I believe in and have a passion for the Ancients." "I am not a born wise man. I am merely one in love with ancient studies and work very hard to learn them."

Confucius regarded the China of his day as decadent and corrupt, but not beyond the hope of reform. He held that the reason for China's troubles was that men had failed to live according to the teachings of antiquity. He placed stress on the term "li" (pronounced "lee"), which is variously translated as "propriety," "courtesy," "correct forms," "due order of ceremony." Lin Yutang, a present day Chinese scholar, defines "li" as "An ideal social order with everything in its place, and particularly a rationalized feudal order, like that which was breaking down in Confucius' days."

He taught that there are five basic human relationships, which must be adjusted and maintained according to the teachings of antiquity. These five relationships are: 1. Ruler and subject. 2. Father and son. 3. Husband and wife. 4. Oldest son to younger brothers. 5. Elders to younger persons. These social relationships can be rectified by the practice of "li", resulting in social harmony. Confucius really believed that the ancient Chinese had attained this social ideal. Unquestionably he idealized "the good old days," which must have been very different from his nostalgic picture of them. His great aim in life was to call China back to the glories and perfections of the past.

On one occasion Confucius came near to enunciating the Golden Rule, but with a great difference from the Golden Rule as stated by Jesus, for Confucius stated the Golden Rule **negatively** whereas Jesus stated it **positively**. Confucius taught men not to do to others what they would not want others to do to them.

Confucius had a shallow, optimistic view of human nature. He had no inkling of the real sinfulness and corruption of the human heart. He held that mankind is good at heart, and that people only need wise instruction to make them what they ought to be. He said: "If rulers are good and just, the people will be virtuous and obedient." He held that reform must begin at the top of society, among the ruling class. Starting with the Emperor, it penetrates down to the humblest citizen of China. Each class will be good and virtuous if the class above it sets a good and virtuous example.

Besides being anti-Biblical, Confucius' view of human nature is psychologically unrealistic and superficial. The factors that make human conduct what it is are not by any means as simple and elementary as he supposed. Confucius, of course, knew nothing of modern psychology. He was totally unaware of the influence of the unconscious mind on man's con-

duct. But even in his own day, Buddhism, though itself a false system, had a more penetrating and less superficial analysis of what is wrong with humanity.

Holding that the human problem is basically intellectual rather than moral, Confucius sought to make people virtuous by enlightenment. But he gave no answer to the questions: "Why should people want to be virtuous?" "What makes a person begin to want to be virtuous?" He left these problems hanging in the air, apparently not even realizing that they existed.

Confucius had no real faith in God or even in the heathen gods — when questioned about such matters he was non-committal or agnostic. He recommended observing customary religious ritual, without committing himself as to the real existence of gods or spirits. When asked about death, he replied that we do not yet understand life, and how can we know about death?

His basic attitude toward religion was rationalistic and humanistic. He valued only what could be shown to serve some social purpose; that is, he regarded religion as a means to a human end — which is just another way of saying that he was not a religious man.

After Confucius' death his teachings had their ups and downs, finally being proclaimed as the official faith of China by the emperor Wu Ti, about 136 B.C. Following this the Confucian scholars were put in charge of government-sponsored education, beginning two thousand years of training the governing classes of China in Confucian thinking. In the course of time there arose a tendency to regard the dead Confucius as divine, and to accord him religious worship.

The Confucian idea of "filial piety" became the main structure of the social order of China. Under Confucianism the first loyalty of a Chinese is to his family, and this means his parents and his ancestors. No man who has a father or older brother living is regarded as of age or free to act independently, and no woman is ever free to act independently — she is always subject to her father, her husband or her son. China has greatly exaggerated filial piety and has claimed wonderful benefits from it, far beyond the real facts. However, it has certainly been a stabilizing force in Chinese society.

The influence of Confucianism on China has been to condition the people to a backward rather than a forward look. All the emphasis was on the teachings of antiquity. Confucianism's agnosticism concerning God and the supernatural, together with its easy-going optimism about the moral condition of the human personality, have fostered in the people of China a hard-headed indifference to religious truths and values,

coupled with a superficial, complacent attitude toward moral or ethical problems. The ideal Confucianist is a gentleman according to the prescribed rules, but he has never come to grips with the evil in the human heart, and he is quite indifferent to the spiritual and eternal dimensions of human life; the supreme need for a right relationship to God does not impress him as a practical matter. He is concerned about the human, not the divine; about the here and now, not the hereafter.

Communism, which dominates the Chinese mainland today, is the direct contradiction of almost everything that Confucianism has stood for, even though perhaps the materialism of both systems may seem to constitute a common ground. But Confucianism is essentially aristocratic, with little room for democracy and certainly none for what Mao Tzu-tung has called "the democratic dictatorship of the people." Whether Confucianism will have sufficient vitality to rise again from its present low condition, only the future can show.

To summarize the faults of Confucianism from the Christian standpoint: it lacks any idea of the true God; in place of divine revelation its standard is the teachings of the ancients; it is without any true conception of human sinfulness and guilt, and of the way of salvation; its easy optimism about human nature fosters complacency and spiritual pride; its backward look has prevented normal human progress; its lack of any clear view of a future life has made it entirely a this-worldly faith; and the superficial, stereotyped character of its ethical teachings has made it very difficult for the Chinese people to come to any real conviction of sin when the Christian Gospel is proclaimed to them.

#### Questions:

1. When and where was Confucius born? What was going on in Bible history at about this time?
2. Describe the early life and education of Confucius.
3. What was Confucius' first government position? Why did he give it up?
4. What was the highest government post ever held by Confucius? Why did he resign this position?
5. How did Confucius spend the remaining years of his life?
6. What are our main sources for Confucius' teachings?
7. What was Confucius' belief as to the cause of China's troubles?
8. What is the meaning of the Chinese term "li"?

9. What are the five basic human relationships, according to Confucius?

10. What was Confucius' attitude toward the remote past?

11. What is the difference between the Golden Rule as stated by Confucius, and the Golden Rule as given by Jesus?

12. How, according to Confucius, must social reform start?

13. Wherein was Confucius' view of human nature unbiblical?

14. Why was Confucius' view of human nature psychologically unrealistic and superficial?

15. What basic questions did Confucius neither ask nor answer?

16. What was Confucius' attitude toward religious worship?

17. What was his attitude with regard to the existence of God?

18. When and by whom was Confucianism made the official faith of China?

19. How did Confucianism come to influence the ruling classes?

20. What is the meaning of "Filial Piety" according to Confucianism?

21. What characteristics of the Chinese people have been fostered by special emphasis of Confucianism?

22. What is the contrast between Confucianism and Communism?

23. What are the special faults of Confucianism from the standpoint of Biblical Christianity?

## LESSON 10

### Shinto, the Deification of Japan

The word **Shinto** means literally "Divine Way" or "Way of the Gods." The form **Shintoism** is sometimes found, but Shinto is more correct, for the **to** in Shinto means "way" and is therefore roughly equivalent to "ism." In this lesson we shall use the term Shinto.

Shinto is typically Japanese, and is unknown except among the Japanese people. It is rooted in ancient Japanese mythology. According to the old myth, a god and a goddess, Izanagi and Izanami, created the Japanese islands and the people of Japan. In bathing himself, Izanagi washed some dirt out of his left eye and thus produced Amaterasu, the sun goddess, most important of all Japanese divinities. The grandson of Amaterasu was Ni-ni-gi, whom she sent to rule on earth. The great-grandson of Ni-ni-gi was Jimmu Tenno, the first human emperor of Japan, whose date is given as 660 B.C. Thus, according to the myth, the historical line of Japanese emperors is directly descended from Amaterasu, the sun goddess.

