

PROTESTANT REFORMED  
THEOLOGICAL JOURNAL

THEOLOGICAL SCHOOL OF THE PROTESTANT REFORMED CHURCHES  
Grandville, Michigan

April, 1977

Volume X, No. 2

PROTESTANT REFORMED  
THEOLOGICAL  
JOURNAL

This Journal is published and distributed in limited quantities, at no charge, by the Theological School of the Protestant Reformed Churches. Interested persons desiring to have their names on the mailing list should address the Editor, Prof. H. Hanko, at the address of the school, 4949 Ivanrest Ave., S.W., Grandville, Michigan 49418.

THEOLOGICAL SCHOOL  
of the  
PROTESTANT REFORMED CHURCHES  
Grandville, Michigan

April, 1977

Volume X, No. 2

T A B L E   O F   C O N T E N T S

Editorial Notes-----	iv
Prof. H. Hanko	
Predestination in Calvin, Beza, and Later Reformed Theology-----	1-24
Prof. H. Hanko	
The Simplicity of God's Will and the "Free Offer" (3)-----	25-47
Prof. H.C. Hoeksema	
Book Reviews-----	48-53
Prof. H. Hanko	

## EDITORIAL NOTES

-- Prof. H. Hanko --

Prof. Hoeksema continues his discussion of the simplicity of the will of God in this issue. The question of God's will lies at the basis of many questions which arise concerning the Reformed faith. We hope and pray that this discussion will aid our readers in understanding the Reformed and Scriptural position on many of these matters. In close connection with this discussion, Prof. Hanko discusses a recent speech which dealt with the important matter of sovereign and double predestination.

\* \* \* \*

There has been a large number of requests for additional copies of Prof. Decker's articles on "Women in Office." Our supply of the Journals which carried these articles is depleted. We are offering copies of these articles at the rate of 5¢ a sheet. This rate is about our cost. If any more readers are interested in these articles please write us.

\* \* \* \*

Enclosed in this issue of the Journal is the latest list of Seminary publications. Any of these publications can be obtained by writing the Seminary. We prefer that a check covering the cost be included with your order.

\* \* \* \*

There is a possibility that the Seminary will be publishing in the future a copy of a translation of Turretin's Dogmatics. Preliminary work is being done on this project. We are concerned however, with the problem of how many to print. In order to get some idea concerning this, we would like all our readers who are interested in obtaining such a copy to let us know. Please do not send money now. We are only interested in gaining some idea of the number of those who would like to obtain a copy.

## SEMINARY PUBLICATIONS

### Biblical-Exegetical Studies

Hermeneutics & NT Textual Criticism (HH & HCH), \$3.00

#### Old Testament History Series (HCH)

Introduction + Creation to the Protevangel, \$5.75

The Prediluvian Period, \$3.00

The Postdiluvian World, \$2.50

The Patriarchal Era, Abraham, \$3.50

The Bondage and Exodus, \$3.00

The Wilderness Wanderings, \$6.00

The Conquest of Canaan, \$4.50

The Epistle to the Romans, Exegesis of Chapters 1-3 (HH), \$2.50

### Church Historical Studies

Medieval Church History (HHa), \$4.00

### Dogmatical Studies

#### Reformed Symbols:

Introduction & Notes on the Heidelberg Catechism (HH), \$2.50

Outlines of the Canons of Dordrecht, (HH), \$2.00

#### Dogmatics Study Outlines (These are outlines of H. Hoeksema's

Reformed Dogmatics, prepared chiefly for student use.) HCH

Introduction and Locus I, \$2.50

Locus II, \$2.00

Locus III, \$2.25

Locus IV, \$2.25

Locus V, \$2.00

Locus VI, \$2.25

Guide Questions for Reformed Dogmatics, \$1.25

### Practical-Theological Studies

Homiletics (HCH), \$4.25

Catechetics (HH-HHa), \$2.00

Notes on the Church Order (HHa), \$3.50

Biblical and Religious Psychology (transl. from Herman Bavinck, HHa.)

### Chapel Talks (HH)

I Peter, \$6.50

II Peter, \$3.00

II, III John, Jude, \$2.00

The Parables in Matthew, \$3.00

#### Author Key:

HH = Rev. Herman Hoeksema

HHa = Prof. Herman Hanko

HCH = Prof. Homer C. Hoeksema

Prices listed above are approximate cost of production; no discount on these prices.

#### How to order:

1. Use this as your order blank; check items desired.
2. Enclose payment + 25¢ postage for each item.
3. Mail to: Prot. Ref. Seminary Bookstore, 4949 Ivanrest Ave., S.W., Grandville, Michigan 49418
4. Be sure to include your name and address.

## PREDESTINATION IN CALVIN, BEZA, AND LATER REFORMED THEOLOGY

-- Prof. H. Hanko --

On February 10 of this year our Seminary went to Calvin Seminary to hear a lecture delivered by Rev. Philip C. Holtrop entitled, "Predestination in Calvin, Beza, and the Later Reformed Orthodoxy." While there were many historical inaccuracies and theological mistakes in this paper which Rev. Holtrop delivered for the student body and professors of Calvin Seminary, there is especially one incorrect view presented in this paper which is worthy of treatment in this Journal article. The reason why this subject is of importance and interest is that it is not only, more or less, a mistaken notion held more widely than by Holtrop, but it is also a view which is used as a basis for a denial of sovereign and double predestination within Reformed circles.

The general view set forth in Holtrop's paper is this. Calvin's doctrine of predestination was essentially correct. But Theodore Beza, Calvin's successor in the Academy in Geneva, reconstructed Calvin's entire view of predestination and introduced into it a scholastic and supralapsarian construction. This view, according to Holtrop, dominated Reformed theology from the time of Beza through the Synod of Dort and post-Dort theologians until the present. It is only in more recent times that several theologians from Reformed circles, including particularly Berkouwer and James Daane, have once again returned to the original ideas set forth by Calvin. And therefore, the great need of the hour is to return once again to the ideas on predestination set forth by Calvin and to revise and revitalize Reformed theology along his lines.

It might be well to quote specifically from a copy of the speech distributed beforehand in order to demonstrate the precise position which Holtrop takes. In the early part of the paper Holtrop points out that while Calvin was predominantly under the influence of the ancient Greek philosopher Plato, his successor Beza was more under the influence of Aristotle. He writes:

Calvin stands within the sphere of platonic and not aristotelian thinking. That point is important in view of the shift of accent from Plato to Aristotle already in the first generation of his successors. In my judgment the structure of Beza's thinking (modified Aristotelian) is more determinative for the character of later Reformed Orthodoxy than the structure of Calvin's thinking (modified Platonism). (p. 2)

On page 3 Holtrop writes:

We see an "aristotelian" standpoint in later Reformed Orthodoxy (Scholasticism) where strong accent is put on logical system, and predestination, e.g., is regarded as the "cause" of everything that happens in the world.

...It is fascinating to see that in the history of theology the "platonists" have more room for feeling, human passion, emotions, joy and sorrow, than the "aristotelians". Thus, Calvin's theology is warm, living, vital, energetic, in contrast to the more systematic and "intellectual" theologies of Reformed Orthodoxy (Beza, Peter Martyr, Zanchi, etc.)

Thus Holtrop writes:

When we compare Calvin and later Reformed Orthodoxy we see two profoundly different ways of doing theology (no matter how much the latter may have thought it was a continuation of the former). Elsewhere I have referred to these as relational and essentialist theologies (Reformed Journal, January 1976, pp. 14 ff.) and have tried to spell out some implications for rethinking and redoing our Reformed heritage (cf. Calvin Theological Journal, April 1976, pp. 91 ff.). (p. 4)

Apart from the fact that Holtrop flies in the face of all historical evidence when he characterizes Calvinism as Platonic and Beza's theology as Aristotelian, the fact of the matter is that both of these Reformers would have risen in righteous indignation at the very thought that their theologies were influenced by pagan philosophers and were not derived from the Holy Scriptures. It is not our intention however, to go into this aspect of the paper, as incorrect as it may be.

It was Beza, however, according to Holtrop, who spoiled the essentially correct emphasis which Calvin made on the doctrine of predestination. And it was Beza who influenced all subsequent Reformed theology.

The influence of Beza on Puritan America would make a worthy study; yet the effects of his predestination theology were especially felt, for the next centuries, in the scholarly orthodox theology that emerged particularly in the Netherlands. The Canons of Dort can only be seen against the backdrop of his theology, and the fact that Dort influenced every Reformed creed that followed prompts us to say that the whole history of Calvinism is significantly illumined when we fasten attention on the doctrine of predestination and the restructuring of Calvin's theology in Beza.

There is a wide agreement that Beza's lasting impact on the later development of Calvinism lies in his (re)interpretation of Calvin's doctrine of predestination. (p. 5)

Holtrop then lists some theologians who in his judgment support this contention. Among those listed are Berkouwer and James Daane of whom Holtrop writes: "Daane rightly located a shift from soteriological to decretal theology in the predestination thinking of Beza, recognizing that other thinkers are also important." (p. 6)

Holtrop goes on to say:

Dort shows the spirit of Genevan Aristotelianism at work; but what happened at Dort and ensuing controversies was international Calvinism in action. Beza gave direction to these controversies. Arminius reacted primarily against the Bezan influence in Reformed theology which he perceived, quite rightly, as different from Calvin. (p. 6)

It almost seems here as if Holtrop takes the position that Arminius himself was in basic agreement with Calvin, and that the error of his thinking which was condemned by the Synod of Dort was an error only in the light of Beza's corruption of Calvin's basically correct doctrine of predestination. However this may be, this is called by Holtrop, "decretal theology". Thus he writes:

Thus, decretal theology, as it comes to be seen in Reformed Orthodoxy, begins at this point; the absolute pre-historical decree of God now comes to be seen as a necessary ontological base for everything that happens (deductive theology), and everything that happens, or exists, is now seen in terms of the essence of God (immutability; mercy and justice, love and hate seen in aesthetic balance). If the doctrine of predestination is the "crown of soteriology" for Calvin, it is the main structure for all theology in Beza.

In that theology the point of departure is the hidden counsel of God, not the actualized relation of God and man, the revelation-and-faith correlate, or man before the face of God. What God has decreed is inviolately executed in history: that means, for Beza, that we must take our standpoint in God and His decree. Predestination in Calvin is a support for the assurance of salvation; hence he looks from sanctification to predestination (observe position of treatment in 1559 Institutes). Calvin's view is a view of man to God. But in Beza's theology that relation is reversed: looking for God's predestination of man's sanctification he remained preoccupied with predestination for his entire life. (p. 6)

Because Beza corrupted Calvin's view of predestination, this view, according to Holtrop, was challenged by Arminius and Uytenbogaert. This resulted in the controversy which led up to the Synod of Dort. But at the Synod of Dort the view of Beza triumphed. "The Synod dealt severely with



Arminius, and though decretal theology won the day the situation was such that practically everybody lost." (pp. 6,7) The result of this was that the views of Beza influenced all subsequent Reformed theology.

It is a little bit difficult to know exactly what Holtrop views as Calvin's teachings on predestination. He emphasizes the fact that Calvin treated predestination in connection with soteriology, and that in fact in Calvin's 1559 edition of the Institutes he deliberately changed the place of treatment of predestination to include it under soteriology because his view of predestination was different from that of subsequent Reformed theology. Holtrop emphasizes the fact that Calvin insists that "the doctrine of election is wrongly seen if it does not produce 'very sweet fruit' and 'benefits'; and because we have been chosen to the end 'that we may lead a holy and blameless life.'" He writes further:

Calvin placed his chapters on election where he did because Scripture places its chapters on election in the context of soteriology; and certain significant consequences -- comfort, doxology, holiness, humility, piety, and a remarkable desire to preach the gospel to all men -- are drawn from that placement. Those consequences would not follow election if he treated election in abstraction, apart from soteriology, under the heading of God. (p. 8)

He writes further:

Thus, to say that Calvin treats predestination at the end of the third book of the Institutes is to say something that Calvin wants to say, and to indicate that Beza treats predestination at the beginning of the doctrine of God is to indicate that he made a choice which Calvin, for good reason, did not make. Calvin's main interest in the doctrine of predestination is a soteriological interest of God-in-us and God-through-us, and thus he is not caught in abstract speculations that virtually controlled the later infra and supra debates....

Calvin wants neither an abstract doctrine based on some passed decree nor an abstract doctrine based on some future threat but rather a doctrine of election open to the soteriological moment of the present. (p. 8)

While it is not altogether clear, Holtrop seems to take the position that Calvin's doctrine of predestination is a doctrine which differs widely from the predestination as set forth by the Synod of Dort, subsequent Reformed theologians, and Reformed believers up until the present. And because he quotes Berkouwer and Daane sympathetically, one is almost driven to the conclusion that Holtrop means to say that Calvin repudiated the doctrine of double predestination altogether. That is, in Holtrop's judgment, Calvin repudiated reprobation as it is set forth in our Canons and repudiated unconditional election as it has been maintained by Reformed theology.

This becomes clearer when Holtrop emphasizes so strongly that Beza's

supralapsarian conception of predestination was a departure from Calvin's view and was a scholastic, Aristotelian, and therefore Scripturally incorrect presentation of the entire subject. Thus he writes:

Beza wants his doctrine to be one of "equal ultimacy"  
-- the results of hardening are as much a work of God as the results of faith; eternal death is as much decreed by God as eternal life; there is no disjunction in the mode of decree and election and reprobation both redound to the glory of God. Everything is seen as the unravelling of God's decree.

