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EDITORIAL NOTES

As we finish our twelfth volume of the *Journal* with this issue and our twelfth year of publishing, we are grateful to God for enabling us to continue this work. Our subscription list has grown rapidly, and the *Journal* is now sent to 21 foreign countries. These countries include such distant places as Australia, Ivory Coast, Finland, Republic of South Africa, Brazil, etc. May God continue to bless these efforts to maintain His truth.

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All three articles in this issue are continuations of previous articles. Prof. Hoeksema continues to write on the subject of the simplicity of God's will. Prof. Decker continues his series on Preaching. And my article continues a discussion of Kingdon's book and the whole subject of infant baptism.

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We wish to bring our readers up to date on the plans to publish Turretin. The MS we have and intend to publish is not the complete translation of Turretin's large Dogmatics. In fact, while many important subjects are covered, the MS we have is approximately 1/3 of the total. We have been informed by a brother in Pennsylvania that there is some possibility that the whole work will be published in the future. We hope this will be done for Turretin is worth having in the English.

In the meantime, we are working hard to get the work out. There have been delays however; and it appears now as if we will not be able to complete the work until the late summer. We ask all you who have sent in names to have patience as we pursue this task.

THE REFORMED DOCTRINE OF INFANT BAPTISM (4)

— Prof. H. Hanko —

Our readers will recall that we have, in previous articles in the *Journal*, been examining David Kingdon's book, "Children of Abraham." In this book the author presents what must be considered the best argument in favor of a "Reformed Baptism" position on the question of infant baptism. We pointed out that Kingdon, while expressly repudiating Dispensationalism, nevertheless falls into this very error. The chief reason for this is that he fails to reckon with the fact that while the covenant is one in both the Old and the New Dispensations, it is differently *administered* because the Old Dispensation was the Dispensation of types and shadows while the New Dispensation is the Dispensation of the fulfillment of the promise of the covenant.

In the last article we examined several questions concerning this unity of the two covenants. We pointed out that the Church in the Old Testament and in the New is one Church. We showed that the covenant is one in both Dispensations. We also proved from Scripture that the promises of the covenant are one in Christ. And following from all this, we pointed to the fact that the signs of the covenant, though differing in administration, were one because they signified the same spiritual blessings. On the basis of these arguments we showed that the sacrament of baptism had to be administered to infants in the New Dispensation just as the sacrament of circumcision was administered to infants in the Old Dispensation.

But these arguments by no means exhaust the Scriptural proof for the doctrine of infant baptism. And to the further proof in Scripture we now turn.

The first line of proof lies in the fact that repeatedly in Scripture specific commands of God come to children as well as to adults. And the important and interesting part of these commands of Jehovah God is that these commands are given on the grounds that children as well as adults are included in God's covenant. We shall take a look at a number of these passages and point out some interesting features about them.

Centrally, of course, there is the law of God itself which is embodied in the ten commandments. As recorded in Exodus 20, the commandment which is of particular interest to us is the fifth commandment, found in vs. 12:

Honor thy father and thy mother: that thy days may be long upon the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee.

Now it must not be forgotten that this commandment is a part of the whole of the Decalogue which is introduced with the words:

And God spake all these words, saying, I am the Lord thy God, which hath brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage.

These words which introduce the law are words which form the basis of the entire law. God says to Israel: I am the Lord thy God. I have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. And because I have done this—because I as thy God have delivered thee from the bondage and slavery of Egypt, therefore thou shalt keep my law. Already then God made it clear to Israel that the keeping of the law rested upon the fact that God was Israel's God and that God had given to Israel redemption from the bondage of Egypt and purposed to bring Israel into Canaan, the land of promise.

There is no one who holds to the authority of sacred Scripture who would dispute the fact that the Decalogue is meant, not only for the nation of Israel, but also for the Church of all ages. To the people of God in the New Dispensation also God comes with the words of the law. We today are also in duty bound to keep that law. Of that there can be no question. But the introduction to the law is also as valid today as it was in Israel's day. God still says to His Church today: "I am the Lord thy God, which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. Thou shalt have no other gods before me. . . ." The only difference is in the fact that Israel lived in the dispensation of types and shadows. Egypt was a picture of the bondage of sin and death in which we are all held. Egypt demonstrates vividly that we are by nature totally depraved and slaves to sin. But from this slavery of sin we are delivered by the mighty power and outstretched arm of Jehovah. We are redeemed from this bondage and brought by God's mighty hand into the heavenly Canaan. So although the typical force of these words is stripped away, the essence remains, and this introduction holds for today as well as for all time. That is exactly why, whenever the law is read in the Church today, this introduction is read too.