Essentially, Shinto consists in according a religious quality or value to Japan — the islands, the people, the emperor being regarded as having a divine character which makes them unique among nations of the world and requires that they be regarded with religious veneration. Shinto, therefore, is the deification of Japan.

The Japanese people have mixed racial origins — partly from the Asiatic mainland and partly from south Pacific islands. These two racial strains — the one of Mongolian type and the other of Malayan type — combined in the Japanese islands to form the historical Japanese people. The earlier population of Japan, the light-skinned Ainu, were displaced and driven northward to the island of Hokkaido.

In the fifth century after Christ Japan came under Chinese influence, the civilization and culture of China being much more ancient than that of Japan. As a result of Chinese influence, Confucian ethics, filial piety and ancestor worship were largely adopted by the Japanese. In the next century Buddhism reached Japan from China, and after a period of resistance it soon found a hearty acceptance. Buddhism became so popular that Shinto was almost submerged by the flood of Buddhist propaganda. In the 17th century after Christ (the time of Cromwell and the Westminster Assembly in England, and of the colonization of Massachusetts Bay in America), there occurred a strong revival of pure Shinto. This led to increased emphasis on the idea that the emperor is a direct descendant of Amaterasu, the sun goddess.

Moto-ori, who has been rated as the greatest scholar in all the history of Japan, asserted the divine descent of the emperor, and held that Japan should be ranked high above all other nations. The foreign nations should rightly acknowledge the supremacy of Japan and pay tribute to the emperor. Moto-ori also opposed the tendency to borrow ethical teachings from Confucianism, this being a foreign (Chinese) system.

Japan had been largely isolated from contact with the rest of the world, but this isolation was broken by the American Admiral Perry in 1853. The Japanese decided to make their country great as a military power by modernizing and industrializing it — something which was accomplished with amazing energy and speed.

In 1868 there was a political change, called the Restoration of 1868, by which the "Shogun" who had been holding power and had negotiated with Admiral Perry, abolished his own office.

The emperor thus became the supreme ruler in fact as well as in name. Soon after 1868 the Emperor Meiji made Shinto the official state religion of Japan. A Constitution adopted in 1889 "granted" religious freedom, but this could not be real freedom as long as Shinto held the privileged place of the state religion of Japan.

As western ideas, including Christianity but especially western science and philosophy increasingly influenced Japan, many people lost their former naive faith in Shinto with its ancient mythology. The Japanese Government sought to meet this threat by reinterpreting the Shinto myths, representing the gods and goddesses as human beings possessing special gifts and powers. The Government sought to use Shinto to mold the thinking and attitudes of the Japanese people.

In 1882 an official separation was made between "Sect Shinto" and "Shrine Shinto." "Sect Shinto" was declared to be a religion, on the same basis as Buddhism, Christianity or any other religion. But "Shrine Shinto" or "State Shinto" was officially declared to be non-religious, and participation in its rites was declared to be the patriotic duty of all Japanese. In 1911 the Government went further and ordered that school teachers must take their pupils in a body to the local "State Shinto" shrine to perform obeisance. Also school pupils were required to bow before the emperor's portrait daily, which caused deep concern to Christians. The Government insisted that these various practices were "non-religious" and merely patriotic. We may comment that patriotism in a nation which regards itself as divine cannot be "merely patriotic" but inevitably partakes of the nature of religious devotion if it is expressed in ways which imply recognition of the divine character of the nation.

More than one hundred thousand shrines were set apart as "State Shinto" shrines by the Japanese Government. These shrines were served by sixteen thousand priests, appointed and paid by the Japanese Government. These priests were to conduct the "non-religious" rites of State Shinto. These shrines were made national property and thus separated from the "Sect Shinto" system. They remained, however, definitely shrines of the Shinto faith, with unmistakable Shinto features and practices.

The Japanese word for "shrine" means "god house." The shrines are often of great beauty and attractiveness. Made of natural, unpainted wood, the shrine is set in a park of fine trees, carefully fenced in, with a single entrance surmounted by a "torii" or ceremonial gateway. The whole atmosphere of the shrine and its surroundings is one of silent, awesome mystery, the immense, old trees adding a sense of almost timeless antiquity.

The worshipper approaches the shrine after cleansing his hands and mouth, claps his hands to

draw the attention of the gods to his presence, bows, presents an offering of food or cloth, prays silently, bows again, and departs solemnly and quietly.

Inside the shrine is kept a *shintai* ("god body") — some sacred object carefully treasured but seldom or never seen. This is regarded as symbolic of the spiritual reality which the shrine exists to honor. It may be a mirror, an old sword, a piece of ancient manuscript, or even a rock or stone. The more ignorant among the people regard this "god body" as divine and actually pray to it. Others, more sophisticated in their outlook, regard the "god body" as having power to bring good luck, or as a mere symbol of some great man or men of the ancient past.

The most important of the State Shinto shrines is the one located at Ise on the southern shore of the main island, near the Inland Sea — a region of great natural beauty. This shrine is devoted to the worship of Amaterasu, the sun goddess. From ancient times it has been a place of pilgrimage of devout and loyal Japanese people. Before 1945 the Japanese emperors would either worship at the Ise shrine in person, or would send a special imperial messenger to the shrine.

Beginning with the invasion of China in 1931 the militaristic party which controlled the Japanese Government actively promoted the Shinto mythology and ideology through all sorts of means of propaganda, especially the elementary and secondary schools. What was originally and in its true meaning a nature myth now was vigorously promoted as a support for the idea that it was the divine destiny of Japan to conquer and rule other nations — ultimately to rule the whole world.

The real meaning of State Shinto as promoted by the militarists during the period 1931-1945 was the **deification and worship of the Japanese State**. The Shinto myths about the sun goddess, etc., served as supports for this state-worship, which was somewhat similar in essential meaning to the absolutizing of the State under Hitler and the Nazis in Germany at the same period. Conscientious Christians were greatly troubled by this program in Japan, and their freedom was seriously infringed by the requirements of a Government headed toward World War II. All this promotion of Shinto by the militarist-dominated Government, it must be remembered, was declared to be "non-religious" and only patriotism.

State Shinto was abolished by the Allied Occupation in Japan under General Douglas MacArthur in 1945. The official bond between the Japanese Government and the shrine system was broken, and the "State Shinto" shrines became dependent on private offerings and generosity for their support. They are still being frequented by throngs of Japanese people, even though they are no longer officially sanctioned by the Government.

At the same time that State Shinto was abolished, true and complete religious liberty was established in Japan for the first time in the nation's history. As Professor John Young has aptly remarked, freedom was Christendom's gift to conquered Japan. This freedom has continued officially to the present time, though today there are some signs on the horizon indicating the danger of a possible return to the former government sponsorship of various features of the Shinto system. The Emperor has disclaimed divinity, but the Shinto ideology is deeply rooted in the minds of the Japanese people, and some turn of events may spark a return to the old State Shinto system. On the other hand, Communist propaganda is seriously active in Japan and there is a real possibility that the nation may turn Red. Either of these outcomes would be most tragic from the Christian standpoint. We should not forget to pray for the continuance of true freedom in Japan.

Besides the now-abolished State Shinto, there has been "Sect Shinto" and Shinto in the homes of the people. Most Japanese homes have a "god-shelf" bearing paper or wood tablets with the name of a god or some ancestor. Offerings may be placed before the god-shelf, and devotions are supposed to be performed there daily, though they may be extremely brief and simple in character. The religious life of the people includes beliefs and practices of Buddhism as well as of Shinto.