This becomes all the clearer when Holtrop presents on p. 12 a comparison of the views of both Calvin and Beza. While we need not quote all that Holtrop writes in this connection, a couple of points are worth noticing. According to Holtrop, Calvin teaches that election must never be divorced from the practical, existential arena of here and now; while in contrast to this, Beza teaches that "the God Who elects is the God Who had formed His plan before the foundation of the world." Further, according to Holtrop, Calvin teaches that the end of predestination "is that we may obtain salvation by the favor of God"; while Beza on the other hand teaches that "the end of predestination is that God may be glorified by realizing His own purpose with the world." Calvin's main interest in predestination is "God-in-us and God-through-us"; Beza's main interest in predestination is "an interest in God-to-us or God-using-us." Calvin escapes the infra-supra debate; while Beza adopts a strong supralapsarian position. For Calvin it is possible to preach election because Calvin speaks of rejection solely as an act of God in time and history; while Beza denies that human response in time and history have any significance. According to Holtrop, Calvin teaches that rejection is always related to preceding sin (this is the doctrine of conditional reprobation emphatically rejected by the Synod of Dort and by all Reformed theology and something which Calvin by no stretch of the imagination ever taught, H.H.); while Beza taught that "the sin of the non-elect is related to God's decree of reprobation," a position which makes it difficult to deny that God is the author of sin. Calvin denies that one is obliged to speak of election and reprobation simultaneously and in the same manner; while Beza virtually accepts this "symmetry".

In summary Holtrop writes: "Beza strongly emphasizes that our election is 'before the foundation of the world.' No doubt he felt he was true to Calvin's intentions, but in fact he restructured Calvin's theology. Reformed Orthodoxy is basically decretal theology, whether mild or rigid; we see that, for example,

in Gomarus, Moccovius, Voetuis, Terrutin, Kuyper, Bavinck, Hoeksema, L. Berkhof, and Van Til."

Although this restructuring of Calvin's theology by Beza was the cause of the infra and supra debates which characterized Reformed theology from the time of Beza until the present, nevertheless, in Holtrop's view, "both these views are expressions of decretal theology -- and precisely that is the problem. For as Daane has written (The Freedom of God), decretal theology is abstract and finally unpreachable." (p. 15)

And so the Synod of Dort basically departed from the position of Calvin and adopted the predestinarian views of Beza.

The spirit of the Canons cannot be apprized until we observe the accent away from abstraction and toward the election of God revealed in Jesus Christ. Given their historical background the Canons look rather good: there is little mention of an abstract decree and where we find that concept (I,6,15) it strikes us as strange. We can sum up the results of Dort in the following two statements. (1) The central importance of predestination, as seen by Beza, was now ecclesiastically sanctioned and recognized; it was virtually canonized as the fundamental tenet of Reformed Orthodoxy. (2) Within that decretal framework, the Synod tried to steer a course away from speculation and determinism. We might wish that Dort had rejected the whole decretal methodology or essentialist theology, but given the historical circumstances that would be asking too much. Dort reminds us that every confession and church council must be seen within an historical context. (p. 15)

And so it has been in all subsequent Reformed theology. Almost never has it happened that the true views of Calvin have been set forth by theologians either within the Dutch Reformed or the Presbyterian tradition. It is only at present, with the works of Berkouwer and Daane primarily, that the opportunity has presented itself to return to the true views of Calvin and to do away with all the "decretal theology" of post-Calvinism. And Holtrop ends his paper with the plea to do exactly this.

\* \* \* \* \*

The first question which we face is the question of whether Holtrop's presentation of the views of Calvin is correct. And in connection with that question we must face the question whether or not Beza at best restructured Calvin's doctrine of predestination and at worst repudiated Calvin altogether. And these two questions in turn bring up the question of whether or not it is true that subsequent Reformed theology from the time of Beza through the present,

including the Synod of Dort, abstracted the doctrine of predestination from soteriology, Christian comfort, and Godly piety. We shall take a look at all these questions.

The first question then concerns Calvin's views of predestination. Before we look at Calvin's views on predestination in detail, a few remarks are in order. In the first place the question is not whether Calvin linked predestination to Christian comfort and Godly piety. Everyone who has read Calvin knows that this is true. The question is however, whether because of the fact that Calvin linked his doctrine of predestination with Christian comfort and Godly piety, he failed to teach a sovereign and double predestination. It seems to be the position of Holtrop, especially if one takes his paper in its entirety, that this is indeed Holtrop's position. In the second place, it is striking that just about the sole proof for this position of Holtrop in his interpretation of Calvin is the fact that Calvin treats the doctrine of predestination under soteriology, after his treatment of prayer, and prior to his treatment of the truth of the resurrection from the dead. One looks in vain in the paper for additional proof for Holtrop's contention. In the third place, it is also interesting that by means of this Holtrop leaves the impression as if this is the only place in all the Institutes where Calvin taught the doctrine of predestination. It is this latter point which, in my judgment, is so important. It is not my purpose at the moment to answer the question of why Calvin treats the doctrine of predestination in connection with soteriology. We shall have to look at this a little bit more in detail a little later. But Holtrop seems to emphasize the fact that this is the only place in Calvin's Institutes where Calvin treats the doctrine of predestination; and that because of the fact that he treats predestination in this connection, Calvin does not believe in a double and sovereign work of predestination. It was this contention of Holtrop which forced me back to the Institutes once again. And this journey back to the Institutes was extremely enlightening.

A rereading of the Institutes can only leave one with the following impressions: 1) there is not a single doctrine of the Christian faith which Calvin treats in all of his Institutes which he treats apart from the truth of sovereign predestination. In connection with every single subject Calvin brings in the truth of both election and reprobation. In the second place, it is impossible to read a single page of the Institutes without taking into

account the fact that the truth of predestination is presupposed and assumed in everything that Calvin writes. It is impossible to understand anything which Calvin says in any part of the Institutes without realizing it is written in the context of and presupposing the truth of sovereign and double predestination. In the third place, so strongly does Calvin teach the doctrine of sovereign and double predestination that many outstanding Reformed theologians, and even enemies of Calvin's view of predestination have taken the position that Calvin was indeed himself a supralapsarian. Philip Schaff, an enemy of the doctrine of predestination, writes in his "History of the Christian Church" (Vol. VIII, pp. 545,546):

The dogma of a double predestination is the cornerstone of the Calvinistic system, and demands special consideration.

Calvin made the eternal election of God, Luther made the temporal justification by faith, the article of the standing or falling church, and the source of strength and peace in the battle of life. They agreed in teaching salvation by free grace, and personal assurance of salvation by a living faith in Christ and His gospel. But the former went back to the ultimate root in a pre-mundane unchangeable decree of God; the latter looked at the practical effect of saving grace upon the individual conscience.

Bavinck also takes the position in his "Gereformeerde Dogmatiek", Vol. II, p. 374 third edition, that Calvin was supralapsarian. He writes:

Therefore all three Reformers came to the so-called supralapsarian conception of the doctrine of predestination, following which the two decrees of election and reprobation are to be considered as acts of God's sovereignty preceding those which concern the fall, sin, and redemption in Christ.

Bavinck writes further on page 399:

And also supralapsarians have not come to their conception by philosophical thinking, but they set it forth because they considered it more in agreement with Holy Scripture. Just as Augustine came to his doctrine of predestination by a study of Paul, so the doctrine of Scripture concerning sin led Calvin to his supralapsarianism. (translations are mine.)

However this may be, it is interesting to read Calvin himself. I have included in this paper a large number of quotes from Calvin's Institutes not only to show that prior to his treatment of the doctrine of predestination, Calvin repeatedly mentions it, but to show too, that his teaching concerning predestination throughout the Institutes is in keeping with all Reformed theology. I have included in this paper only those quotes from the Institutes

which appear before his actual treatment of the subject. I have done this in order to show that even though Calvin treated predestination in connection with soteriology, the whole of his Institutes from the very beginning are filled with his doctrine on this matter.

It is impossible to read Calvin, especially in his Institutes, without coming to the conviction that Calvin deals with the doctrine of predestination in connection with every subject. In fact, it is impossible to understand Calvin in any part of his writings without understanding that he writes from the viewpoint of sovereign and double predestination. There is almost no page in the Institutes which does not have in it some reference to the truth of election and reprobation. While the terms themselves may not always be specifically mentioned, the truth as such is clearly stated and presupposed. (All quotations in this paper are taken from the translation of John Allen, published by the Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company in 1949)

Already in chapter 5 where Calvin treats, "The Knowledge of God Conspicuous in the Formation and Continual Government of the World," Calvin writes in paragraph 7:

For He so regulates His providence in the government of human society, that, while He exhibits, in innumerable ways, His benignity and beneficence to all, He likewise declares, by evident and daily indications, His clemency to the pious, and His severity to the wicked and ungodly.

It is evident already from this quote that Calvin presupposes a sovereign distinction between those whom he calls the pious and those whom he calls the wicked and the ungodly. It is in this connection and in this same paragraph that he speaks also of the sovereignty of God's mercy.

So, also, what ample occasion He supplies us for the consideration of His mercy, while, with unweary benignity, He pursues the miserable, calling them back to Himself with more than paternal indulgence, till His beneficence overcomes their depravity!

In the next paragraph Calvin speaks of the impious as being reprobate:

To this end the Psalmist, mentioning that God, in desperate cases, suddenly and wonderfully succors, beyond all expectation, those who are miserable and ready to perish.... -- the Psalmist, I say, having proposed such examples as these, infers from them that what are accounted fortuitous accidents, are so many proofs of His heavenly providence, especially of His paternal clemency; and that hence the pious have cause to rejoice, while the mouths of the impious and reprobate are stopped.

In Calvin's treatment of the doctrine of Holy Scripture, Calvin repeatedly stresses that the true knowledge of the Scriptures is given only to the elect.

In chapter VII, par. 5 he writes:

Only let it be known here, that that alone is true faith which the Spirit of God seals in our hearts. And with this one reason every reader of modesty and docility will be satisfied: Isaiah predicts that "all the children" of the renovated church "shall be taught of God." (Isaiah 54:13) Herein God deigns to confer a singular privilege on His elect, whom He distinguishes from the rest of mankind.... If God hath determined that this treasury of wisdom shall be reserved for His children, it is neither surprising nor absurd, that we see so much ignorance and stupidity among the vulgar herd of mankind.... Whenever, therefore, we are disturbed at the paucity of believers, let us, on the other hand, remember that none, but those to whom it was given, have any apprehension of the mysteries of God.

After treating the doctrines of the Trinity, the divinity of Christ and the Holy Spirit, etc., Calvin, in Chapter XIV treats "The True God Clearly Distinguished in the Scripture from All Fictitious Ones by the Creation of the World." In this chapter in par. 6, in speaking of the angels, Calvin writes:

In these passages God shows that He delegates to His angels the protection of those whom He has undertaken to preserve.

Still talking of this same subject Calvin, in par. 12, writes:

Therefore, whatever is said concerning the ministry of angels let us direct it to this end, that, overcoming all diffidence, our hope in God may be more firmly established. For the Lord has provided these guards for us, that we may not be terrified by a multitude of enemies, as though they could prevail in opposition to His assistance, but may have recourse to these sentiments expressed by Elisha, "There are more for us than against us."

It is impossible to explain these passages in any other way than from the viewpoint of Calvin's doctrine of predestination.

In fact, Calvin applies the doctrine of predestination even to the angelic world. In par. 16 of the same chapter he writes:

And Paul, mentioning the elect angels, without doubt passively implies that there are reprobate ones.

It is in connection with his discussion of the evil angels that Calvin repeatedly speaks of the sovereign control of God even over them.

According to these particular examples, Paul declares generally, that the blinding of unbelievers is the work of God, (II Thessalonians 2:9,11) whereby he had before called it the operation of Satan. It appears, then, that Satan is subject to the power of God, and so governed by His control, that he is compelled to render obedience to Him.... This depravity stimulates him to attempt those things which he thinks the most opposed to God. But since God holds him tied and bound with the bridle of His power, he executes only those things which are divinely permitted; and thus, whether he will or not, he obeys his Creator, being constrained to fulfill any service to which He impels him. (Par. 17)

While God directs the courses of unclean spirits hither and thither at His pleasure, He regulates this government in such a manner, that they exercise the faithful with fighting, attack them in ambuscades, harass them with incursions, push them in battles, and frequently fatigue them, throw them into confusion, terrify them, and sometimes wound them, yet never conquer or overwhelm them; but subdue and lead captive the impious, terrorize over their souls and bodies, and abuse them like slaves by employing them in the perpetration of every enormity.... But, as the promise respecting the breaking of the head of Satan belongs to Christ and all His members in common, I therefore deny that the faithful can ever be conquered or overwhelmed by him.