But it is clear that, in the body of the commandments, there is one commandment which is addressed specifically to children. This is interesting and important. Every commandment is, of course, important for children too. Believing parents are always to instruct their children to keep the law of God in all its parts. But the fact remains that God considers children so important that He devotes one entire commandment to them. He says to children, and to them specifically, "This is my injunction to you: Honor thy father and thy mother."

But if God addresses this command to children, then it follows that the introduction to the law is spoken also to them. God says to children: "I am the Lord thy God, which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the

house of bondage." The Lord Jehovah is the God of children. They too belong to Him. They too are redeemed from the bondage of sin and delivered by His mighty arm. And because they too are redeemed, they must also hear the law and obey it. And this can only be because they, as well as their adult parents, are included in the covenant of grace.

There are two possible objections which can be raised against this. One is that by "children" here, reference is made only to older children who have come to sufficient years of discretion that they may themselves accept the provisions of the covenant and agree to the demands of obedience to the law. But, notice, the text makes no such distinction. It speaks to all children of Israel without exception. And if Baptists want to make such a distinction, then they must also be prepared to say that the law does not apply to these children until they are sufficiently of age to believe and be baptized. But God does not look at the matter in this way. God says to all children, from the moment they are born, "Honor thy father and thy mother." God insists that this obligation of the law rests upon children throughout their life as children until they themselves become parents. And so parents, in humble recognition of this fact, begin from earliest infancy on to teach their children to honor their fathers and their mothers.

Another objection is that this refers merely to Israel and has no reference to the New Dispensation. Only to Israel does God say, "I am the Lord thy God, which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage." Presumably this would be Kingdon's position, for he speaks of the fact repeatedly that all such texts speak only of the nation of Israel which had earthly promises, an earthly inheritance, an earthly covenant and earthly signs of the covenant. But if one takes this position one must also conclude that the entire Decalogue is really valid only in the Old Dispensation. And no Baptist would ever want to do this.

The conclusion is that the introduction to the law is inseparably related to the law as a part of it. That there is one commandment specifically referring to children proves that the introduction also refers to children of believers. And if God is their God, if they too are redeemed, then they must bear the sign of such redemption as well.

The same idea is present in Psalm 78:1-7. This passage reads:

Give ear, O my people, to my law: incline your ears to the words of my mouth. I will open my mouth in a parable: I will utter dark sayings of old: Which we have heard and known, and our fathers have told us. We will not hide them from their children, shewing to the generation to come the praises of the Lord, and his strength, and his wonderful

works that he hath done. For he established a testimony in Jacob, and appointed a law in Israel, which he commanded our fathers, that they should make them known to their children: That the generation to come might know them, even the children which should be born; who should arise and declare them to their children: That they might set their hope in God, and not forget the works of God, but keep his commandments.

There are several interesting points to notice about this passage. In the first place, there are several generations mentioned. Strikingly, four specific generations are spoken of here. There are first of all the people speaking in the Psalm. This is one generation. But these people speaking mention their fathers and speak of the fact that the words which came from the mouth of God are words which they heard from their fathers (vs. 3). Furthermore, these same people speak of their children. And in connection with this reference to their children, they speak of their obligation to show these same things to the children God will give them. And then, finally, these people mention the fact that their children will make known these things unto the children which follow them: "That the generation to come might know them, even the children which should be born; who should arise and declare them to their children."

Secondly, the content of that instruction is specifically defined in the text. In vs. 1 this is described as the law of God and the words of God's mouth. In vs. 2, mention is made of a parable and of dark sayings of old. And in the rest of the Psalm this is further discussed as being all the mighty deeds which God did for Israel.

In the third place, this covenant instruction which is passed on from generation to generation is the means whereby each succeeding generation learns to set its hope in God and keep His commandments. That is, God has ordained that He will save His people in the line of generations and that the means whereby this salvation will be preserved in the line of generations is instruction in the mighty works of God and in His law.

Now it is evident from this that the instruction which God wills should be passed on from generation to generation is based on the fact that God continues His covenant in the line of generations. All covenant instruction is based upon the truth that children as well as their believing parents are incorporated into the covenant of grace.