What shall be said of Shinto from the Christian standpoint? First of all, the ancient myths, like those of other nations, are filled with fantastic features and are unworthy of being taken seriously. The attempt to reinterpret the myths in the interest of Japanese national greatness is a rationalization which disregards their true character — in reality the old myths are chiefly ancient people's response to the mysterious forces of nature. The whole complex of the divinity of Japan — her emperor, islands and people, and her alleged destiny to rule the world — is simply false. It is not only an extreme form of idolatry which robs the true God of the honor which is His alone, but it is a flat contradiction of the Biblical truth and scientific fact that mankind is a single natural species—God has made of one blood all nations of men to dwell on all the face of the earth (Acts 17-26). All "super-race" ideologies, wherever found, are essentially idolatrous and anti-scientific.

The declaration of the Government that the rites and ceremonies of State Shinto were "non-religious" must be judged to be a mere legal fiction—the rites and the shrines were and are obviously religious by any ordinary criterion of what constitutes "religion". It is amazing that a modern government could officially declare that ceremonies involving a "god house", priest-

hood, prayer, offerings and a very real recognition of gods and spirits were "non-religious" and must therefore be participated in by all Japanese, even by the Christians who believed in the God who commanded, "Thou shalt have no other gods before me." The former program of requiring participation in the ceremonies of State Shinto was therefore essentially tyrannical and idolatrous—a grievous sin against God and a serious infringement of the freedom of Christian people.

Theologically and ethically Shinto is so thin and barren that, even if true, it could not support the religious and moral needs of the people. This may partly explain the popularity and success of Buddhism in Japan. Buddhism is a false system, but it is not "thin" or lacking in essential content. Shinto cannot support a real world-view or philosophy of life, nor a well-developed system of ethics or morality. It has hardly any conception of sin or of moral law. Of the living and true God it knows nothing. The people and nation of Japan need Christianity, with the Holy Bible of the Old and New Testaments as the special revelation of the true God. They need the Bible's revelation of the doctrine of creation to take the place of the incredible Shinto myths of the origin of things. And they need Jesus Christ and Him crucified and risen from the dead as the one and only Saviour of men and nations.

#### Questions:

1. What is the meaning of the word **Shinto**?
2. What is the Shinto myth about the origin of the Imperial line of Japan?
3. What is the essential meaning of Shinto?
4. What were the racial origins of the Japanese people?
5. When did Japan come under Chinese influence, and with what result?
6. When did Buddhism come to Japan, and with what success?
7. What change in the Japanese religious situation took place in the 17th century after Christ?
8. What were the teachings of the scholar Moto-ori?
9. How was Japan opened to contact with the rest of the world, and with what result?
10. What was the Restoration of 1868?
11. When and by how was Shinto made the official state religion of Japan?
12. Why could the religious freedom "granted" by the Constitution of 1889 not be true religious freedom?

13. What was the effect of the coming of western ideas on the Japanese people's faith in Shinto?
14. How did the Japanese Government try to counteract this tendency?
15. When were "Sect Shinto" and "Shrine Shinto" separated?
16. What was the character of "Shrine Shinto" or "State Shinto", according to the Japanese Government?
17. In what ways were the people required to participate in State Shinto?
18. How many State Shinto shrines were there in Japan?
19. How many priests served the State Shinto shrines?
20. What is the meaning of the Japanese word for "shrine"?
21. Describe the appearance and surroundings of a Shinto shrine.
22. What acts are performed by the worshipper at a shrine?
23. What is kept inside a shrine, and what different attitudes may the people have toward this object?
24. Which of the State Shinto shrines is the most important one? Where is it located, and to what divinity is it devoted?
25. What use was made of Shinto by the militarist-dominated Japanese Government in the period 1931-1945?
26. What is the real meaning of State Shinto as promoted by the militarists during 1931-1945?
27. What parallel development took place in Germany during this same period?
28. When and by what authority was the system of State Shinto abolished?
29. What is the present status of the former State Shinto shrines?
30. When and how did religious liberty come to Japan?
31. What two possible dangers to freedom exist in Japan today?
32. How is Shinto practiced in the homes of the people?
33. What should be thought of the Shinto myths from the Christian standpoint?
34. Show that the claim that the Japanese race is superior and unique is both a contradiction of Bible truth and also contrary to scientific fact.
35. What must be thought of the claim that the rites of State Shinto were "non-religious"?
36. What is the theological and ethical character of Shinto?
37. How can the remarkable success of Buddhism in Japan possibly be explained?
38. What essential truths of true religion are lacking in Shinto?
39. Why is the Bible's doctrine of creation needed in Japan?
40. What is Japan's deepest and most real need?

## LESSON 11

### Islam — Militant Monotheism from Arabia

Islam, sometimes called: "Mohammedanism," is the youngest of all world religions. It is the only important world religion that is younger than Christianity. All the systems we have studied in these lessons originated long before the time of Christ, but Islam began in the seventh century after Christ. It is therefore only about twelve hundred years old.

The name **Islam** means "submission." From the same Arabic root comes the word **Moslems** or **Muslims**, which means "those who have submitted" — that is, those who accept Islam. It is estimated that there are a quarter of a billion Moslems in the world today (250,000,000), and the number is increasing rapidly, especially in the continent of Africa, where Islam is replacing polytheistic paganism with astonishing success.

A great deal of the content of Islam was borrowed by Mohammed from Jewish, Christian

and other sources. There is a story of a woman who sent a manuscript of poetry to a publisher hoping that it would be published in book form. The publisher rejected it, sending a note saying: "Dear Madam: Your poetry is both good and original. But unfortunately the part that is good is not original, and the part that is original is not good." It might be truly observed that that in Islam which is good is not original, but borrowed from other faiths; while that which is original is not good.

The background of Islam is the religious scene of ancient Arabia. The religion was crudely polytheistic, with worship of moon, stars, gods and goddesses, and with belief in a multitude of lesser spirits — angels, demons, fairies, and the like. At Mecca a meteorite was built into the corner of the Ka'bah, a sacred shrine. This shrine is mentioned in literature going as far back as

60 B. C., or more than six hundred years before the time of Mohammed. Sacrifices were offered to this black stone, which was said to have fallen down from heaven in the time of Adam and Eve. The people of Mecca had a tradition that the shrine was built by Abraham while on a visit to his son Ishmael. There was also at Mecca a holy well, called Zemzem, which was said to have been dug by the kicking of Ishmael. The Ka'bah also contained numerous idols, the chief one being that of a god named Hubal.

Mohammed was an orphan at the age of six. His guardians were zealous for the special religious superstitions of Mecca. As a young man Mohammed was troubled by the evil features of Arabian religion as it existed at that time, especially its quarreling, idolatry, immorality and intemperance. A specially revolting custom was the burying alive of unwanted infant daughters. Mohammed was outraged, too, by the needless, endless bloodshed in wars between different Arabian tribes.

From the age of twelve Mohammed went on caravan trips to Palestine and Syria. In this way he came in contact with Jewish and Christian beliefs. These experiences led him to question many Arabian beliefs and practices.

Mohammed married a rich widow named Khadijah, who was fifteen years older than himself. She gave him the affection and encouragement which enabled him to prosecute his religious interests in the face of difficulty and opposition. At the age of 40 while he was in a lonely place in the mountains he experienced a vision of the angel Gabriel who commanded him to "Recite" in the name of the Lord. Mohammed was at first skeptical about the supernatural source of this vision, and inclined to question his own sanity. But his wife reassured him and he became convinced that the vision was really from Gabriel. Soon he had another vision of Gabriel, then more frequently he received revelations. Thus he came finally to the conviction that he had been called to be a prophet of God (**Allah** is the Arabic word for "God," corresponding to **El** or **Elohim** in Hebrew).