In this same paragraph Calvin writes:

And to this end Christ by His death overcame Satan, who had the power of death, and triumphed over all his forces, that they might not be able to hurt the church; for otherwise it would be in hourly danger of destruction. For such is our imbecility, and such the strength of his fury, how could we stand even for a moment against his various and unceasing attacks, without being supported by the victory of our Captain? Therefore God permits not Satan any power over the souls of the faithful, but abandons to his government only the impious and and unbelieving, whom He designs not to number among His own flock (underscoring mine). For he is said to have the undisturbed possession of this world, till he is expelled by Christ. (John 12:31) He is said also to blind all who believe not the gospel, (II Corinthians 4:4) and to work in the children of disobedience; (Ephesians 2:2) and this justly, for all the impious are vessels of wrath. (Romans 9:22) To whom, therefore, should they be subjected, but to the minister of the Divine vengeance? Finally, they are said to be of their father the devil; (John 8:44) because, as the faithful are known to be the children of God from their bearing His image, (I John 3:10) so the impious, from the image of Satan into which they have degenerated, are properly considered as his children.

In Chapter XV Calvin treats of the creation of man in general, and, among other subjects, the question of free will. In a lengthy discussion of this subject Calvin makes clear that it is impossible to speak of a free will in fallen man in the sense of the ability to choose between the good and the bad. This was the position of all the Reformers, and Calvin is no exception. This question of the free will of man is a critical question in connection with Calvin's later development of the doctrine of predestination, for Calvin makes it clear that, because man is without free will in the sense mentioned above, predestination can never be in any sense dependent upon the choice of man. In par. 8, e.g., Calvin writes:

But those who profess themselves to be disciples of Christ, and yet seek for free will in man, now lost and overwhelmed



in spiritual ruin, in striking out a middle path between the opinions of the philosophers and the doctrine of heaven, are evidently deceived, so that they touch neither heaven nor earth.

In Chapters XVI and XVII Calvin discusses at length the doctrine of providence. This whole section on providence is replete with examples of God's sovereign disposition among men. It is almost possible to quote at random from this chapter in proof of Calvin's firm commitment to the doctrine of sovereign predestination; but a few examples will suffice. Chapter XVI, par. 7 we read:

Lastly, when we hear, on the one hand, that "the eyes of the Lord are upon the righteous, and His ears are open unto their cry," and on the other, that "the face of the Lord is against them that do evil, to cut off the remembrance of them from the earth," (Psalm 34:15,16) we may be assured that all creatures, above and below, are ready for His service, that He may apply them to any use that He pleases. (Underscoring mine.)

In par. 8 he writes:

By this reasoning he (the reference here is to Augustine) excludes also any contingency dependent on the human will; and immediately after more expressly asserts that we ought not to inquire for any cause of the will of God. But in what sense permission ought to be understood, whenever it is mentioned by him, will appear from one passage; where he proves that the will of God is the supreme and first cause of all things, because nothing happens but by His command or permission.

With this sentiment of Augustine Calvin agrees.

In this same section Calvin repeatedly speaks of the fact that the deeds of wicked men are also under God's sovereign control. He writes for example in par. 5:

I admit more than this; even that thieves and homicides, and other malefactors, are instruments of Divine Providence, whom the Lord uses for the execution of the judgments which He has appointed.

And again in par. 6:

With respect to men, whether good or evil, he will acknowledge that their deliberations, wills, endeavors, and powers, are under His control, so that it is at His option to direct them withersoever He pleases, and to restrain them as often as He pleases.

A little farther on in this same paragraph, writing concerning the people of God, Calvin says:

What more can we desire for ourselves, if not a single hair can fall from our head, but according to His will? I speak not exclusively of the human race; but since God has chosen the church

for His habitation, there is no doubt but He particularly displays His paternal care in the government of it.

In Chapter XVII, par. 2 Calvin even repudiates the idea of permission.

With respect to His secret influences, the declaration of Solomon concerning the heart of the king, that it is inclined hither or thither according to the divine will, (Proverbs 21:1) certainly extends to the whole human race, and is as much as though he had said, that whatever conceptions we form in our minds, they are directed by the secret inspiration of God. And certainly, if He did not operate internally on the human mind, there would be no propriety in asserting, that He causes "the wisdom of the wise to perish, and the understanding of the prudent to be hid; that he poureth contempt upon princes, and causes them to wander in the wilderness, where there is no way." (Isaiah 29:14, Psalm 107:40, Ezekiel 7:26)... These passages also many persons refer to permission, as though, in abandoning the reprobate, God permitted them to be blinded by Satan. But that solution is too frivolous, since the Holy Spirit expressly declares that their blindness and infatuation are inflicted by the righteous judgment of God. He is said to have caused the obduracy of Pharaoh's heart, and also to have aggravated it and confirmed it. Some elude the force of these expressions with a foolish cavil -- that since Pharaoh himself is elsewhere said to have hardened his own heart, his own will is stated as the cause of his obduracy; as though these two things were at all incompatible with each other, that man should be actuated by God, and yet at the same time be active in himself. But I retort on them their own objection; for if hardening denotes a bare permission, Pharaoh cannot properly be charged with being the cause of his own obstinacy. Now, how weak and insipid would be such an interpretation, as though Pharaoh only permitted himself to be hardened! Besides, the Scripture cuts off all occasion for such cavils. God says, "I will harden his heart." (Exodus 4:21)... But as we must discuss this subject again in the second book, where we shall treat of the freedom or slavery of the human will, I think I have now said, in a brief manner, as much as the occasion required. The whole may be summed up thus; that, as the will of God is said to be the cause of all things, His providence is established as the governor in all the counsels and works of men, so that it not only exerts its power in the elect, who are influenced by the Holy Spirit, but also compels the compliance of the reprobate.

In book II Calvin devotes a great deal of time to a discussion of the question of free will. He repeatedly speaks of the slavery of the will to sin. In par. 12, e.g., he writes:

So the will, being inseparable from the nature of man, is not annihilated; but it is fettered by depraved and inordinate desires; so that it cannot aspire after anything that is good.

In par. 20, referring again to election, he writes:

If we were firmly persuaded of what, indeed, ought not to be questioned, that our nature is destitute of all those things

which our heavenly Father confers on His elect through the spirit of regeneration, here would be no cause of hesitation.

Continuing this theme in Chapter III, par. 5, Calvin writes:

The will, therefore, is so bound by the slavery of sin, that it cannot excite itself, much less devote itself to anything good; for such a disposition is the beginning of a conversion to God, which in the Scriptures is attributed solely to divine grace.

In par. 8 Calvin writes:

The origin of all good clearly appears, from a plain and certain reason, to be from no other than God alone; for no propensity of the will to anything good can be found in the elect. But the cause of election must not be sought in man, (under-scoring mine) whence we may conclude, that man has not a good will from himself but that it proceeds from the same decree by which we were elected before the creation of the world.

After a lengthy discussion on the sovereign character of the work of salvation Calvin repeatedly writes concerning the decrees of election and reprobation in connection with this. We quote but a few instances.

Nor does He promise by Ezekiel that He will give to the elect a new spirit, only that they may be able to walk, but that they may actually walk, in His precepts.

This is the privilege of the elect, that, being regenerated by the Spirit of God, they are led and governed by His direction. (par. 10)

Still discussing the general subject of providence in chapter 4, Calvin writes in par. 3:

And Augustine himself, in his fifth book against Julien, contends very largely, that sins proceed not only from the permission or the prescience, but from the power of God, in order that former sins may thereby be punished. So also what they advance concerning permission is too weak to be supported. God is very frequently said to blind and harden the reprobate, and to turn, incline, and influence their hearts, as I have elsewhere more fully stated.

Now that the ministry of Satan is concerned in instigating the reprobate, whenever God directs them hither or thither by His providence, may be sufficiently proved even from one passage.

(The passage referred to is I Samuel 6:14, 18:19, 19:19) (Par. 5)

In answering objections to this doctrine, Calvin, in Chapter 5, par. 5 writes concerning the operations of God in both the elect and the reprobate.

If anyone would desire a plainer answer, let him take it thus: the operations of God on His elect are twofold -- internally, by His Spirit, externally, by His Word. By His Spirit illuminating their minds and forming their hearts to the love and cultivation of righteousness, He makes them new creatures. By His Word He excites them to desire, seek, and obtain the same renovation. In

both He displays the efficacy of His power, according to the mode of His dispensation. When He addresses the same word to the reprobate, though it produces not their correction, yet He makes it effectual for another purpose, that they may be confounded by the testimony of their consciences now, and be rendered more inexcusable at the day of judgment. Thus Christ, though He pronounces that "no man can come to Him, except the Father draw him," and that the elect come when they have "heard and learned of the Father," (John 6:44,45) yet Himself neglects not the office of the teacher, but with His own mouth sedulously invites those who need the internal teaching of the Holy Spirit to enable them to derive any benefit from His instructions. With respect to the reprobate, Paul suggests that teaching is not useless, because it is to them "the savor of death unto death," but "a sweet savor unto God." (II Corinthians 2:16)

It is to be expected that the same doctrine of election would appear in Calvin's discussion of redemption through Christ in chapter VI. In par. 4 we read:

Only let this be well fixed in the mind of the reader; that the first step to piety is to know that God is our Father, to protect, govern, and support us till He gathers us into the eternal inheritance of His kingdom; that hence it is plain, as we have before asserted, that there can be no saving knowledge of God without Christ, and consequently that from the beginning of the world He has always been manifested to all the elect, that they might look to Him, and repose all their confidence in Him.

Even in connection with the treatment of the law of God in Chapter VIII Calvin repeatedly refers in one manner or another to the doctrine of predestination. In par. 21, e.g., he writes:

For as the temporal punishments inflicted on a few wicked men are testimonies of the divine wrath against sin, and of the judgment that will hereafter be pronounced on all sinners, though many escape with impunity even to the end of their lives, so, when the Lord exhibits one example of this blessing, in manifesting His mercy and goodness to the son for the sake of his father, He affords a proof of His constant and perpetual favor to His worshippers; and when, in any one instance, He pursues the iniquity of the father in the son, He shows what a judgment awaits all the reprobate on account of their own transgression.

In Chapter XII, "The Necessity of Christ Becoming Man in Order to Fulfill the Office of Mediator", par. 5, Calvin writes:

If anyone objects, that it is not evinced by any of these things, that the same Christ, Who has redeemed men from condemnation, could not have testified His love to them by assuming their nature, if they had remained in a state of

integrity and safety, -- we briefly reply, that since the Spirit declares these two things, Christ's becoming our Redeemer, and His participation of the same nature, to have been connected by the eternal decree of God, it is not right to make any further inquiry. For he who feels an eager desire to know something more, not being content with the immutable appointment of God shows himself also not to be contented with this Christ, Who has been given to us as the price of our redemption. Paul not only tells us the end of His mission, but ascending to the sublime mystery of predestination, very properly represses all the licentiousness and prurience of the human mind, by declaring, that "the Father hath chosen us in Christ before the foundation of the world, and predestinated us to the adoption of children according to the good pleasure of his will, and made us accepted in his beloved Son, in whom we have redemption through his blood." (Ephesians 1:4 ff.)

In this entire section in which Calvin talks of the work of Christ, the doctrine of election is constantly presupposed and is the background against which all that Calvin writes can be understood. Repeatedly Calvin refers to "God's people," "the church", "us", "believers", etc. I challenge anyone who reads this entire section to explain all that Calvin writes in any other way than from the viewpoint of sovereign double predestination.

In Book III Calvin treats of, "The Manner of Receiving the Grace of Christ, the Benefits Which We Derive from It, and the Effects Which Follow From It." In this book too, the doctrine of predestination stands out sharply. In Chapter I, par. 2, we read:

And it must be remarked, that He is called the Spirit of Christ, not only because the eternal Word of God is united with the same Spirit as the Father, but also with respect to His character of Mediator; for, if He had not been endued with this power, His advent to us would have been altogether in vain. In what sense He is called "the second Adam, the Lord from heaven, a quickening spirit;" (I Corinthians 15:45) where Paul compares the peculiar life with which the Son of God inspires His people, that they may be one with Him, to that animal life which is equally common to the reprobate.

In this same section, now dealing with faith, Calvin writes in par. 11:

I know that it appears harsh to some, when faith is attributed to the reprobate; since Paul affirms it to be the fruit of election. But this difficulty is easily solved; for though none are illuminated to faith, or truly feel the efficacy of the gospel, but such as are preordained to salvation, yet experience shows, that the reprobate are sometimes affected with emotions very similar to those of the elect, so that, in their own opinion, they in no respect differ from the elect.... If anyone object that there remains, then, no further evidence

by which the faithful can certainly judge of their adoption, I reply, that although there is a great similitude and affinity between the elect of God and those who are endued with a frail and transitory faith, yet the elect possess that confidence, which Paul celebrates, so as boldly to cry, "Abba, Father." (Galatians 4:6) Therefore, as God regenerates forever the elect alone with incorruptible seed, so that the seed of life planted in their hearts never perishes, so He firmly seals within them the grace of His adoption, that it may be confirmed and ratified to their minds. But this by no means prevents that inferior operation of the Spirit from exerting itself even in the reprobate.... Besides, the reprobate have only a confused perception of grace, so that they embrace the shadow rather than the substance; because the Spirit properly seals remission of sins to the elect alone, and they apply it by a special faith to their own benefit. Yet the reprobate are justly said to believe that God is propitious to them, because they receive the gift of reconciliation, though in a confused and too indistinct manner: not that they are partakers of the same faith or regeneration with the sons of God, but because they appear, under the disguise of hypocrisy, to have the principle of faith in common with them. Nor do I deny, that God so far enlightens their minds that they discover His grace; but He so distinguishes that perception from the peculiar testimony, which He gives to His elect, that they never attain any solid effect and enjoyment. ...but He vouchsafes to the elect alone, the living root of faith, that they may persevere even to the end.