Nor may Kingdon simply say that this refers to the Old Testament for in doing so he cuts the heart out of the Old Testament. He must leave this as an abiding principle of the Scriptures to be followed by all believing parents of all

time or he must refer this only to the Jews and adopt some sort of Dispensationism not only, but take away from believing parents the responsibility of the spiritual education of their children.

The same truth is even more strongly stated in Genesis 18:18, 19 where we read:

And the Lord said, Shall I hide from Abraham that thing which I do; Seeing that Abraham shall surely become a great and mighty nation, and all the nations of the earth shall be blessed in him: For I know him, that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the Lord, to do justice and judgment; that the Lord may bring upon Abraham that which he hath spoken of him.

The setting of this passage is the visit of the Lord to Abraham in the plains of Mamre where God revealed to Abraham that he would shortly have a son. Now, as the Lord and Abraham walk in the direction of Sodom, God speaks of revealing to Abraham what He purposes to do to the wicked cities of Sodom and Gomorrah. In this context God speaks these words.

You will notice that God determines to reveal these purposes to Abraham because Abraham will become a great and mighty nation and because all the nations of the earth will be blessed in him. This is an obvious reference to the New Testament truth that Abraham is the father of all believers. But how is it that Abraham will become the father of all believers? This will happen God says because Abraham "will command his children after him, and they shall keep the way of the Lord, to do justice and judgment." And in this way God will bring upon Abraham that which God has spoken of him. In other words, throughout all time, this principle holds true: parents will instruct their children in the truth of God. And the result will be that these children will keep the way of the Lord, to do justice and judgment. God will then do all that He purposed to do. The covenant which God established with Abraham will be continued in the line of generations. God Himself has promised that. This will not only happen in the Old Testament, but also in the New. Abraham is the father of all believers. And this principle always holds true.

But there is one more element in the text. God emphatically says: "For I know him. . . ." It is probably better, according to the Hebrew, to translate this, "For I have known him. . . ." It is evident from this that the reference is to God's eternal foreknowledge of Abraham. God is not simply making here a prediction as if to say, "I can accurately predict that Abraham will do this." Rather, God says that His sovereign and eternal foreknowledge lies at the basis. It is determinative. And it is determinative for the fundamental truth that through the instru-

mentality of covenant instruction, God will always continue His covenant in the lines of continued generations. God has sovereignly determined to bring upon Abraham all that He has said. God will do this through the means of the instruction of children by their parents. And through this means God will preserve His covenant. God knows Abraham and his seed with the foreknowledge of divine election. That election also is in the line of generations.

Nor can Kingdon say that this refers only to the Old Dispensation. The whole reference in the text is to the fact that Abraham shall become a great and mighty nation and that *all the nations of the earth shall be blessed in him*. And if this covenant, one in every age, is always in the line of generations, then the sign and seal of that covenant must also be administered to the children of believers just as it was in the Old Dispensation.

This command of God to believing parents to instruct their children is so common in the Scriptures that it can be found on almost every page. How mistaken is the notion that all these admonitions are given only because it is a necessary part of some kind of missionary work. Yet it is in this way that the Baptists would explain it. Our children are born as unbelievers. They are such because we have no promise of God that God will save our children any more than He will save anyone from darkest heathendom. They are therefore, along with all people who have never heard the gospel, the objects of our missionary enterprise. And so, when we give them instruction, we do this only because we hope, as we do in all missionary work, that God will be pleased to save some of them. All instruction is only in the pious wish that God may save some. And, because this salvation can only come when these children are sufficiently old to exercise faith, so all the instruction which we give from infancy on is instruction of unbelievers. The best we can hope for is that they will remember some of the things we have taught them so that, should they in the future be saved by God, they will be able to recall these things. But until they are saved, all the instruction really falls upon spiritually dead ears and spiritually dead hearts.

How different is the truth of Scripture. When God, in so many places, enjoins upon believers to instruct their children in the ways of the Lord, they have the sure Word of God that they are instructing children of God, God's own elect people. And the instruction they give is then not some kind of missionary enterprise within their own families, but is instruction which is based upon the sure knowledge that God's promise is to save them and their children. They instruct covenant children. And their instruction will be fruitful for it falls upon hearts which are regenerated by the Spirit of Christ.