Mohammed began preaching in his home city, Mecca, but met with bitter opposition. This continued for ten years. His first convert was his wife Khadijah. A kinsman of Mohammed named Abu Bekr, a wealthy merchant, was also an early convert. Four years of preaching gained about 40 converts to the new faith of Islam. But the opposition in Mecca was too powerful, and finally in A. D. 622 Mohammed with his followers fled to the city of Medina—a journey of eight days by camel caravan. In Medina he was honorably received, and was able to establish Islam as the faith of the city. New practices were introduced — worship services on

Fridays, a call to prayer from the mosque roof, giving of alms for the support of the prophet and for the poor and needy.

This was followed by war between Mecca and Medina. Mohammed and his followers were victorious and returned in triumph to Mecca. Partly by conquest and partly by influence and persuasion he gained both political and religious supremacy throughout Arabia. He died in 632, and was succeeded by Abu Bekr, who was called the "caliph."

Islam continued to spread, being promoted by extensive military campaigns. Jerusalem fell to the Moslems in 638, Egypt three years later; Iraq or Mesopotamia in 637; Persia in 649; and most of Asia Minor by 652. Later Islam was carried by military force as far afield as India and beyond. In less than 100 years after the death of Mohammed all of North Africa and part of Spain were Moslem. The spread of Islam in western Europe was finally checked by Charles Martel at the Battle of Tours (France) in A. D. 732 — exactly a century after the death of Mohammed. Spain was later reclaimed for Christianity, but a wide belt of territory from Morocco to Pakistan and Indonesia has remained Moslem to this day. As already mentioned, Islam is today spreading widely in Africa and elsewhere. It is also dominant in parts of the Soviet Union and parts of China. A few years ago Peiping, now the capital of Communist China, had no less than 40 mosques, though Moslems were a minority of the population. How many of these mosques are still functioning today is unknown.

The main doctrines of Islam are as follows:

**Monotheism** — the absolute unity and simplicity of God. This involves rejection of the Christian doctrine of the Trinity, with which Mohammed had come into contact. It is unfortunate that Mohammed knew Christianity only in a corrupted form which seems to have resulted in his misunderstanding the doctrine of the Trinity as belief in three Gods or Tritheism. The Moslem doctrine of God stresses His transcendence at the expense of His immanence, and His majesty and power at the expense of His love and mercy. Absolute predestination is affirmed. This Islamic belief differs from the Calvinistic doctrine of predestination in that it regards ends as foreordained apart from means, thus disregarding the reality of second causes.

**Mohammed is the Prophet of God.** Islam recognizes the existence of other prophets, including Moses and Jesus, but insists that Mohammed is the last and greatest of the prophetic line. However Mohammed is not regarded as more than human — he is simply a man through whom God is said to have spoken.

**The Koran is the Absolute Word of God.** Islam gives some standing to the Jewish and Christian Scriptures, but claims for the Koran an absolutely unique character. It is even said to be an exact copy of an original in heaven.

**Salvation is Obtained by Human Works.** It is characteristic of religious Moslems that they are proud or self-righteous to such a degree that it is extremely difficult to get the Christian Gospel of sin and redemption across to them. The main religious works or duties are repetition of the formula: "There is no God but Allah, and Mohammed is the Prophet of Allah." (To recite this makes one a Moslem;) prayer; almsgiving; specified fasting, and pilgrimage. Once in a lifetime, if possible, every Moslem is bound to make a pilgrimage to Mecca. There are also numerous moral duties; these include kindness to widows, orphans, etc.; abstinence from adultery and intoxicating liquors, as well as games of chance, and from eating blood and pork; kindness to divorced women; marriage to not more than four women at one time; and especially military service in the cause of Allah against unbelievers.

Several of these moral precepts represented real reforms in the time of Mohammed. For example, his limitation of polygamy to four wives at the same time was apparently a distinct reform in his day — it seems that before his time it was fairly common for a man to have as many as ten wives at one time. Though the ethics of Islam doubtless constituted a distinct improvement in the Arabia of Mohammed's day, the ethical aspect of Islam has tended to become petrified and externalized, with emphasis on specific commands and prohibitions rather than on genuine love in the heart for one's neighbor. In this respect Islam resembles the Pharisaic perversion of the Jewish faith.

Why is Islam so successful? How can its rapid spread be explained? And why is it so hard to win Moslems for Christ? A Moslem student once asked the present writer why Islam is so much more successful than Christianity. After a moment's thought the reply was given that Islam is an easier religion than Christianity to live up to; it makes less difficult moral demands upon people. There is nothing in Islam to lead a man to say, "O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" or "I know that in me, that is, in my flesh, dwelleth no good thing." A religion with reasonable attainable objectives fosters self-confidence, complacency and spiritual pride — it leads inevitably to self-righteousness, but it does not give the sinner the anguish of a guilty conscience nor the frustration of trying without success to attain in practical living the requirements of an absolute moral standard. In brief, Islam makes a man feel good, while Christianity necessarily first (and often thereafter) makes a man feel bad.

The religion of the broken heart is Christianity, not Islam.

Again, Islam is a religion which has already looked Christianity in the face and definitely rejected it. It is vastly easier to win an idol-worshipping Chinese or African polytheist to Christ than to win a Moslem who takes pride in his abhorrence of idolatry. Rejection of the Trinity, which is the very basis of the Christian Gospel, is not only implicit but actually explicit in Islam. The Koran states it in the plainest of language. Therefore there is a certain "hardened" character of Moslems in relation to the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Yet it is not impossible to win Moslems for Christ. The grace of God is sovereign and the Holy Spirit is able to break through the tough crust of prejudice and self-righteousness and bring Moslems to real conviction of sin and saving faith in Jesus Christ. If the Christian world were more concerned perhaps missions to Moslems might be more successful.

In spite of its monotheism, Islam must be judged a false faith. Its doctrine of God is too simple to be the truth. God is One but He is also Three in a different sense (see article on **The Divine Trinity** in this issue of **Blue Banner Faith and Life**). Its view of Jesus Christ gives him scant honor by rating him as merely a prophet of less importance than Mohammed. Its way of salvation is essentially false, being without the atoning blood of the only Redeemer of men. And it fosters a proud self-righteousness rather than a broken-hearted faith in a God-given Substitute. As an ethical system it is largely vitiated by externalism. Its sacred book, the Koran, falsely claims to be absolute divine revelation, and sanctions some of the greatest evils in the Moslem system, such as the low position occupied by women historically throughout the Moslem world.

#### Questions:

1. What is unique about Islam as to the time when it began?
2. What does mean by the word **Islam**?
3. What is the meaning of **Moslems** or **Muslims**?
4. How many Moslems are there in the world today?
5. Where is Islam progressing rapidly today?
6. From what sources did Mohammed borrow many of his ideas?
7. What was the religion of pre-Islamic Arabia?
8. What special features were found at Mecca?
9. What features of Arabian religion troubled Mohammed?

10. How did Mohammed come in contact with Jewish and Christian beliefs?

11. What was the effect of Mohammed's marriage on his religious career?

12. Describe how Mohammed came to regard himself as called to be a prophet.

13. What was Mohammed's success as a prophet at Mecca?

14. Why did Mohammed go to Medina, and with what results?

15. How did Mohammed gain political and religious supremacy throughout Arabia?

16. How far had Islam spread by 100 years after Mohammed's death?

17. How and when was the spread of Islam in western Europe checked?

18. What lands or areas of the world have remained Moslem to the present day?

19. What are the features of the Mohammedan doctrine of God?

20. How does the Mohammedan doctrine of

predestination differ from the Calvinistic doctrine of predestination?