In par. 12 Calvin writes:

Moreover, though faith is a knowledge of the benevolence of God towards us, and a certain persuasion of His veracity, yet it is not to be wondered at, that the subjects of these temporary impressions lose the sense of Divine love, which, notwithstanding its affinity to faith, is yet widely different from it. The will of God, I confess, is immutable, and His truth always consistent with itself. But I deny that the reprobate ever go so far as to penetrate to that secret revelation, which the Scripture confines to the elect.... But as the persuasion of the paternal love of God is not radically fixed in the reprobate, so they love Him not reciprocally with the sincere affection of children, but are influenced by a mercenary disposition; for the spirit of love was given to Christ alone, that He might instill it into His members. And this observation of Paul certainly extends to none but the elect: "the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost, which is given unto us." (Romans 5:5)

In this same connection, Calvin speaks of the election of Jacob when he writes in par. 31:

Yet it is certain, that this desire preceded from faith.

Rebekah, having been divinely assured of the election of her son Jacob....

In discussing the relationship between election and faith, Calvin refers again to Augustine when he writes in par. 35:

And that He may more illustriously display His liberality in so eminent a gift, God deigns not to bestow it promiscuously on all, but by a singular privilege imparts it to whom He will. We have already cited testimonies to prove this point. Augustine, who is a faithful expositor of them, says, "It was in order to teach us that the act of believing is owing to the divine gift, not to human merit, that our Savior declared, 'no man can come to me except the Father which hath sent me draw him; (John 6:44) and except it were given unto him of my Father.'" (John 6:65)

It is almost tedious to pursue this subject further and to quote repeatedly from Calvin to prove the point beyond what we have already quoted. It is incredible that anyone who claims to be a student of Calvin can possibly take the position that Calvin treats the doctrine of predestination except in connection with prayer and the resurrection of the dead. Even repentance is connected with predestination in Book III, Chapter IV, par. 33, when Calvin writes:

The second distinction is, that when the reprobate are lashed by the scourges of God in this world, they already begin to suffer His vindictive punishments; and though they will not escape with impunity for having disregarded such indications of the divine wrath, yet they are not punished in order to their repentance, but only that, from their great misery, they may prove God to be a Judge Who will inflict vengeance according to their crimes. On the contrary, the children of God are chastized, not to make satisfaction to Him for their sins, but that they may thereby be benefitted and brought to repentance.

In Chapter XIV, par. 21, Calvin connects the doctrine of predestination with the truth of justification by faith.

For this reason he sometimes deduces eternal life from works; not that the acceptance of it is to be referred to them; but because He justifies the objects of His election, that they may finally glorify them; He makes the former favor, which is a step to the succeeding one, in some sense the cause of it.

In Chapter XXI Calvin treats of eternal election, or God's predestination of some to salvation, and of others to destruction. It is here that Calvin develops his views of sovereign double predestination in full. We need not quote from the many places following this section where Calvin treats of the church and the sacraments, to continue to show how the doctrine

of predestination lies as the very root of Calvin's theology. It continues throughout to stand on the foreground.

\* \* \* \* \*

From all these quotations of Calvin's Institutes we can come to the following conclusions.

In the first place, Holtrop is completely wrong when he writes: "Calvin and Beza, both Reformed, should be seen in the light of different philosophical traditions that played upon them and conditioned their thinking." It is simply a generalization without warrant that Calvin was influenced in any respect by philosophical traditions. His theology, whatever it may be, is thoroughly Scriptural.

In the second place, it is clear from Calvin's treatment of predestination throughout his entire Institutes that he believed firmly that there is no single point of doctrine which can be understood apart from the truth of sovereign and unconditional predestination. Regardless for the moment of what the answer to the question of the place of predestination in the Institutes is, Calvin repeatedly looks at the whole of the truth which he develops in his Institutes from the viewpoint of this doctrine which he considered to be the heart of the gospel and the truth of the Scriptures.

In the third place, Calvin's view of predestination is that of sovereign and double predestination (including therefore both election and reprobation). That this is indeed Calvin's view is not only clear from his treatment of predestination throughout the Institutes and from his discussion of this doctrine in Chapters XXI through XXIV, but is also emphatically clear from his pamphlet entitled "A Treatise on the Eternal Predestination of God" which was written against the errors of Pighius. In the fourth place, the fact that Calvin treated the doctrine of sovereign predestination in connection with soteriology is by no means proof of the fact that Calvin had a view of predestination which is in important respects different from that view of predestination held by subsequent Reformed theologians both in the Dutch Reformed and in the Presbyterian traditions. It must be remembered that, in general, Calvin was following the order of the Apostolic Confession in his treatment of doctrine in the Institutes. This order of treatment of doctrine would quite naturally place a discussion of predestination in connection with soteriology and the application of the blessings of salvation. This is also the method which is followed by Chapter 2 of our own precious Heidelberg Catechism where election



is discussed in connection with the doctrine of the church in Lord's Day XXI, Q. and A. 54. There can be no disagreement on the point that in treating election in connection with soteriology Calvin emphasized indeed that the doctrine of predestination is a doctrine which may not be divorced from the salvation of the church, from the comfort of believers and from the calling of all the people of God to walk a pious and Godly life. The question is not whether Calvin actually did this. Everyone admits that he did. The question is rather, did subsequent Reformed theology change this? And the answer to this question is emphatically no. Nevertheless Calvin's treatment of sovereign predestination in this context is an abiding reminder to all those who stand in the tradition of Calvin that the doctrine of predestination may not be discussed as a cold and abstract doctrine, but must be discussed always in connection with God's sovereign work of grace in the salvation of His church in Christ.

Did Beza change all this?

We may grant that Beza did indeed treat the doctrine of sovereign predestination in connection with the doctrine of God. We may even grant that Beza was probably more emphatic in his supralapsarianism than even Calvin was (but note that many others considered Calvin also as a supralapsarian). But is there any evidence that Beza substantially and at significant points altered the doctrine of predestination as set forth by Calvin?

It is clear from history itself that Calvin, in specifically choosing Beza as his successor, put his stamp of approval on Beza's theology. There is no question about it that Calvin understood Beza's theology, knew what Beza taught, and yet was not hesitant in assigning to Beza the work that still had to be done in Geneva and in its Academy. It is incredible to think that Calvin would ever have agreed to making Beza his successor if he was in any sense aware of the fact that Beza had significantly altered the doctrine of sovereign predestination. On the other hand, there is no evidence that Beza in any way felt that he was departing from the position of Calvin essentially as he set forth his views with respect to predestination. If one would listen to Holtrop, one would come to the conclusion either that Beza deliberately distorted Calvin's view on predestination or that Beza did not understand what Calvin was teaching. The first is impossible and there is no evidence to support such a contention. There is, with respect to the second possibility, a prima facie case to be made for the fact that Beza knew Calvin much better than Holtrop.

Beza was Calvin's intimate friend. Beza worked closely with Calvin both in the work of the ministry in Geneva and in the work of the Academy in that city. Beza himself certainly believed, and all the evidence points in this direction, that he was indeed carrying on the traditions of John Calvin. Does Holtrop standing in the twentieth century, assume that he knows Calvin's position on predestination better than Beza did? This is an assumption that appears to be incredibly presumptuous.

Nor is there any evidence for the fact that Beza while treating the doctrine of predestination in connection with the doctrine of God, divorce predestination from the Christian's comfort, from his calling to walk in piety, and from the work of salvation as a whole. In fact, Beza's own confession, presents the matter quite differently. We offer here only one quote, although many could be given.

Fourthly, seeing that good works are for us the certain evidences of our faith, they also bring to us afterwards the certainty of our eternal election. For faith necessarily depends on election. Faith lays hold of Christ, by which, being justified and sanctified, we have the enjoyment of the glory to which we have been destined before the foundation of the world. (Romans 8:39; Ephesians 1:3,4). This is so much the more important because the world holds it in less esteem, as if the doctrine of particular election were a curious and incomprehensible thing. On the contrary, faith is nothing other than that by which we have the certainty that we possess life eternal; by it we know that before the foundation of the world God has destined that we should possess, through Christ, a very great salvation and a most excellent glory. This is why all that we have said of faith and of its effects would be useless if we would not add this point of eternal election as the sole foundation and support of all the assurance of Christians. (Quoted from Beza's "Confession of the Faith of Christians," Chapter XIX)

We may safely assume that Calvin and Beza were one in this key doctrine of the Reformed faith.

The same is true of subsequent Reformed theology. Holtrop is wrong when he writes: "We have seen that Reformed scholasticism (Orthodoxy: Decretal Theology) follows the methodology of Beza more than that of Calvin." (p. 18) We cannot go into this question in detail in this article, nor is that necessary. The fact of the matter is that Reformed theologians, whether infra or supralapsarian, whether treating predestination in the locus on theology or in the locus on soteriology, have always insisted that the doctrine of predestination must be treated in connection with salvation in Christ and with the comfort of the believer.

Holtrop takes the position that the Canons of Dort, following in the tradition of Beza, were also at variance of Calvin's view of predestination. He takes the position therefore, that the Canons separate the doctrine of predestination from the doctrine of Christian comfort. Even a cursory reading of the Canons will show how false this is. We quote a few excerpts in proof of this.

Art. 7. This elect number, though by nature neither better nor more deserving than others, but with them involved in one common misery, God hath decreed to give to Christ, to be saved by Him and effectually to call and draw them to His communion by His Word and Spirit, to bestow upon them true faith, justification and sanctification; and having powerfully preserved them in the fellowship of his Son, finally to glorify them for the demonstration of His mercy, and for the praise of His glorious grace.

Art. 12. The elect in due time, though in various degrees and in different measures, attain the assurance of this their eternal and unchangeable election, not by inquisitively prying into the secret and deep things of God, but by observing in themselves with a spiritual joy and holy pleasure, the infallible fruits of election pointed out in the Word of God -- such as a true faith in Christ, filial fear, a Godly sorrow for sin, a hungering and thirsting after righteousness, etc.

Art. 13. The sense and certainty of this election afford to the children of God additional matter for daily humiliation before Him for adoring the depth of His mercies, for cleansing themselves, and rendering grateful returns of ardent love to Him, Who first manifested so great love towards them. The consideration of this doctrine of election is so far from encouraging remissness in the observance of the divine commands, or from sinking men in carnal security, that these, in the just judgment of God, are the usual effects of rash presumption, or of idle and wanton trifling with the grace of election, in those who refuse to walk in the ways of the elect.

Art. 16. Those who do not yet experience a lively faith in Christ, an assured confidence of soul, peace of conscience, an earnest endeavor after filial obedience, and glorying in God through Christ, efficaciously wrought in them, and do nevertheless persist in the use of the means which God hath appointed for working these graces in us, ought not to be alarmed at the mention of reprobation, nor to rank themselves among the reprobate, but diligently to persevere in the use of means, and with ardent desires, devoutly and humbly to wait for a season of richer grace.

All these quotations are taken from Chapter 1, where the doctrine of sovereign predestination is treated specifically in the Canons. In Chapter 5 where the perseverance of the saints is treated the Canons especially concentrate on the comfort that is to be derived from the truth of sovereign election. The Canons say:

Article 6. But God, Who is rich in mercy, according to His unchangeable purpose of election, does not wholly withdraw the Holy Spirit from His own people, even in their melancholy falls, nor suffers them to proceed so far as to lose the grace of adoption, and forfeit the state of justification, or to commit the sin unto death; nor does he permit them to be totally deserted and to plunge themselves into everlasting destruction.

Article 9. Of this preservation of the elect to salvation, and of their perseverance in the faith, true believers for themselves may and do obtain assurance according to the measure of their faith, whereby they arrive at the certain persuasion, that they ever will continue true and living members of the church; and that they experience forgiveness of sins, and will at last inherit eternal life.

These and many other articles could be quoted in support of the contention that the Canons agree completely with the truth as set forth by both John Calvin and Theodore Beza. Anyone who is able to read need only read the Canons superficially to understand how far from the truth Holtrop is in his characterization of the Canons. And this is true of all genuine Reformed theology as it appears in the Reformed Confessions, in the Westminster Confession of Faith, and in all those theologians who remain faithful to Calvin and to Beza in the Reformed and Presbyterian tradition.