This truth that God saves His people in the line of continued generations is so much a part of the teaching of Scripture that it can hardly be ignored if one is

to understand the Scriptures at all. It is, of course, a truth which is especially emphasized in the Old Testament; but the idea is so all-pervasive that if one follows Kingdon's argument that all these passages refer only to the nation of Israel, one makes a large segment of the Old Dispensation totally irrelevant for the Church of the New.

We cannot begin to mention all these passages in this article. But to show how completely this is the teaching of the Old Testament, we refer nevertheless, to several.

We need only remind our readers in passing that there is great emphasis placed on the fact that the covenant lines followed from father to son within the whole of the Old Testament times. This was not only true of the nation of Israel, but was also true before that nation was formed. These covenant lines can be traced, as Scripture itself does this, from Adam to Seth, to Enoch, to Methuselah, to Lamech, to Noah (Genesis 5). After the flood that line continued from Shem to Arphaxad, to Salah, to Eber, to Peleg, to Reu, to Serug, to Nahor, to Terah, to Abraham. And after Abraham, the line continued through Isaac and Jacob. And, from the sons of Jacob, the royal line can be traced through all the history of Israel until it climaxed in Christ. Always that covenant line was in the line of generations.

This emphasis on generations appears repeatedly in Abraham's life, with the classical statement of God to Abraham: "And I will establish my covenant between me and thee and thy seed after thee in their generations for an everlasting covenant, to be a God unto thee, and to thy seed after thee" (Genesis 17: 7). In passing, it is worth our attention that God speaks here of an *everlasting* covenant. It has been objected, especially by Baptists of all types, that the word "everlasting" in the Old Testament does not always mean "everlasting," but often means simply, "a long time." Whether this be true or not is not the question here. The point simply is that God established His covenant with Abraham and his seed as an everlasting covenant. The nature of the covenant is everlasting. If the nature of that covenant established with Abraham and his seed is everlasting, then the principle that that covenant continues in the line of generations is a principle which belongs to the very essence of that covenant. If then, as Kingdon argues, the covenant in the Old and New Dispensations is essentially one covenant, then the principle of the covenant in the line of generations is also a principle which continues throughout all time.

Kingdon argues that the very next verse reads: "And I will give unto thee, and to thy seed after thee, the land wherein thou art a stranger, all the land of Canaan, for an everlasting possession: and I will be their God." On this basis he writes:

(In referring to a quote by a certain Mr. Heaney, a defender of infant baptism): Here we can see a typical example of the method of covenantal theologians of the Paedobaptist type, an example which illustrates the point that they are dwelling in the sphere of the theocracy of Israel rather than in the realm of the redeemed community, the Church. Mr. Heaney is prepared to drop the "land" out of the promise of God to Abraham, but he is not prepared to drop the infant seed of Abraham and say, as he would in the case of the land, that we must understand it in the way the New Testament does as the believer's inheritance in Christ (I Pet. 1:4). Now if he does this in the one case, why is he not prepared to do it in the other, particularly when the New Testament offers us the clearest possible definition of what is meant by the seed of Abraham? In short then, we are maintaining that the Reformed Paedobaptist is incorrect in his method of approach to the covenant. Whilst rightly stressing its unity, he often overlooks the diversity of its administration, which arises because we have passed from the age of types and shadows into the last days. (pp. 39, 40)

Kingdon's argument here is clear. He claims that the whole establishment of the covenant with Abraham "and his seed" was the establishment of a covenant involving the land of Canaan. And because the land of Canaan has fallen away from the covenant, there is no reason why the idea of the seed of believers as incorporated into that covenant ought also not fall away.

But there are several remarks which ought to be made.

In the first place, even if it is true that the idea of the land of Canaan has fallen away so that it is no longer a part of the promise of the covenant, what right does Kingdon, rather arbitrarily, have to decide that then too the idea of children of believers should fall away. If one can arbitrarily drop the idea of the land of Canaan and the idea of the seed of Abraham, then Kingdon ought to be consistent and drop also the last part of vs. 8: "I will be their God." This is part of it all.

In the second place, whatever may have been the position of Mr. Heaney, I refuse to drop the element of the land of Canaan from the promise of the covenant. It is still a part of that promise. Only, as we pointed out in an earlier article, the reference is to the heavenly land of Canaan of which the earthly land was but a type. Even Abraham did not set his heart on that earthly land, but "he looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God" (Hebrews 11:10). The land of Canaan spoke to Abraham in typical language of the heavenly Canaan. But it remains, whether in typical form or in reality, an essential part of

the promise of the covenant. It is for this reason also that God speaks of the gift of the land of Canaan as an "everlasting possession." This is strange language to use if God simply referred to the earthly Canaan. Strangely, Kingdon makes no reference to this at all.