21. What is the attitude of Islam toward Jesus?

22. What is the sacred book of Islam? What claim is made for it?

23. What is the way of salvation, according to Islam?

24. What are the main religious duties of Islam?

25. What are some of the moral duties of Islam?

26. Mention one of Mohammed's moral precepts which was a real reform in his day?

27. What is the general character of Islamic ethics?

28. How can the success of Islam be explained?

29. Why is it easier to win an idol-worshiping polytheist to Christ than to win a Moslem to Christ?

## LESSON 12

### Judaism — the Old Testament without Atoning Blood

The religion of the Old Testament is a religion of grace, that is, it is a religion of the love of God providing salvation for sinners as a free, undeserved gift. It is also a religion of redemption, for it represents human sin as being canceled through the shed blood of a Substitute accepted by God. Thus the religion revealed in the Old Testament is both **gracious** and **redemptive**. The most spiritual of the people of Israel always realized this gracious-redemptive character of the Old Testament religion. But there were probably always forces and tendencies at work to change it or reinterpret it in the direction of a non-redemptive religion of human merit (works or achievement of some kind).

As we open the pages of the New Testament, we find the religious leadership of the Jewish people sharply divided between two sects or parties — the Pharisees and the Sadducees. The Sadducees had control of the Temple organization and worship. They were the party most influenced by Greek philosophy, and may be called the liberals or modernists of the day. They doubted or denied many teachings of the Scriptures, including the resurrection.

The Pharisees, on the other hand, were separatists and clung tenaciously to everything Jewish against everything Gentile. In all the points at issue between them and the Sadducees, the Pharisees were right and the Sadducees were wrong. This does not imply that the Pharisees

were correct on all matters, for they surely were not. They had grievous faults and errors of their own. In particular, they had transformed the redemptive-gracious religion of the Old Testament into a system of human merit or works, by which a man saves himself by his diligent, consistent efforts at keeping the laws and commandments of God. The apostle Paul, before his conversion to Christ on the Damascus road, was an adherent of this Pharisaic perversion of the religion of Israel. Though they still offered blood sacrifices and still observed the Passover, including the killing of the lamb, their theology was essentially meritorious or legalistic. They gave a false answer to the question, "What must a sinner do to be saved?" for they answered this not in terms of faith but in terms of human works.

The outcome of the Jewish-Roman war was the utter defeat of the Jews and the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple in A.D. 70. Those of the Jews that were not killed were dispersed far and wide through the Roman world, many of them as slaves. The Jewish faith, as distinguished from the Christian faith, had received a very severe blow, from which it would have seemed that recovery would be impossible.

A short time before Jerusalem fell to the Romans, a learned rabbi named Johanan ben Zakkai escaped from the city to a place at the seacoast called Jabneh or Jamnia, where he began to act as a teacher of the laws and

principles of the Jewish faith. This man sought to adapt the Jewish religion to the historical changes that were taking place. The Sanhedrin (Council of 70 elders) was dead, so Johanan ben Zakkai organized a new council to take the leadership and make rules and decisions for the Jewish faith as a whole, wherever located. It must be realized that these men simply took this upon themselves — they were not called to this function by God nor by any lawful continuation of Old Testament institutions. However, the Jamnia Council gained wide recognition and came to be regarded as the official mouth-piece of the Jewish religion. Even the Roman Government so recognized it, treating its Patriarch (presiding officer) as the head of all Jews throughout the Empire.

The Jewish religion as it exists at the present day is only partly based on the Old Testament Scriptures. It is only in a very limited sense that the Judaism of the present day can claim to adhere to the religion of the Old Testament. Much has been added in the way of traditions and interpretations. Among these additions are the **Mishnah**, made in the second century after Christ — a list of four thousand rabbinic precepts calculated to adapt the Torah (Law of Moses) to the conditions existing in the second century. The Mishnah was made by Jewish scholars in Galilee. The same groups of Jewish scholars produced the **Palestinian Talmud**, which was not a very important work.

The next important additions to the Old Testament Scriptures came from Jewish scholars living in Mesopotamia or Babylonia. It is thought that there may have been as many as one million Jews in Mesopotamia soon after the destruction of Jerusalem in A. D. 70.

Learned Jewish scholars in Babylonia carried further the elaboration and codification of details of Jewish religion. Part of the Mishnah was an exposition of the **Halakah**, or so-called unwritten Law, while part of it consisted of what were called **Haggadah** (traditions other than interpretations of laws; they were historical, religious, moral and practical items collected from countless sermons and sayings of noted rabbis of former times). The Jews in Babylonia now brought together all previously unrecorded **Halakah** and **Haggadah** material into an immense book called the **Gemara**. Then the Gemara was combined with the Mishnah, forming the enormous work known as the (Babylonian) **Talmud**. The Talmud is the real authority of present day Judaism. It was completed by about A. D. 500. Some idea of its immense size can be gained from noting that it contains 63 volumes, divided into six major parts. From that day to this, the orthodox Jew views the Old Testament through colored spectacles — he views the Old

Testament as reflected and interpreted in the Talmud.

More time passed, and the Jews adhered tenaciously to their religion in spite of much persecution. The greatest Jewish scholar of the Middle Ages was Moses ben Maimon (Moses Maimonides), who was born in Spain but driven by persecution to Egypt. Maimonides lived 1135-1204, and wrote several very important books. One was a commentary on the Mishnah in which he reduced that work to thirteen basic principles. Another book by Maimonides was a simplified condensation of the Talmud. Still another book by him was his **Guide to the Perplexed**, a reasoned defence of the Jewish faith in terms of the philosophy of Aristotle. Maimonides in this book explained away miracles rationally and interpreted the creation story of Genesis allegorically instead of literally. Maimonides was extremely influential in Jewish circles, even though there were not lacking some who opposed his new ideas.

At the present day many Jews are secular, without religion; they are Jews by race but not by religion. A considerable portion of the Jewish population of the Republic of Israel is secular. The Zionist movement which advocated return of the Jews to Palestine was pre-eminently a secular, social-political or nationalistic movement rather than an expression of religious faith.

Religious Jews of today are divided into various branches or denominations. The Orthodox Jews adhere very closely to the historic documents of Judaism, especially the Talmud. They hope for salvation from careful, painstaking observance of every detailed precept of the Law. Some of them hope for the coming of a personal Messiah who will make Israel free and great again, though many have given up the expectation of a personal Messiah and hold that Israel collectively is the Lord's anointed with a mission to the world. Of the animal's sacrifices of the Old Testament they have nothing. Even the Passover is observed without the killing of a lamb. Their religion is essentially legalism, moralism, or self-salvation by human works.

What are called Reform Jews are very much like "liberal" Protestants in their attitudes and manner of worship. The synagogue services rather closely resemble those in a Protestant congregation. The strict Jewish dietary laws are regarded as more or less optional and some Reform Jews disregard many of them. The Talmud is no longer regarded as authoritative. No personal Messiah is expected. The Jewish faith is not regarded as a fixed or closed system but as something capable of indefinite development in varying conditions. Many Reform Jews have a characteristically "liberal" attitude to-

ward the Old Testament, holding the "higher critical" views about the authorship and date of the various books, such as that Moses wrote little of the Books of Moses, Deuteronomy was written in the time of Josiah, and Isaiah chapters 40-66 was written by the "Second Isaiah" during the Babylonian Captivity.

There are other developments in the Jewish world of today, but lack of space forbids discussion of them in this lesson.

The thing that the student should by all means learn from this lesson is that **twentieth century Judaism and the Religion of the Old Testament are two entirely different kinds of religion.** The difference between them is as great as that between Saul of Tarsus before his conversion and Paul the apostle after the conversion. It is the difference between a religion of works and a religion of grace, a religion of human achievement and a religion of divine redemption. The present writer has met a number of people in orthodox Protestant churches who naively assumed that the Jewish faith of today is a point-by-point reproduction of the religion of the Old Testament, lacking only faith in Jesus as the Messiah. Some were utterly astonished when told that many religious Jews of today do not believe in a personal Messiah at all. Others are unaware that the Passover is observed today without its principal feature, the killing of the lamb.