In the light of such obvious historical evidence, one must look elsewhere for an explanation of the thesis set forth in Holtrop's paper. The only possible explanation which one can give which explains the position which Holtrop takes is that Holtrop, along with other theologians who claim to stand in the Reformed tradition, no longer wants the doctrine of sovereign double predestination. In an effort to justify the rejection of that doctrine which is fundamental to all Calvinism and to all the Reformed faith a totally erroneous construction is placed upon the theology of Calvin and upon all those who followed him and who stood in his tradition. When Holtrop writes at the end of his paper:

We need a renewed Reformed theology today, willing to break with decretal patterns and eager to be guided by Scripture. While there are problems in Calvin, he continues to be suggestive for those new efforts. We need a relational as opposed to essentialist theology; but relations, rightly conceived, must preserve the integrity of those essences that are related. We need a theology, Biblical and Reformed, in which faith and life, "sound doctrine" and "sound practice," are not separated, seen in balance, or considered apart from each other. That theology should be a communal activity of professionals and non-professionals within the church. People in Biblical, systematic, philosophical, pastoral and

other fields should all make their contributions, aiding, correcting, and supporting each other. (p. 18)

When, I say, Holtrop takes this position, it is evident that he takes this position because he is an enemy of the truth of sovereign, unconditional, double predestination. And as an enemy of sovereign, double, unconditional predestination, he is an enemy of all the Reformed faith, an enemy of Dort, an enemy of Beza, and an enemy of John Calvin.

The Simplicity of God's Will  
and the  
"Free Offer"  
(3)

-- Homer C. Hoeksema --

In our two previous articles we have noticed how Prof. W. Heyns, the father of the doctrine of a general, well-meant offer of salvation in the Christian Reformed denomination, involved himself in a denial of God's simplicity by positing two contradictory wills in God, according to one of which God wills the salvation of the reprobate and according to the other of which God does not will the salvation of the reprobate. Prof. Heyns did not explicitly address the subject of God's simplicity in this connection; but in opposing Heyns, Rev. Herman Hoeksema pointedly called attention to the fact that Heyns would have to accept the consequence of his position: two wills -- two Gods!

Every theologian who attempts to speak of the "free offer" in terms of the will of God necessarily faces the same problem. This is true of the out-and-out Arminian. It is even more true of anyone who attempts to maintain the "free offer" while sailing under the Reformed, or Calvinistic, flag. In fact, a Reformed man, just because he is supposed to hold to the doctrine of sovereign election and reprobation, faces the problem most emphatically. He must come to a denial of the simplicity of the will of God, or he must give up his doctrine of a "free offer."

It is interesting to note that Profs. John Murray and Ned Stonehouse faced this problem immediately when they began to write on the subject of the "free offer." The opening paragraphs of their booklet, The Free Offer of the Gospel, bring them face to face with the matter of God's simplicity. In the first two paragraphs we read the following:

It would appear that the real point in dispute in connection with the free offer of the gospel is whether it can properly be said that God desires the salvation of all men. The Committee elected by the Twelfth General Assembly in its report to the Thirteenth General Assembly said, "God not only delights in the penitent but is also moved by the riches of His goodness and mercy to desire the repentance and salvation of the impenitent and reprobate." (Minutes, p. 67). It should have been apparent that the aforesaid Committee, in predicating such "desire" of God, was not dealing with the decretive will of God; it was dealing with

the free offer of the gospel to all without distinction and that surely respects, not the decreative or secret will of God, but the revealed will. There is no ground for supposition that the expression was intended to refer to God's decreative will.

It must be admitted that if the expression were intended to apply to the decreative will of God then there would be, at least, implicit contradiction. For to say that God desires the salvation of the reprobate, and also that God wills the damnation of the reprobate and apply the former to the same thing as the latter, namely, the decreative will, would be contradiction; it would amount to averring of the same thing, viewed from the same aspect, God wills and God does not will.

We will not at this time discuss the validity of the distinction between the decreative will and the revealed will of God, except to note that by implication Murray and Stonehouse here adopt the distinction "hidden-revealed." It is important to note, however, that, very plainly, they do not escape the problem with respect to the will of God. Though they do not directly mention the simplicity of God in the above paragraphs, they are evidently aware of its being involved when they refer to the possibility of contradiction. However, their attempt to escape the contradiction, "God wills and God does not will," is obviously a failure. Instead of positing contradiction within the one, decreative will of God, they posit two wills in God, and then leave those two wills in contradiction with one another. Nevertheless, when we take into account the fact that the "decreative will" of God is also a revealed will, that is, that the "decreative will" of God has been revealed, it becomes evident that Murray and Stonehouse do not escape the contradiction which they seek to escape. For what they write above can be reduced to these two propositions:

1. God, according to His eternal decree, does not will the salvation of the reprobate. (Obviously, this is a revealed truth: if it were not, we could not make the statement.)
2. God, according to His revelation, does indeed will the salvation of the reprobate.

The same contradiction in sharper form is evident in these paragraphs from the Introduction of the Murray-Stonehouse booklet:

The question then is: what is implicit in, or lies back of, the full and free offer of the gospel to all without distinction? The word "desire" has come

to be used in the debate, not because it is necessarily the most accurate or felicitous word but because it serves to set forth quite sharply a certain implication of the full and free offer of the gospel to all. This implication is that in the free offer there is expressed not simply the bare preceptive will of God but the disposition of lovingkindness on the part of God pointing to the salvation to be gained through compliance with the overtures of gospel grace. In other words, the gospel is not simply an offer or invitation but also implies that God delights that those to whom the offer comes would enjoy what is offered in all its fulness. And the word "desire" has been used in order to express the thought epitomized in Ezekiel 33:11, which is to the effect that God has pleasure that the wicked turn from his evil way and live. It might as well have been said, "It pleases God that the wicked repent and be saved."

Again, the expression "God desires," in the formula that crystalizes the crux of the question, is intended to notify not at all the "seeming" attitude of God but a real attitude, a real disposition of lovingkindness inherent in the free offer to all, in other words a pleasure or delight in God, contemplating the blessed result to be achieved by compliance with the overture proffered and the invitation given.

Now the above paragraphs are everything but clear on more than one point; one gets the impression that there was almost a deliberate attempt at vagueness. Let it be noted that the authors use the term "perceptive will," but do not explain how an offer can be a precept. Let it be noted, too, that they use the terminology, "It pleases God....," but do not make plain whether or not they are referring to God's good pleasure (beneplacitum, eudokia) in the sense of His decree, which is the current sense in which this expression is used in Scripture and in dogmatics. Above all, however, it must be remembered that the reprobate are included in the "all" who are alleged to be the recipients of this offer and the objects of this "real disposition of lovingkindness." If this is kept in mind, it is obvious that here we have a clear denial of the simplicity of God's will. And again, this denial takes the form of conflict, of flat contradiction. This can be expressed in the following propositions:

1. God, according to the will of His decree, is filled with hatred against the reprobate, and reveals Himself as such.
2. God, according to His preceptive will, His revelation in the "offer," is filled with a real disposition of lovingkindness toward the reprobate.



In the booklet The Free Offer of the Gospel no attempt is ever made to deal with this subject of God's simplicity. In fact, the denial of the simplicity of the will of God is at no point in the booklet expressly admitted; neither is the problem ever faced. In another connection, however, Prof. Murray expressly denies the simplicity of the will of God. Strangely enough, Prof. Murray arrives at this denial in a discussion of "The Sovereignty of God in His Providence" in the little book, Calvin on Scripture and Divine Sovereignty (pp. 64, ff.). I say "strangely," because in a discussion of the sovereignty of God in His providence, Prof. Murray nevertheless arrives at the point of a discussion of God's will unto salvation, and that, too, specifically in connection with a passage such as Ezekiel 18:23 -- one of the several passages frequently cited as proof for the "free offer." Let us follow this discussion of Prof. Murray and see how he arrives at the point of a discussion of God's will of salvation in this connection, and how he arrives at the point of a literal contradiction of God's simplicity. He writes as follows:

"The providence of God embraces all events, past, present, and future, and applies to the evil as much as to the good, to sinful acts as much as to the holy acts of men and angels. Unsanctified sense is liable to conceive of providence as consisting simply in the unfolding of potencies and virtues implanted in the world at its creation and so the utmost of its adoration is to perceive the wisdom, power, and goodness of God in the work of creation. It conceives of God as a mere spectator. For the believer the presence of God appears no less in the perpetual government of the world than in its origin. Perhaps the most distinctive emphasis in this connection is Calvin's insistence that providence does not consist in a general motion or superintendence but that all events whatsoever are governed by the secret counsel and directed by the present hand of God (occulto Dei consilio gubernari... praesenti Dei manu diriguntur). Calvin does not deny but rather asserts that created things are endowed with properties and laws which operate according to their nature. Yet they are only instruments into which God infuses as much efficacy as he wills and according to his own will turns to this or that action. The sun, for example, 'the godly man does not regard as the principal or necessary cause of those things which existed before the creation of the sun but only an instrument

which God uses, because he so wills, since he could dispense with it and act directly without any more difficulty.' (Inst. I, xvi, 2.) God made the sun to stand still (Josh. 10:13) to testify that 'the sun does not daily rise and set by a secret instinct of nature but that he himself governs its course to renew the memory of his fatherly favour towards us.' (Inst. I, xvi, 2.) God's omnipotence is not a vain, idle, and, as it were, slumbering potency, but a vigilant, efficacious, and operative agency constantly exerted on every distinct and particular movement (ad singulas et particulares motus). Not a drop of rain falls and no wind ever blows but at the special command of God (speciali Dei jussu). (Inst. I, xvi, 7.) Every year, month, and day is governed by a new and special providence of God (nova et speciali Dei providentia temperari). (Inst. I, xvi, 7.) Chance and fortune do not belong to a Christian man's vocabulary. Events are often fortuitous to us because their order, reason, end, and necessity are hid in the counsel of God and are not apprehended by the mind of man. But they are not fortuitous for God -- they proceed from his will.

"This insistence upon the ever-present and ever-active will of God in each particular movement obviously rules out the notion of bare permission. But Calvin takes pains to reflect on this subterfuge. It is particularly in connection with the sinful acts of Satan and of wicked men that the postulate of bare permission appears to offer escape from the allegation that the presence of the will and agency of God would be inconsistent with the responsibility and guilt which devolve upon the perpetrators of iniquity. In Calvin's esteem, this resort to the idea of permission is only to evade the difficulty. For 'that men can effect nothing but by the secret will of God nor can they be exercised in deliberating anything but what he has previously with himself decreed and determines by his secret direction is proved by innumerable and express testimony.' (Inst. I, xviii, 1.) 'Whatever is attempted by men, or by Satan himself, God still holds the helm in order to turn all their attempts to the execution of his judgments.' (Inst. I, xviii, 1) So it is nugatory and insipid to substitute for the providence of God a bare permission. The very 'conceptions we form in our minds are directed by the secret inspiration of God to the end which He has designed' (arcana Dei inspiratione ad suum finem dirigi). (Inst. I, xviii, 2.)

"It is obvious what questions arise in connection with this doctrine. And Calvin was well aware of the objections and faced up squarely to their apparent validity. There is, first of all, the question of authorship. Is not God, therefore, the author of the crimes which the instruments of iniquity conceive and perpetrate? At certain points Calvin does speak of God as author and cause. According to Scripture God 'himself is said to give men over to a reprobate mind and cast them into vile lusts, because he is the principal author (praecipuus autor) of his own righteous vengeance, and Satan is only the minister of it.' (Inst. I, xviii, 2.) Again he says: 'And I have already sufficiently shown that God is called the author (autor) of all these things which these censors wish to happen merely by his idle permission.' (Inst. I, xviii, 3.)

"There are, however, certain qualifications which must be appreciated if we are to assess these statements correctly. Calvin is equally emphatic to the effect that God is not the author of sin. With respect to Adam's fall he says expressly, that although God ordained the fall of Adam, 'I so asserted as by no means to concede that God was the author.' (De Aeterna Dei Praedestinatione, as cited, col. 315; cf. E.T., p. 126.) 'But how it was that God, by his foreknowledge and decree, ordained what should take place respecting man, and yet so ordained it without his being himself in the least a participator of the fault, or being at all the author (autor) or the approver of the transgression; how this was, I repeat, is a secret manifestly far too deep to be penetrated by the human mind, nor am I ashamed to confess our ignorance. And far be it from any of the faithful to be ashamed to confess his ignorance of that which the Lord envelopes in the blaze of his own inaccessible light.' (De Aeterna Dei Praedestinatione, col. 316; cf. E.T., p. 128.)

"Furthermore, Calvin will allow for no equivocation on the principle that on those operations which are common to God and men God is free from all fault and contracts no defilement from men's vices. No one has expended more care than Calvin in developing the distinction in respect of the motive, reason, and end by which men are actuated in the commission of sin and the motive, reason, and end by which God makes the vices of men to fulfill His holy purposes. 'So great is the difference,' he says in quoting from Augustine, 'between what belongs to the human will, and what to the divine, and between the

ends to which the will of everyone is to be referred, for approbation or censure. For God fulfills his righteous will by the wicked wills of wicked men.'

(Inst. I, xviii, 3.) There is a complete disparity between the wills of wicked men and the will of God which is operative in the same event. When men sin they do not perform evil actions with the motive or design of promoting the will of God but because they are inflamed with the violence of their own passions and deliberately strive to oppose him. 'God only requires of us conformity to his precepts. If we do anything contrary to them, it is not obedience, but contumacy and transgression...they (men) can lay no blame upon God, for they find in themselves nothing but evil, and in him only a legitimate use of their wickedness.' (Inst. I, xvii, 5; E.T. by John Allen) There is thus a coincidence of the wicked wills of wicked men and the holy will of God. Both are operative in and converge upon the same event, and yet God contracts no defilement from the perversity which is the instrument of his holy designs. The difficulty this may pose for our understanding arises from the fact that 'because of the weakness of our mind we do not comprehend how in different respects (diverso modo) he does not will and wills the same thing' (nolit fieri et velit). (Inst. I, xviii, 3.)