The observations in the preceding paragraph will indicate how difficult it is today to win a Jew for Christ. It is not simply that he must be convinced that Jesus is the expected Messiah—much more than that is necessary. He must be convinced of man's utter sinfulness and inability to save himself—of the sinner's desperate need of an absolutely gracious salvation. And this is hard to do, for the religious Jew is extremely self-righteous. Only the almighty power of the Holy Spirit can really bring a Jew to Christ in repentance and saving faith.

### LESSON 13

#### Religion or Christianity?

The preceding twelve lessons have outlined the idea of religion, naturalistic versus Biblical views of the origin and development of religion, how to account for the elements of relative good found in false religious systems, and how the Christian church through its missionary program ought to approach the non-Christian religions and their adherents. Following this several historical religions were described and discussed—Hinduism, Buddhism, Confucianism, Shinto, Islam and Judaism. It was attempted to bring each of these non-Christian

#### Questions:

1. What kind of religion is the religion of the Old Testament?
2. What is the meaning of the terms **gracious** and **redemptive**?
3. What were the two main sects of the Jewish leaders in the time of Christ? What did each group stand for?
4. Why was the theology of the Pharisees essentially false?
5. Who was Jonanan ben Zakkai and what did he do for the Jewish faith?
6. What is the **Mishnah**? the **Gemara**? the **Talmud**?
7. Who was the most famous Jewish scholar of the Middle Ages?
8. What important books did this scholar write?
9. What was the attitude of Moses Maimonides toward the miracles of the Old Testament? Toward the Creation story of Genesis?
10. What is the character of the Zionist movement?
11. What is the general character of the religion of Orthodox Jews today?
12. How do Reform Jews of the present day differ from Orthodox Jews?
13. What is the attitude of many Reform Jews to the Old Testament Scriptures?
14. Why is it difficult to win a Jew for Christ?

religions under criticism from the viewpoint of Biblical Christianity. In this final lesson of the series some general observations are in order concerning the basic falsehood of all non-Christian religions, their inadequacy to meet man's real need, and the real uniqueness of the Christianity of the Bible.

Even though the non-Christian faiths all contain some elements of truth or some particular features that can be called "good" in a limited and relative sense, still as **systems** they are all

false, because they give wrong answers to the great questions of life. Such questions as (1) What is the nature of God? (2) What is the relation between God and the universe? (3) What is the real reason for humanity's troubles? (4) What must a man do to be saved? (5) What is the real meaning of death? and (6) What comes after death? — such questions as these are given false or ambiguous answers by all non-Christian religious systems. In spite of limited elements of truth and good, they are false as systems and they cannot save mankind from sin and misery.

In particular, there is no non-Christian faith that sees man's predicament and need as it really is. That man is actually dead in sin they do not and will not admit. Only Biblical Christianity gives the correct diagnosis of humanity's case — man is hopelessly sunk in sin by reason of moral and intellectual revolt against the living God. Only Biblical Christianity, therefore, realizes man's desperate need for an absolutely gracious salvation. The other religious offer man advice — some of it good, some not so good — but Christianity brings men **good news**, the Gospel, the message that Jesus Christ, the Son of God, has done for man what he could never do for himself.

In missionary work among semi-illiterate people in China the writer used to use a large poster which was divided into several panels. The first panel showed a man who had fallen into a pit. The pit was deep and the sides were steep, and his efforts to climb out were futile. The second panel showed a scholarly representative of Confucianism standing at the brink of the pit. He says to the poor man in the pit something like this: "Why didn't you watch where you were walking? A careful man does not fall into pits. In the future be careful where you walk!" This, of course, leaves the poor man helpless in the pit. In the next panel there comes a Taoist priest (Taoism is a Chinese religion replete with magic and superstitious beliefs). He advises the man in the pit to burn incense and propitiate the spirits, but he does nothing to get him out of the pit. The next panel shows a Buddhist monk addressing the man in the pit somewhat as follows: "Poor man, the trouble with you is that you want to get out of the pit. All our human misery comes from desire. We want things that we cannot have. Just rid yourself of that evil desire and you will have peace. Try to attain a detached attitude, so you will not care whether you get out of the pit or not." But Buddhism is not the effective remedy, so the next panel shows a Christian evangelist on his knees, reaching deep down into the pit to help lift the man out. The final panel shows the now rescued man standing on a great rock singing praises to God, who took

him out of the fearful pit and put a new song into his mouth, even praise to God.

Only Biblical Christianity recognizes the pit into which man has fallen for what it really is. Only Biblical Christianity realizes the utter hopelessness and futility of all human schemes of salvation by man's own efforts, works or achievements. Only Biblical Christianity carries within itself the almighty power of the Holy Spirit by which a man is born again and his will renewed and his character changed and re-oriented from sin and self to righteousness and God. And only Biblical Christianity can approach modern man, whether in Europe and America or in Asia and Africa with a fully confident, assured "Thus saith the Lord" to back up the message.

Nothing is more pitiable than the efforts of theological liberals and modernists to carry on some kind of missionary work. All they have to offer the people of non-Christian lands is essentially good advice. Their message is essentially works, moralism, salvation by education and human culture. The heathen have no shortage of advice. They have plenty of sages and philosophers, past and present, just as the world of Paul's day had plenty of merchants of human wisdom. Liberalism or Modernism has no faith in, and therefore cannot proclaim, the one message that carries saving power — the message of Jesus Christ and Him crucified as the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.

It is the hope of the writer that this series of lessons may help some to realize more fully the world's desperate need of the one and only true religion — the Christianity of the Bible.

#### Questions:

1. What subjects have been studied in the preceding twelve lessons of this series?
2. Why must all non-Christian religions, when viewed as systems, be regarded as false?
3. What fact about human need is recognized only by Christianity?
4. What power is found only in Christianity?
5. What is the essential difference between good advice and good news?
6. Why can theological liberals and modernists not carry on any really effective missionary work?

The End

## Reviews of Religious Books

The favorable reviewing of a book here is not to be understood as necessarily implying an endorsement of everything contained in it. Within the editorial policy of Blue Banner Faith and Life each reviewer is solely responsible for the opinions expressed in his reviews. Please purchase books from your book dealer or direct from the publishers; do not send orders for books to the manager of this magazine.

**HOLY BIBLE: THE BERKELEY VERSION IN MODERN ENGLISH**, Containing the Old and New Testaments translated afresh from the original languages and diligently compared with previous translations, with numerous helpful non-doctrinal notes to aid the understanding of the reader. Gerrit Verkuyl, Ph. D., Editor-in-chief and translator of New Testament section, Zondervan Publishing House, 1415 Lake Drive, S. E., Grand Rapids, Mich. 1959, pp. 1233. \$7.95.

A new version of the Bible in the English language must always be an outstanding event. When one comes not as a one-man translation, nor the product of a modernist committee, but as the fruit of over ten years of labor, by a large committee of evangelical scholars, it must be of historic significance. The above mentioned Berkeley Version (BV) is such a translation. Since it only came off the press this April it is too soon to appraise it properly. The following thus must be more by way of announcement than review.