"It is not only, however, the disparity that exists between the wicked wills of men and the holy will of God, as both converge upon the same event, but also the disparity that exists within the will of God. There is a twofold aspect to the will of God. And there is the disparity between the decretive will and the preceptive will, between the determinations of his secret counsel that certain events will come to pass and the prescriptions of his revealed will to us that we do not bring these events to pass. It cannot be gainsaid that God decretively wills what he preceptively forbids and decretively forbids what he preceptively commands. It is precisely in this consideration that the doctrine of God's sovereignty is focused most acutely with its demands for our faith and reverence. If I am not mistaken it is at this point that the sovereignty of God makes the human mind reel as it does nowhere else in connection with this topic. It should be so. It is the sanctified understanding that reels. And it is not the mark of intelligence to allege or claim a ready resolution of the apparent contradiction with which it confronts us. How can God say: this comes to pass by my infallible foreordination and providence, and also say to us: this thou shalt not bring to pass?

"Calvin was well aware of this question and he did not tone down the mystery with which it confronts us. He is constantly refuting, by appeal to Scripture, the objections which unbelief registers against this doctrine. Much of the argumentation in the last three chapters of Book I of the Institutes is concerned with it. It is of interest that the last work in which Calvin was engaged before his work was arrested by the hand of death was his exposition of the prophecy of Ezekiel. His work ended with Ezekiel 20:44. He did not even complete his exposition of the chapter. At Ezekiel 18:23, in dealing with the discrepancy between God's will to the salvation of all and the election of God by which he predestinates only a fixed number to salvation, he says: 'If anyone again objects -- this is making God act with duplicity, the answer is ready, that God always wishes the same thing, though by different ways, and in a manner inscrutable to us. Although, therefore, God's will is simple, yet great variety is involved in it, as far as our senses are concerned. Besides, it is not surprising that our eyes should be blinded by intense light, so that we cannot certainly judge how God wishes all to be saved, and yet has devoted all the reprobate to eternal destruction, and wishes them to perish. While we look now through a glass darkly, we should be content with the measure of our own intelligence.' (Comm. ad Ezek. 18:23; E.T. by Thomas Myers.)"

It is at this point that Prof. Murray makes the following significant comment in a footnote about Calvin's treatment of Ezekiel 18:23:

"It is more probable that the Latin verb velle, translated on three occasions above by the English term 'wishes,' should rather be rendered 'wills.' The present writer is not persuaded that we may speak of God's will as 'simple,' after the pattern of Calvin's statement. There is the undeniable fact that, in regard to sin, God decretively wills what He preceptively does not will. There is the contradiction. We must maintain that it is perfectly consistent with God's perfection that this contradiction should obtain. But it does not appear to be any resolution to say that God's will is 'simple,' even in the sense of the Latin term simplex."

Prof. Murray concludes his discussion of the sovereignty of God in His providence as follows:

"I said previously that in this discrepancy the doctrine of God's sovereignty comes to its most pointed expression. It is so, I submit because the sovereignty of God bears upon us at no point more relevantly and with more

irresistible sanction than in his command. Nothing underlines God's sovereignty over us and his propriety in us, as creatures made in his image, as does his sovereign command. In his command his sovereignty is addressed to our responsibility and our responsibility defines our creaturehood as made in his image. And the command of God registers his supremacy and our complete subjection to him. The providence of God, as also his decretive will, is at no point exemplified and vindicated as to its all-inclusiveness more effectively than at the point where our responsible agency is exercised in violation of his command. There is, after all, the contradiction that we by sin offer to God's sovereignty. It is the contradiction of the claim which his sovereignty demands of us and the contradiction of what is God's good pleasure. But if the providence of God did not embrace that very contradiction, then there would be a sphere outside the realm of God's providence and, therefore, outside the sphere of his sovereign control and direction. The simple upshot of that alternative would be that God would not be sovereign, and man in his sin would be able to command a realm impervious to God's providence.

"What a dismal perspective and prospect that alternative would offer to us! We must boldly maintain and profess the only alternative which Calvin so insistently asserted. In the realm of sin we do have the contradiction of God's revealed and prescriptive good pleasure. But that very contradiction is embraced in the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God. And it is just because this is the case, it is just because the contradiction which sin offers to his sovereignty in command is embraced in the sovereignty of both decree and providence and does not create a realm impervious to his efficient foreordination and operation that the sovereign provisions of his grace invade that same realm and emancipate men from the contradiction itself and therefore from the curse, condemnation, thralldom, and misery which the contradiction entails. It is this doctrine of God's sovereignty in the realm of sin that is the pre-condition of sovereignty in redemptive grace."

Concerning this lengthy quotation we make the following remarks:

1) It should be evident that Prof. Murray is, to say the least, rather bold in his use of such terms as "disparity, discrepancy, contradiction" to describe the relation between God's decretive and His preceptive will. True, on one occasion he uses the expression "apparent contradiction." But for the rest, he does not qualify his use of these terms. This is all the more significant in the light of the fact that he uses the very same terminology with regard to the relation between the will of the wicked and the will of God. For example:

"There is a complete disparity between the wills of wicked men and the will of God which is operative in the same event." Besides, in the footnote to which we referred we find the following bold language: "There is the undeniable fact that, in regard to sin, God decretively wills what he preceptively does not will. There is the contradiction."

2) We may note the same imprecise use of the term "good pleasure" which we noted earlier. Prof. Murray more than once uses this term to refer to what he calls God's preceptive will, while this term should be reserved in theological parlance for God's decree.

3) We ought to notice that Prof. Murray in his discussion of Calvin's comments on Ezekiel 18:23 actually leaves the subject of the relation between the will of God and sin, and slips into the area of the so-called "free offer." True, the "free offer" is not mentioned literally. However, we should bear in mind:

a) That the quotation from Calvin concerns "how God wishes all to be saved, and yet has devoted all the reprobate to eternal destruction, and wishes them to perish." This is, you will recall, the subject with which The Free Offer Of The Gospel was introduced. b) There is no mention in the paragraph devoted to these comments of Calvin to the will and actions of wicked men in relation to God's will, but only of God's will to save all and His will that the reprobate perish (and Murray himself insists that the Latin velle should be translated by "wills" rather than by "wishes" -- something to which we have no objection.) c) Anyone familiar with the subject of the "free offer" knows that Ezekiel 18:23 is considered to be one of the key passages of Scripture in support of the doctrine of the "free offer."

4) We should recognize the fact that as soon as the discussion turns to the area of the "free offer" we have also actually left the area of the decretive-preceptive distinction in the will of God. When anyone speaks of the "free offer," he is no longer speaking of God's preceptive will, i.e., of what God wills that the creature shall be and do in the spiritual, ethical sense, but of what God Himself wills to do. i.e., save all men.

5) In this light, it is all the more serious when Prof. Murray parts ways with Calvin, as in the footnote which we quoted, and denies the simplicity of the will of God. It is true that he still speaks of the decretive-preceptive distinction. But this distinction is not valid in the context, neither does Calvin here employ it, neither does it rescue Prof. Murray in any way from the

seriousness of his statement. One can only come to the same conclusion to which Herman Hoeksema came with respect to Heyns's view: so many wills -- so many gods.

6) Finally, it should be noted that Prof. Murray does not quote the whole of Calvin's comments on Ezekiel 18:23. Both in his Commentary and elsewhere Calvin has more to say on the problem raised in connection with Ezekiel 18:23, as well as more to say on the subject of the simplicity of the will of God. To this we shall refer later.

H. Bavinck

Next we turn to Dr. Herman Bavinck's Gereformeerde Dogmatiek. In Volume II, pp. 227 ff., (2nd edition), Dr. Bavinck devotes a lengthy discussion to the subject of the will of God. His treatment of this subject is under the heading Attributes of Sovereignty. Characteristically, Bavinck devotes considerable attention to the history of this doctrine; and this in itself makes it worthwhile to study Bavinck's contribution. But Dr. Bavinck also raises some questions and draws some lines and calls attention to some distinctions which are important for our present study. For these reasons, therefore, as well as in the interest of completeness, we will quote this entire discussion by Dr. Bavinck in translation. It is as follows:

" 207. Following the virtues already treated are those which are peculiar to God as Sovereign. God is the Creator, and therefore the Owner, Proprietor, Lord of all; nothing exists or possesses anything outside of Him; He alone has absolute authority; His will is decisive always and concerning all. Of that sovereign will, אֵלֹהִים, אֱלֹהִים, אֱלֹהִים, Daniel 4:35; 6:18, θελημα, βουλημα, repeated mention is also made in Holy Scripture. That will is the final cause of all things, of their being and of the manner of their being. From it everything is derived, creation and preservation, Revelation 4:11 government, Proverbs 21:1, Daniel 4:35, Ephesians 1:11, the suffering of Christ, Luke 22:43, election and reprobation, Romans 9:15 ff., regeneration, James 1:18, sanctification, Philippians 2:13, the suffering of believers, I Peter 3:17, our life and our portion, James 4:15, Acts 18:21, Romans 15:32, even the smallest and most insignificant things, Matthew 10:29 etc. And in harmony with this Scriptural data also in Christian theology the will of God has been acknowledged as the final cause of all that exists and as the end of all contradiction. Voluntas conditoris conditae rei cujusque natura est. (Augustine, de civ. XXI. 8. de trin. III 6-9.) Philosophy however, has never been satisfied with this and



has consistently sought after another and deeper explanation of things. Plato attempted to derive the visible world from the ideas, which were the real being, but he did not succeed in this. Aristotle conceived of the Deity as pure εἶδος, as νοῦς νοῦς, which excluded all willing, all <sup>doing?</sup> ποῦς and πρᾶξις; and although he at the same time acknowledged it as primum movens, the nature of the movement and the relation of God and the world remains entirely in the dark with Aristotle. Among the Stoics this led to Pantheism; God is the reason, the spirit, the soul of the world, and the latter is the body, the garb, the appearance of God. The new philosophy returned to this rationalism. Cartesius saw in thought the essence of the spirit and the guarantee of being. This led, by legitimate conclusion, to the identity-philosophy of Hegel. The absolute is pure thinking, but not, as with Plato, a world of ideas and still less a true reality. But it is thinking without more, without any content; no being, but becoming; it is actually nothing and potentially everything. From this principle, which was only a logical abstraction, the world had to be explained. It soon became plain that this was impossible. Hegel left the problem as unsolved as did Plato and Aristotle. From this abstract unity the plurality could not come forth; from this thinking, being could not proceed. That there still lay in it some appearance of truth arose out of a playing with concepts. Hegel called this absolute thought also pure possibility. This logical possibility, however, was dialectically changed into real power, into absolute δύναμις, and thus it appeared indeed to be able to bring it forth. But this was a dialectical game, which in the long run could not satisfy. From various quarters opposition arose against the philosophy of Hegel. Rationalism had served out its time, idealism did not explain being, the primacy of the intellect suffered bankruptcy, from absolute thought without will no existence, no world was to be derived. Therefore they now attempted a solution with the primacy of the will!

"Schelling undertook this in his second period. He went back to the theosophy of Böhme, and through him to the Cabbala and to Neoplatonism. Here Plotinus had already taught that God was causa sui, product of His will and power, and that thus the will was the final being and preceded the understanding. And even so now Schelling made the will to be the last principle both of the existence of the infinite and of the being of the finite. Already in his philosophical investigations concerning the essence of human freedom in the year 1809 he assumed this position. 'Es gibt,' he said, 'in der letzten und höchsten

Instanz gar kein anderes Seyn als Wollen. Wollen ist Urseyn und Auf dieses allein passen alle Prädicate desselben: Grundlosigkeit, Ewigkeit, Unabhängigkeit von der Zeit, Selbstbejahung. Die ganze Philosophie strebt nur dahin, diesen höchsten Ausdruck zu finden.' (Schelling, Werke I, 7 bl. 350.) In God and in the creature distinction must be made between the essence in so far as it exists and the essence in so far as it is only the ground of existence. God has the ground of His existence in Himself, that is in a nature distinguished from God Himself. This nature is as it were die Sehnsucht, die das ewige Eine empfindet, sich selbst zu gebären; it is will, aber Wille, in dem kein Verstand ist, und darum auch nicht selbständiger und vollkommener Wille, indem der Verstand der wille in dem Willen ist. Dennoch ist sie ein Willen des Verstandes, nämlich sehnsucht und Begierde desselben; nicht ein bewusster, sondern ein ahnender Wille, dessen Ahndung der Verstand ist. But thus it is now also with all things. They are something other than God and can nevertheless not be outside of God. This contradiction is only thus to be solved, dass die Dinge ihren Grund in dem haben, was in Gott selbst nicht Er selbst ist, d.h. in dem, was Grund seiner Existenz ist. Things have their ground in this dark nature, in this unconscious will of God. There is indeed law and order and form to be observed in the world, just as also in God out of the dark nature the light of the spirit and of the personality has arisen. Aber immer liegt noch im Grunde das Regellose, also könnte es einmal widere durchbrechen, und nirgends scheint es, als wären Ordnung und Form das Ursprüngliche, sondern als wäre ein anfänglich Regellostes zur Ordnung gebracht worden. (Schelling I 7 bl. 357-359.) The entire world process is derived by Schelling from the contrast of nature and spirit, of darkness and light, of the real and the ideal principle, which together are present in God Himself from all eternity.