The preface states, "This is not just another revision; it is a completely new translation," and it is advertized as "The Book of the Ages in the language of today." The unique feature of this new version, and one which will cause evangelicals to rejoice, is its happy combination of modern language, accuracy of translation and orthodoxy in theology. None of the wretched translations found in the RSV, concerning the deity of Christ, for instance, appear but rather all those passages shine forth in sparkling witness to Him who inspired the revelation. (Psalms 2:12 "Kiss the Son"; 45:6 "Thy throne, O God, is for ever"; Is. 7:14 "Behold, the virgin shall conceive"; Micah 5:2 "from you shall He come forth to Me, who is to be ruler over Israel, His goings forth are from of old, from days of eternity;" Rom. 9:5 "Christ, He who is God over all, blessed forever. Amen.")

Although the BV has 9 point type in comparison with the RSV's 10 point, the books are the same size due to the copious notes at the foot of each page of the former. These notes are very helpful, many containing archeological references of recent findings as well as references to the Dead Sea Scrolls. There must be an average of nearly eight to a page. Modern punctua-

tion, paragraphing and spelling are used, the archaic *th* being dropped from the ends of verbs. Pronouns when referred to the Lord are in capitals and "Thou" is used of the Lord but "you" of men.

There are some features which will strike readers in different ways. This reviewer does not prefer the rendering of *logos* as "message" of God instead of "word" of God, although in a few cases the latter is used. (Heb. 4:12) Would it not have been clearer and more consistent to have rendered it "word" in all cases? Nor do we feel it wise to put weights, measures and monetary values in modern terms (Ezra 8:27 "5000 dollars") in the *text* instead of in the footnotes.

One misprint (Syrene for Syene in Is. 49:12) was noticed but these seem to be largely eliminated. The insertion of dates throughout to keep the reader abreast of the historical chronology is very helpful, although necessarily only of relative value in some places such as the early chapters of Genesis. The first date listed appears after Gen. 1:25 as "13,673 or 4,205 B.C." The latter is based on Ussher's chronological system in which the dates of each genealogy are totaled. If that system is not to be followed, however, and it is to be recognized, as B. B. Warfield has pointed out, that Hebrew genealogies are usually not given for chronological purposes and that "the genealogies of Scripture are freely compressed for all sorts of purposes" (note Matt. 1:1-18), then, instead of suggesting a date like 13,673 for the origin of man, would it not have been better to say with that great Old Testament, orthodox scholar, W. H. Green, "Scripture furnishes no data for a chronological computation prior to the life of Abraham?"

Such criticisms, however, are of only a minor nature. Our first perusal of this new version has left a very fine impression of it as a whole. We believe its modern language, accuracy of translation and orthodoxy of interpretation will bring it a great number of readers who will find in it and its extensive notes a keener and deeper understanding of the inexhaustible Word of God.

—John M. L. Young

**AFTER BISHOPS - WHAT? THE NEW PERIL**, by Rev. Murdoch Campbell. Published

by the author, Resolis, Conon., Ross-shire, Scotland, pp. 16, paper, no price stated.

A brief, yet piercing, critique of the ecumenical movement, especially as manifested in the Church of Scotland. Rev. Campbell very ably points out the failure of humanistic optimism, the reality of the Rome-ward movement, and the nature of the "World Church" as the spiritual counterpart of totalitarian Communism.

In reference to the ecumenical movements as an answer to the threat of a third world war, the following excerpt is quite relevant: "We have shown that one motive behind the Ecumenical plan is to save the world from nuclear warfare. One watchword of the movement is "fusion or fission." Another is "One World—One Church." But is there another war on the way? All the signs point in that direction. Both the Word of God and the state of the world anticipate such an hour of tribulation, but if the Churches in Scotland and elsewhere, instead of following the faint illusion of an unscriptural world church, would cry like Jonah against the sins of our age, these temporal tribulations might be averted. We want to prevent an outbreak of God's holy and righteous judgment while we refuse to repent of the evil. We dread the effects of sin but we cling to sin itself. Therefore God is going to speak in the awful accents of His indignation. That hour is in His own keeping." (p. 15)

It is unfortunate that in stressing the importance of spiritual unity, the author seems to assert the propriety of independency in church government. Thus, regarding the apostolic age: "They kept 'the unity of the Spirit in the bonds of peace' while each congregation might remain autonomous and independent. This spiritual unity is the only unity Christ recognizes." (p. 8)

This booklet should prove helpful to members of all denominations, which are in reality faced with the challenge of ecumenism, either directly or indirectly.

—Joseph P. Duggan

**BRAVE BOYS AND GIRLS OF LONG AGO**, by Dorothy C. Haskin. Baker Book House, Grand Rapids, 6, Michigan, 1958, pp. 61. \$1.50.

Seven short stories for young children, dealing with the experiences of boys and girls in contact with various notable figures in church history, such as Luther at Christmas-time, Venerable Bede (who wrote "one of the first history books ever to be written"!), and Sir Patrick Hume, a Covenantor (sic).

—Joseph P. Duggan

**THE BIBLICAL BASIS OF INFANT BAPTISM**, by the Rev. Kenneth A. Horner, Jr. Committee on Publications of the Bible Presbyterian

Synod, Bible Presbyterian Supply House, 1209 King Street, Wilmington, Delaware, pp. 16, paper, 10c.

A short, but carefully organized and skillful, presentation of the Biblical doctrine of infant baptism. Rev. Horner goes to the very heart of the matter, considered in terms of both logic and Scripture teaching, by expounding the nature and terms of the Abrahamic Covenant. This is done in such a manner as to make very clear the inseparable connection between the Old and New Testaments in respect to their teaching concerning the sign of the Covenant.

Now, of course, there is much that should be said about infant baptism that cannot be contained in sixteen pages. However, in this short space the author does effectively direct the reader's attention to those Scripture passages which most clearly and certainly instruct God's covenant people to baptize their children.

This tract is warmly recommended, because its reasoning is sound, clear, and well organized and because of its utter dependence on Scripture.

—Joseph P. Duggan

**THE RISE AND DEVELOPMENT OF CALVINISM**, edited by John H. Bratt. Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., Grand Rapids, 3, Michigan, 1959, pp. 134. \$2.75.

In lamenting the present low estate of the reformed church, Calvinists ought never to pine for what some might call the golden age of Calvinism. Although the days of Calvin, and the Huguenots, and the Puritans, and the Doleantie brought with them great blessings, there never has been anything approaching a golden age.

In presenting the history of Calvinism from Calvin to the present day, this book (which might be better entitled "The Rise and Fall of Calvinism") quite properly reveals that even in better days Calvinistic churches were beset not only by effective external opposition, but also by internal dissension, corruption and decay.

This book, which consists of contributions by four professors at Calvin College, does not pretend to be anything more than an introduction. However, many readers will be disappointed by the extreme brevity of treatment. Thus, in the eight pages devoted to Scotland and England, there is room to mention neither the Covenanters nor the Secession. To the Disruption is devoted only fifteen lines, and to the Westminster Confession a half page. The Puritans receive very slight notice. Considerably more space is devoted to the developments in the Netherlands, but here, too, the coverage is so brief that there is little more than a mention of the high lights, and almost no room for analysis of

the significance of these developments. In general, the authors would have done well to devote more attention to analyzing the meaning of historical developments, which are so sketchily presented that the reader cannot do this for himself.

It is lamentable that even when this is undertaken for the reader, the judgments are occasionally very questionable. Thus: "True righteousness and godliness was the goal Calvin sought, not formal obedience to a legal code such as is usually associated with Puritanism" (p. 31) This does correctly state the common misconception of Puritanism, and does call attention to its perversion, but it hardly does justice to the main body of Puritan teaching. Again: "The Lutheran movement, which began as a righteous cry against a grossly abused but peripheral doctrine of the Church, the granting of Indulgences . . ." (p.33) Certainly this is a remarkably shallow interpretation of the total significance of indulgences and Luther's revulsion against them.