By taking this position Schelling superceded the rationalism of Hegel and he became of the greatest significance for later philosophy. The thought which he had expressed already in his investigation concerning human freedom he worked out more precisely and in a theistic sense in his later writings. But he remained faithful to his primacy of the will and was followed in this by Schopenhauer and Von Hartmann. Now it is true that with these philosophers the will is no will in a real sense, but nothing else than an unconscious desiring, a blind urge, a dark nature. But in part this was acknowledged by them. Schelling says expressly that the will without understanding is no

independent and complete will, indem der Verstand der Wille in dem Willen ist. Schopenhauer reckoned the consciousness as belonging to the manifestation of the will and considered it bound to individuality and the brain, but nevertheless inserted between the will and the world of phenomena the ideas, which were the eternal forms and examples of things. And Von Hartmann speaks of the Unconscious also again as subject and as Überbewusst. The existence of things is determined by the will, but the essence by the intellect. But also apart from this acknowledgement, their philosophy is of great significance for theism. It demonstrated the untenability of rationalistic and idealistic Pantheism.

✓ God is not to be thought of without will, freedom, and power. Indeed it was argued against this that all willing was a desiring and striving, and therefore a proof of incompleteness, of being unsatisfied, of unrest, which cannot occur in God. And the mystic therefore sang: Wir beten, es geschehe, mein Herr und Gott, dein Wille; Und siehe, Er hat nicht Wille, Er ist eine ewige Stille (Angelus Silesius.) But this objection rests on an incorrect conception of the will. Certainly, willing is often a striving after something which is not possessed; but when the will has now obtained that which was desired and rests in and enjoys it, then also that resting and enjoyment is a deed and activity of the will, yea, the highest and most powerful activity. Such a will now, which rests in and enjoys that which is attained, there is also in creatures and is nothing else than the love which embraces its object and is happy therein. If such a rest and enjoyment is not ascribed to the will, it is either unattainable for the creature, that is, then there is no happiness possible for the creature; or if that blessedness nevertheless shall one day be bestowed upon the creature, it can consist in nothing else than in the annihilation of the will, in the benumbing of the consciousness, and in the complete suppression of the personality. In Pantheistic mysticism therefore salvation is conceived of as a being absorbed, an ascension, a being swallowed up of the soul in God, that is, in a nirvana. However, Scripture and Christian theology do not teach this. Salvation does not slay the will, but brings it to its highest activity; for love is the richest, most powerful energy of the will. Thus there is also a will in God. His willing is not a striving after a good that He is lacking and without which He cannot be blessed. For He is the All-sufficient and Blessed One in Himself. He is Himself the highest Good, for His creatures and also for Himself. He can rest in nothing else than in Himself; seeing that He is God, He can not be blessed except through and in

Himself. His love is self love, and therefore absolute, divine love. And that absolute self love is nothing else than a willing of Himself, the highest, absolute, divine energy of His will. The object of God's will is therefore God Himself. Not in the sense that He were the product of His will, as though He had caused Himself and were causa sui, for that again introduces in God becoming and striving and therefore imperfection. But indeed thus, that God eternally wills Himself with a voluntas complacentiae, that He eternally loves Himself with divine love, and is perfectly blessed in Himself. His will is sapientissima ejus propensio in se ipsum tanquam summum bonum; it is also no faculty or power in God, but subject, action, and object of that will is one with God's being;  $\theta\epsilon\lambda\eta\mu\alpha$   $\theta\epsilon\lambda\eta\tau\iota\kappa\omicron\nu$ ,  $\theta\epsilon\lambda\eta\sigma\iota\varsigma$  and  $\theta\epsilon\lambda\eta\mu\alpha$   $\theta\epsilon\lambda\eta\tau\omicron\nu$  coincide with His being.

Scripture, however, also speaks of a will of God in relation to that which is created. As the knowledge of God is twofold, scientia necessaria and libera, so also is the will of God to be distinguished as propensio in se ipsum and as propensio in creaturas. But even as the scientia libera does not make God dependent on the creatures but is known to Him from His own being, so also the will of God which directs itself toward the creatures is not to be placed dualistically next to the will which has His own being as its object. Scripture teaches expressly that God wills alia a se and speaks repeatedly of His will in relation to the creatures, but adds as in one breath that God does not will those creatures out of need, but only for His own sake, for His Name's sake, Proverbs 16:4. Creation is therefore not to be conceived as an object which stands outside of and over against Him, which He is lacking and after which He strives in order to possess it, or whereby He hopes to obtain something which He does not have. For of Him and through Him and also to Him are all things. He does not find His purpose in the creatures, but the latter find their purpose in Him. Quae extra se vult, ea etiam quodam modo sunt in Deo, in quo sunt omnia (Zanchius, Opera, II, 246). He does not will the creatures for something that they are or that is in them, but He wills them for Himself. He remains His own purpose. He never directs himself toward the creatures as such, but through them toward Himself. Proceeding out of Himself, He returns to Himself. It is a propensio in se ipsum tanquam summum finem et in creaturas propter se ut media; His love toward Himself takes up in itself His love toward the creatures and returns through them to Himself.

Therefore His willing, also in relation to the creatures, is never a striving after any still to be attained good and therefore also no indication of imperfection and lack of blessedness; but His willing is always also in and through the creatures absolute self enjoyment, perfect blessedness, divine rest. Rest and labor are in God one, His self sufficiency is at once absolute activity.

"208. Although God, however, with one and the same simple deed wills Himself and the creatures, nevertheless the will of God must be distinguished by us with a view to the various objects. In Pantheism this distinction is impossible because in it the world and the Being of God are identical. But Scripture ascribes to the creatures not indeed independent being, but nevertheless their own being distinct from God's essence; and therefore the creatures cannot be the object of His will in the same sense and in the same manner as He is with His essence. The will of God with which God wills Himself is propensio in se tanquam finem<sup>end</sup>; the will which has the creatures for its object is propensio in creaturas tanquam media<sup>means</sup>. The former is necessaria, just as the scientia simplicis intelligentiae; God cannot do otherwise than love Himself; He delights in Himself eternally and with divine necessity. This will of God is therefore exalted above all arbitrariness, but nevertheless is not under compulsion and lacking in freedom; freedom and necessity coincide here; it is entirely different, however, with the will of God which has the creatures for its object. Scripture speaks of this will as absolutely as possible. God does whatsoever pleases Him, Psalm 115:3, Proverbs 21:1, Daniel 4:35. He is obligated to give account to no one and answers for none of His deeds, Job 33:13. Men are in His hand as clay in the hand of the potter, Job 10:9, 33:6, Isaiah 29:16, 30:14, 64:8, Jeremiah 8:1 ff., nations are as a drop, a bit of dust, esteemed as nothing, Isaiah 40:15 ff. It is as foolish for a man to exalt himself against God as that an axe exalts itself against him that heweth with it, or a saw against the one who draws it, Isaiah 10:15! Man has no rights with God; no one can ask Him: What doest Thou? Shall the clay say to him that forms it: What makest Thou, Job 9:2 ff., 11:10, Isaiah 45:9? Hence, let man keep silence and lay his hand upon his mouth, Job 39:37. And the New Testament does not teach differently. God can do with His own what He will, Matthew 20:15. Being and manner of being are dependent only upon God's will, Revelation 4:11. This is the ultimate ground of everything. Mercy and

504  
God  
Tripto

hardening have their cause therein, Romans 9:15-18. In the church the Holy Ghost imparts gifts as He will, I Corinthians 12:11. And a man has nothing to say against God's free decrees, Matthew 20:13 ff., Romans 9:20,21.

"On these grounds also the voluntas dei, which had the creatures as object, was, even as the scientia visionis, consistently called libera in Christian theology. Augustine said that the will of God was the ultimate and deepest ground of all things; a deeper ground there is not. To the question why God created the world there is but one answer: quia voluit; whoever then inquires further after a cause for that will, majus aliud quaerit, quam est voluntas Dei; nihil autem majus inveniri potest; and thus spake the entire Christian church and theology with him. All taught not indeed that God could have acted plus and melius than He did, for He always acts in a divine, perfect manner; but that He nevertheless could have made things plura and majora and meliora than He has made them. By some indeed the moral law was called eternal and natural, and viewed as the expression of God's Being; but there was in this nevertheless also distinction made again between the essential and incidental and concerning many commandments in special circumstances dispensation could be granted. According to many the incarnation and satisfaction were not absolutely necessary; God could also, if He had willed, have forgiven without satisfaction and does not necessarily have to punish sin. This freedom of God came still more strongly to expression in election and reprobation, for which there is no single ground to be given and which rests only in the sovereign good pleasure of God. A right of any creature over against God is out of the question; a justitia commutativa there is not. Since a creature can have no merit with God, there is also no justitia remunerativa in the real sense. Some even proposed that God, although He never makes use of this right, could punish the innocent temporally or eternally.

"Thus many theologians, proceeding from the absolute freedom of God, came to stand in the line of medieval nominalism. It was Duns Scotus who consistently applied the Pelagian concept of freedom of the will as absolute indifference to God. In his commentary on the Sententiae of Lombard he argues against Aristotle and Avicenna that nothing is necessary except God. The world is in its entirety and in its parts contingent; it is unnecessary for God. To the question why God has willed this and has willed the one thing rather than the other, Scotus gives the answer: indisciplinati est quaerere omnium causas et demonstrationem.... Principii enim demonstrationis non est demonstratio;

immediatum autem principium est voluntatem velle hoc ita quod non est aliqua causa media inter ista; sicut immediatum est, calorem esse calefactivum, licet hoc sit naturalitas, ibi autem libertas, et ideo hujus, quare voluntas voluit hoc, nulla est causa, nisi quia voluntas est voluntas. Sicut hujus, quare calor est calefactivus, nulla est causa, nisi quia calor est calor, quia nulla est prior causa. One must abide by this word: Voluntas Dei vult hoc; there is no cause prior ratione voluntatis. Scotus remains faithful to this principle with regard to all that is and that happens in time. If the entire world is incidental, then this its character can only be preserved by this, that God, the first cause, causes it incidentally. Now God causes the world through understanding and will. The incidental, however, cannot lie in God's understanding in so far as it precedes the will, for this understanding intellegit mere naturaliter et necessitate naturali. It must lie therefore in the will. This divine will nihil aliud respicit necessario pro objecto ab essentia sua; ad quodlibet igitur aliud contingenter se habet, ita quod posset esse oppositi. No, Scotus recognizes indeed that the knowledge of God precedes the will and that the ideas in God, although distinguished from His essence, are before His decree. But it is nevertheless the will which chooses out of all those possible ideas and determines which shall attain reality. The will is the cause of all reality. And only as a consequence of this determination of the will does the understanding also know what shall become reality. God has therefore created the world with absolute freedom although it be also true that He has taken the decision to do so from eternity. Of course man's freedom of will was therefore also conceived of by Scotus as absolutely as possible; the will is free ad oppositos actus and ad opposita objecta; it is determined by nothing, it can as well choose a lower as a higher good, it is itself alone the complete cause of its actions; non autem bonitas aliqua objecti causat necessario assensum voluntatis sed voluntas libere assentit cuilibet bono et ita libere assentit majori bono sicut minori. Nihil aliud a voluntate est causa totalis volitionis in voluntate. The will even precedes the understanding, for although it is true that the understanding presents to the will the object of its striving, the will nevertheless directs the understanding to that object; and salvation lies formally not in the understanding but in the will. Furthermore Scotus recognizes indeed that love to God, prescribed in the first table of the law, is necessary and natural; but the commandments of the second table are positive and could also have been different. In relation to the incarnation

Scotus teaches that the Logos, if He willed, could also have assumed another nature, for example, that of a stone. The incarnation would apparently also have taken place apart from sin and was also in the condition of sin not absolutely necessary; God could also have saved in another manner. The merits of Christ were not atoning in themselves, but were accepted as such by God. Considered by itself, reckoned according to God's potentia absoluta, God could have bestowed salvation upon the sinner also apart from the merits of Christ, and the sinner could also have atoned for himself if God had but willed to count his works as atoning. Transubstantiation is possible, quia una substantia potest totaliter incipere et alia totaliter desinere. God can even cause a person or thing for a tempus intermedium to cease in its existence without thereby losing its identity.

Nevertheless Scotus did not go so far as some Mohammedan theologians who allowed all things from moment to moment to be created by the will of God without mutual connection, without natural laws, without substances and qualities. He acknowledges ideas in God which precede the will; considers love toward God necessary and natural; believes in a natural knowledge of God, in a world order and natural law, and also says that the incarnation and atonement were necessary according to the potentia Dei ordinata. Nevertheless Scotus exalts freedom and omnipotence so much that at least the means which must lead to the purpose become entirely arbitrary. By others this principle of the freedom and omnipotence of God was developed still farther. Entirely in the spirit of Scotus, Occam, for example, asserted that God according to His potentia absoluta can bestow salvation without regeneration and can condemn the regenerate; that He can forgive without atonement and can count works of the sinful man as atoning; that the Father could have become man in place of the Son, and that the Son could also have assumed the nature of a stone or an ass; that God can grant dispensation for all the commandments of the moral law, etc. This nominalist position was later assumed in the first place by the Jesuits, but then further by the Socinians, by the Remonstrants, by Cartesius, by Cartesian theologians, such as Burmannus and in the last century especially by Charles Secretan. On this position the will in God is entirely disconnected from His being and from all His virtues; it consists in nothing else than formal arbitrariness. Creation, incarnation, atonement, good and



evil, truth and untruth, reward and punishment, everything could have just as well been different than it actually is. There is nothing natural any more, everything is positive.