The inclusion of a bibliography at the end of each of the five essays is quite commendable and a valuable technique.

—Joseph P. Duggan

**THE LORD FROM HEAVEN**, by Rev. Leon Morris. (a Pathway Book) Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., Grand Rapids, 3, Michigan, 1958. pp. 112. \$1.50. In Britain: The Tyndale Press, 39 Bedford Square, London W. C. 1, England.

A brief, yet comprehensive, discussion of the Christology of the New Testament. For the young Christian this book will serve as an excellent introduction to the study of the person of Christ. It is characterized by clear language and reasoning and by faithfulness to Scripture. In such a book, which does appear to be written for the young Christian, however, it seems somewhat unwise for the author to cite occasionally from such writers as William Temple and Alan Richardson, in that the uninformed might believe that these writers are as reliably orthodox as is Dr. Morris.

—Joseph P. Duggan

**THE PILOT SERIES IN LITERATURE, BOOK TWO**, by Gertrude Haan, Alice Fenenga and Beth Merizon. Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., Grand Rapids 3, Mich. 1959, pp. 560. \$5.50.

This second volume of the Pilot Series in Literature for junior high schools is just off the press. It has been prepared especially for Christian day schools in the United States and Canada.

If you enjoyed Volume One of this series, you will be further carried along the road of good literature by this new 552-page volume. It is

divided into ten interesting units dealing with Science, History, Nature and Animals, Freedom, Famous People, Legends, etc. An outstanding feature of the Pilot Series is an introduction to the author given with each selection. Thought-provoking questions and aids to vocabulary building and word power accompany each composition.

Material from the pens of contemporary writers will be found here as well as great selections from the past.

The compass, as pictured on the cover, indicates that the selections were chosen with God's truth and relationship to the world as the "pilot."

I would especially recommend this book for a junior high reading text book, but would also suggest that homes with growing children of ten to sixteen years old will find it a source of many hours of pleasant reading.

—Marian M. Vos

**ILLUSTRATIONS FROM BIBLICAL ARCHAEOLOGY**, by D. J. Wiseman. Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., Grand Rapids 3, Mich. 1958, pp. 112. \$3.50. In Britain: The Tyndale Press, 39 Bedford Square, London, W. C. 1. England.

The format of this volume is unusual but very pleasing. It is six inches high and nine inches wide. At least part of every page is devoted to a photograph of some significant finding or reconstruction in the field of Biblical archaeology. The photography is superb, and the book would be worth more than the price for the sake of the pictures alone. The illustrations are accompanied by a running text which occupies a part of many of the pages. Anyone wanting a simple and very attractive introduction to the fascinating subject of the archaeology of Bible lands should by all means purchase this book.

The viewpoint is that of faith in the Bible as the Word of God. This reviewer regrets the author's adherence to the "late chronology" of early Old Testament history, which appears at various points in the book. For example on page 30 it is stated as a certainty that there was no sedentary population in Trans-Jordan (Moab and Ammon) from the time of the destruction of Sodom until the thirteenth century before Christ. This implies, of course, that the Exodus cannot have taken place in the middle of the fourteen hundreds as is required by taking 1 Kings 6:1 in its plain meaning and at its face value. Similarly, on page 43 the author argues for the late dating of the Exodus, basing this upon archaeological considerations rather than upon Biblical data. As a matter of fact new archaeological evidence has been accumulating which strongly favors the "early chronology" (which

dates the Exodus at about 1440 B. C. and the fall of Jericho at about 1400 B. C.). For a summary of this recent evidence our readers are referred to two reviews by Professor Meredith G. Kline in *The Westminster Theological Journal* (November, 1958, pages 93-4; May, 1959, pages 200-1). Professor Kline says: "Even those with naturalistic views of the Scriptures ought to be asking themselves whether a wholesome respect for the biblical chronology of the entire second millennium B. C. is not long overdue." Dr. Wiseman, of course, does not hold a naturalistic view of the Scriptures. Many conservative scholars, however, seem to be strongly impressed by the claims put forward for the "late chronology" by Dr. William F. Albright of Johns Hopkins University and Dr. Nelson Glueck of the Hebrew Union College of Cincinnati. While

these men are both very distinguished scholars in the field of Old Testament studies and archaeology, neither of them is a believer in the verbal inspiration and infallibility of the Scriptures.

While this reviewer considers the implications of the "late chronology" serious, he nevertheless regards **Illustrations from Biblical Archaeology** as a very remarkable production and certainly an eminently worthwhile book. If you want to present your minister with a gift which he will appreciate and cherish, give him a copy of this most attractive volume on Biblical archaeology. This is the type of book that whets the reader's appetite for further reading and study in its field.

—J. G. Vos

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## R E V E R E N C E

"Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips: for mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts"—Isa. 6:5.

Reverence is "a feeling of profound respect often mingled with awe and affection." Reverence is an attitude, but more than a mere mental attitude. It is an attitude that controls our conduct in speech and action. We may have reverence for our country, for great men, etc., but in the highest sense reverence concerns God. Reverence is greatly lacking in present-day religion. Modern religion has stressed the Fatherhood of God while neglecting the holiness and majesty of God, until little real reverence remains. Some have even dared to refer to God as their "Pal".

Reverence is intended to please God, not men. Not to please the minister and officers of the Church, but to express our devotion to God. Think of God's transcendent greatness: He is the Creator of the universe, infinite, eternal, unchangeable, to whom a thousand years are as one day, whose word called the solar system, the constellations and the nebulae into being. "What is man, that thou art mindful of him, and the son of man, that thou visitest him?" Compassed with the limitations of time and space, and the weakness of our mortal body, we are totally dependent on God. God and man are not equals. He is our Creator, we His creatures.

When God's awful majesty and holiness come home to a person, an attitude of reverence will result. Think of Isaiah crying out "Woe is me!", of Peter saying "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord", and of Moses who "hid his face, for he was afraid to look upon God". God is the One who dwells in light unapproachable, whom no man hath seen nor can see, to whom be honor and power eternal (1 Tim. 6:16). If all God's rational creatures have reason for reverence, how much more the Christian, who has been adopted into God's family and made a child of the Heavenly Father! Far from familiarity breeding contempt, the Christian's special relation to God ought to result in an attitude of greatly increased reverence.

There are many common forms of irreverence which we should avoid. One is profanity and levity in speech. Especially should we avoid light and careless speaking of divine things, jesting about the Bible and religion. Also we should cultivate reverence in connection with divine worship. This involves presence, punctuality and attentiveness. It is forbidden to chew gum, eat candy or peel an orange in the British Parliament; how much more should we avoid irreverent conduct during divine worship! Needless talking, whispering, note-passing, staring at late comers, reading books or papers not connected with the service—all these are forms of irreverent conduct.

We should also treat our church building in a manner fitting their function as the place of worshipping God. Our church buildings are mostly plain; very few of them could in any sense be called ornate. But they can be as clean and neat as Westminster Abbey. It is disgraceful that there should be burnt matches, trash and paper and other refuse scattered on the floor during divine service. Worn out Psalters that are falling to pieces are a shame when clean new ones can be purchased for \$1.50 each. Unseemly writing in church Psalters or Bibles is also irreverent. "It is not fine clothes, but clean ones, that mark a gentlemen"; similarly, we may affirm, it is not elaborate, expensive buildings, but ones that are kept clean, neat and orderly, that mark reverent congregations. We should be ashamed to have the place of divine worship less clean and neat than the parlor of our own homes. If small children drop papers or trash on the floor, the parents should be ashamed to leave without cleaning this up after the service.

The real secret of reverence is a personal knowledge of and devotion to God. "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom". And it is only through Christ that we can truly know God. Jesus said, "I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father but by me" (John 14:6).

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