"But precisely this nominalism put Christian theology on its guard. Although it also said with Augustine that the will of God was the final ground of all things, it guarded against depriving this will of all nature and allowing it to vanish into pure arbitrariness. To begin with it took its starting point in the doctrine of God not in the voluntas but in the essentia Dei. The scientia simplicis intelligentiae logically preceded the scientia visionis, even as the voluntas necessaria the voluntas libera. Self-knowledge and self-love were in God absolutely necessary; and the knowledge and the will which have the creatures as their object are not dualistically separated from these, but stand in the closest connection with them. The scientia visionis is bound to the scientia simplicis intelligentiae, and the voluntas libera to the voluntas necessaria. According to consistent nominalism not only the existence but also the essence of things is exclusively determined and established by the formal will in God; really there is, therefore, in God no scientia simplicis intelligentiae, in which all possibilities are comprehended; there is only in Him a scientia visionis, which follows upon the will. But according to Christian theology all possibilities lay locked up in the scientia simplicis intelligentiae, and from it the scientia visionis draws, and the will brings them to reality. The existence of things, therefore, depends indeed upon the will of God, but the essence upon His understanding. Leibniz built upon this, but he nevertheless also gave another sense to it when he said that God was indeed free to create or not to create the world, man, the animals, the plants, but if He created them, He had to create them according to the idea which His consciousness had of them without and before the will. Given the will of God to create, the world must be just exactly as it is. It is therefore the best possible and in all its parts coheres so closely that qui unum bene novit omnia novit. Further, Scripture taught everywhere that God created and upheld the world through the word, through the Logos. It rested therefore upon thoughts of God. God did not deal arbitrarily and incidentally but with the highest wisdom. Although therefore also for us the reasons for His actions could not be fathomed, they were nevertheless present for Him. And for those reasons, then, Christian theology also sought. Creation had its cause in His goodness

or love; for the permission of sin various reasons were furnished; incarnation and atonement were perhaps not absolutely necessary, but this way of salvation was nevertheless the most suitable and most excellent; and although many did not dare limit the potestas absoluta, nevertheless all acknowledged that He made no use of this absolute right and therefore came to complete agreement with one another in the potestas ordinata. And finally, nominalism was definitely rejected in concrete points; the moral law cannot have another content than it has; the punishment of sin is necessary; the incarnation and atonement is grounded in God's justice; and the power of God was so circumscribed that it excluded the doing of contradictory things.

"In this manner nominalism in Christian theology was, if not conquered, then nevertheless suppressed and limited. When the voluntas libera was circumscribed as propensio in creaturas propter se ut media, then there was implied in this also already a principal opposition against the will of God as absolute arbitrariness, for the character of the means is determined by the nature of the goal. This also explains the fact that theology, although placing the will of God on the foreground and consistently returning to it, nevertheless has always and again sought after the motives for that will. Realism strove after this, in order to understand the world as one harmonious whole, in which nothing was arbitrary and everything had its place, even including sin, and which was entirely in the service of the glorification of God's Name. If the nature of a science consists in the rerum cognoscere causas, also theology cannot withdraw from such an investigation. Only, for every practitioner of science, and especially for the theologian, humility and propriety are a first obligation. He may not be wise above measure. All science is bound to its object; it may not falsify or deny the phenomena which it perceives for the sake of any preconceived theory. Thus also theology is strictly bound to the facts and evidences which God makes known to it in nature and Scripture. She must allow these to stand, undiminished and unmutated. If she cannot explain them, she has to confess her ignorance. The will of God which expresses itself in those facts is for her the end of all reasoning. She rests finally in His sovereignty. In that sense the word of Augustine remains true: voluntas Dei cujusque creaturae natura est. She does not let herself be deceived by Pantheism, which makes the world necessary, for there is distinction between God and the world, between His voluntas necessaria

and voluntas libera; neither does she allow herself to be deceived by Deism, which makes the world a product of coincidence, for that entire world is a revelation of God's wisdom. And she maintains against both that the world is a deed of God's free, sovereign will, and that for this will God had His wise and good reasons. For us something is good simply because God wills it; God Himself can never will something except because it is either in itself or because of something else good. We almost never see why God has willed the one thing and not the other; and therefore we must present it thus, that He could as well have willed the one thing as the other. But in God there is really no choice, which after all always presupposes uncertainty, wavering, deliberation. He knows eternally, firmly, unchangeably that which He wills. In His will there is no arbitrariness, no accident, no uncertainty, but only eternal determinateness and unchangeability. Contingency is peculiar to the creature; and, reverently speaking, it is not even possible for God to deprive the creature of this character. In God alone are existentia and essentia one; every creature as such by virtue of its own nature, includes the possibility that it did not exist. But God with an eternal and unchangeable will has willed all creatures as contingent. Therefore it is not possible and not even permissible to climb higher than to the will of God. For every attempt at this ends in seeking for the creature a ground in God's being, thus making it necessary and eternal and divine, and depriving it of its creaturely, that is, contingent character. In so far the will of God which has the created being for its object <sup>is</sup> free. But this freedom does not exclude the other virtues of God, His wisdom, goodness, righteousness, etc. For also among creatures that is not the true freedom of will which has need of a long period of doubt, deliberation, and decision; but that is the highest freedom which at once, *uno intuitu*, establishes both the purpose and the means and knows of no hesitation. And such a freedom there is also in God; a freedom which is not to be conceived as bound by the other virtues of God or independent of them in nominalistic fashion, but such a freedom which is free in the absolute sense because it is the freedom of a wise, righteous, holy, merciful, and almighty God. When Augustine, Thomas, Calvin, etc., then also said that there was no cause for the will of God, then they meant thereby that the will of God, as one with His Being, has no cause behind or above it, on which that will is dependent. But by this they by no means wanted to say that that will was without ratio, that it was in the sense of Schopenhauer a blind, alogical will. On the contrary

the will of God is one with His Being, with His wisdom, goodness, and all His virtues. And therefore the heart and head of man can rest in that will, for it is the will, not of a blind fate, of an unaccountable accident, of a dark power of nature, but the will of an almighty God and of a merciful Father. His sovereignty is a sovereignty of unbounded power, but also a sovereignty of wisdom and grace. He is at once King and Father.

## BOOK REVIEW

Foundations of Christian Scholarship, Essays in the Van Til Perspective, Edited by Gary North; Ross House Books, 1976; 355 pp., hard cover.

This book is a Chalcedon Study; i.e., it is sponsored by Chalcedon, Inc., a group of conservative Christian scholars of which Rousas Rushdoony is the President.

The justification for this book is found on the blurb of the outside cover. The authors believe that Christian scholarship has suffered from a kind of "intellectual schizophrenia. . . . Secular textbooks are baptized (sprinkled, usually) with a morning prayer of daily required chapel. Sometimes students do not even get this. The students and their parents find themselves paying high tuitions for educational content which is not noticeably different from that provided by tax-supported public universities. People are in effect, paying for very expensive morning prayers."

The authors plead for a Christian "reconstruction in every branch of the college curriculum." "The essays in this volume represent a beginning. Too many academic disciplines are absent from its pages, but at least a preliminary start has been made. The writers are committed to the interpretive principle of biblical a priorism: the Bible judges both the framework and the content of each academic discipline." As the subtitle of the book suggests, the authors are heavily indebted to Cornelius Van Til, long time professor of apologetics in Westminster Theological Seminary, for their basic viewpoint; and the book is an effort to put the epitomology of Van Til into practice in Christian higher education.

The first section of the book deals with basic epistemological questions, and gives the epistemological basis for Christian scholarship. The second section has to do with the application of these principles to various academic disciplines: Psychology, History, Economics, Education, Political Science, Sociology, Mathematics. The third section deals with "Foundations for Christian Reconstruction" and has chapters on Apologetics, Philosophy and Theology. While this section in this reviewer's opinion, the most interesting, the chapter on Theology by John Frame was the best because it gave an excellent and helpful insight into the thinking of Cornelius Van Til.

There is much in Van Til with which I agree; there are some aspects of his apologetics with which I sharply disagree. Although this is not the place to

go into these questions, the whole book emphasizes the importance of genuine Christian scholarship in Christian education. As was Van Til's thinking, so also this book is highly philosophical, and therefore, not easy reading. It is, however, a book that ought to be read by those who are interested in this question of genuine Christian education.

(Reviewed by H. Hanko)

## BOOK REVIEW

A Harmony of the Gospels, by Loraine Boettner; Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Company, 1976; 131 pp., \$2.95 (Kivar binding). (Reviewed by H. Hanko)

This harmony is a bit different from usual harmonies. A few quotes from the Introduction will make this plain.

The purpose of this HARMONY is to weave together in chronological order and in one continuous account all of the material found in the four Gospels: Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, and to include everything without repeating anything. Dates and places have been given so far as possible. The material is thus systematically arranged, and all that the four writers have to say about any particular event or teaching is brought together in one compact statement. . . .

This HARMONY is thus a purely Scriptural account. It differs from most other works of this kind in that the separate accounts are not printed in full in parallel columns, but are woven into one unified, continuous story. It is in no sense a commentary on the Gospels.

The present arrangement should be especially helpful in classwork in which the four Gospels are studied together. It was in connection with classes of that kind that the present arrangement was made. . . .

The American Standard Version of 1901, rather than the King James or any of the modern translations, has been used since in the opinion of the present editor it best preserves the beauty of the King James while at the same time improving the accuracy of translation. . . .

Although I personally prefer a harmony which is given in parallel columns (mainly for purposes of completeness), this is a very valuable little book and will indeed be helpful to all our pastors and teachers who teach the material of the Gospels in the Catechism class and in the classroom.

There are difficult questions of harmony in the Gospel narratives for which there are no easy and ready answers. The position which the author takes on these questions is not argued in this book -- this is not its purpose. But there are, as a result, points with which I would disagree. The

author places the material of John 1 which deals with Jesus' meeting with John the Baptist after the temptation in the wilderness. He takes the position that the identical material in Luke to the material in Matthew on the Sermon on the Mount indicates that Luke gives a record of the same sermon. It is my contention that probably Luke records a later sermon of Jesus which uses much the same material, but which nevertheless differs in important details. Boettner places the material in Luke 12 and 13 in Galilee and speaks of three different trips of Jesus to Perea. He also teaches that the Lord was crucified on Wednesday of the passion week to make room for three days and three nights in the tomb. The other events of the passion week are rearranged to fit this scheme.

These questions will have to be solved by personal study however; and there is room for difference of opinion on some of them.

The book is highly recommended.



## BOOK REVIEW

ELECTION, LOVE BEFORE TIME; by Kenneth D. Johns; Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing, 1976; 93 pp. \$2.50 (paper) (Reviewed by H. Hanko)

In many respects this is a very excellent book. It speaks of a doctrine which though in Reformed circles is increasingly neglected and denied, in many other circles is increasingly the object of study and interest. It is not a heavy theological work which deals with the doctrine of election in an abstract and coldly intellectual way; it is rather a popularly written book, easy to understand, and of value for many who are relatively unacquainted with this precious truth of Scripture or who want a book which is devotionally oriented.

There are many appealing features about the book. In Chapter 1 the author inveighs against the currently held doctrine of conditional election and shows how unscriptural such a view is. His exegesis of such passages as Romans 8 and 9 is very good, and his explanation of foreknowledge is thoroughly Scriptural. Raising strong arguments against the error of conditional election, the author speaks strongly for the truth of sovereign election apart from free will. In this same connection, (chapter 4), the author speaks also of prevenient grace. He does not however, speak of this in the Arminian sense, but in the sense of a sovereign preparation for salvation in God's people. In Chapter 5 the author speaks of the relation between election and preaching and stresses the fact that this truth gives the preacher the courage which he needs to go on with his work. The relation between sovereign election and the sovereign work of grace is also strongly stressed. In Chapter 9 the author points out that always the objections which have been raised against this doctrine really arise out of human pride and man's efforts to be as God.

There are some weaknesses in the book. In the first place, the author speaks (although somewhat in passing) of God's desire to save all men. Apparently he relates this to a general invitation and offer of the gospel. He makes no attempt to reconcile this with his strong emphasis on sovereign predestination, but simply states that the apparent conflict must stand. In the second place, there is little mention of the doctrine of reprobation. In so far as the author does mention it, he refers to it as a just leaving of some in their sin. And while it was no doubt the author's purpose to stress

particularly the positive truth of election, nevertheless, it is almost impossible to deal fully with election without speaking also of reprobation. In the third place, as far as this reviewer is concerned, the value of the book would be greatly enhanced if the poems at the end of each chapter were omitted. I do not know where the poems came from or if they are of the author's making; but they are not very good poetry and they detract from the value and force of the argument of the book.

With the reservations mentioned, we heartily recommend this little book to our readers.