There is therefore, no element of the promise to Abraham which ought to be dropped. It is all a part of the promise of the covenant which remains true in the New Dispensation as well as in the Old. God will be Abraham's God. God will give Abraham a son. God will make Abraham the father of all believers. God will give Abraham the land of Canaan. God will establish that covenant with Abraham and his seed. All remains the same.

Especially in the Psalms this idea of generations stands sharply on the foreground. This is not immediately evident in all its force in the Authorized Version; but the Hebrew is clear. Repeatedly the expression is used: לְדֹר וָדֹר. To capture this idea, the Dutch translates in every case: "van geslacht tot geslacht." I.e., "from generation to generation." So we read in Psalm 33:11: "The counsel of the Lord standeth forever, the thoughts of his heart to all generations." The Dutch has here: "Maar de raad des HEEREN houdt stand in eeuwigheid, de gedachten zijns harten van geslacht tot geslacht." In Psalm 45:17 we read: "I will make thy name to be remembered in all generations (from generation to generation): therefore shall the people praise thee for ever and ever." The Psalmist writes in Psalm 72:5: "They shall fear thee as long as the sun and moon endure, throughout all generations (from generation to generation)." And so we could go on. The interested reader can consult for himself such passages as Psalm 79:13, 89:1, 100:5, 102:12, 119:90, 135:13, 146:10. The conclusion that must then be drawn is that all God's promises of which His people sing, are promises which are granted from generation to generation. If one would cut all these promises out of the Scriptures by limiting them only to the Old Dispensation, one would lose the Scriptures in their entirety. But always these promises are from generation to generation, for God establishes His covenant and saves His people in the line of generations.

Many other passages can be quoted to show this emphasis on generations. A few more ought to suffice. In Psalm 48:13 we read: "Mark ye well her bulwarks, consider her palaces; that ye may tell it to the generation following." In Psalm 145:4 we read: "One generation shall praise thy works to another, and shall declare thy mighty acts." In Isaiah 51:8 we read: "For the moth shall eat them up like a garment, and the worm shall eat them like wool: but my righteousness shall be forever, and my salvation from generation to generation." The prophet exalts in Lamentations 5:19: "Thou, O Lord, remainest for ever; thy throne from generation to generation." In Deuteronomy 7:9 there is the powerful

passage: "Know therefore that the Lord thy God, he is God, the faithful God, which keepeth covenant and mercy with them that love him and keep his commandments to a thousand generations."

The conclusion is that the whole concept of salvation in the line of generations so thoroughly permeates the Old Testament Scriptures that it is impossible to understand these Scriptures without taking this idea into account.

But one will say: What about the New Testament? If this idea of generations is so much a part of the plan of salvation and of the establishment of the covenant, why is there absolutely no mention of it in the New Testament?

To assume that there is no mention of this idea of generations in the New Testament is to make a serious mistake. It is true that there are not the many references to this idea in the New Testament which are found in the Old. But there are two things which must be borne in mind in this connection. One is that all the earthly ministry of the Lord Jesus was performed within the bounds of the nation of Israel. All the teaching of Jesus therefore, implies, on the part of the nation, this strong covenant consciousness which pervaded the people and which was a part of the heritage in which they had been brought up. Jesus' teaching simply assumes all this without its being specifically mentioned. It was so much a part of the heritage of the Jews that it was with them a way of thinking. This was also true of the work of the apostles in the first years of their work. Until the labors of the apostle Paul, the early Church labored exclusively within the bounds of Jewry with the exception of some work in Samaria. God only gradually instructed them to proceed with the work of the gospel in foreign lands.

The second point which needs to be remembered is that, because, after Pentecost, the Lord was about to begin a work which involved the gathering of the Church from every nation and tribe and tongue, the labors of the apostles outside Jewry were labors which involved the saving of new generations. As the gospel was brought first to Antioch, then to Asia Minor, and finally to Europe itself, the Church was being gathered from nations where the gospel had never before been preached. New generations were, to use a figure of Paul in Romans 11, being grafted into the old olive tree of the nation of Israel. And thus, in these early years of missionary work, the emphasis was not on children of believers in their generations, but was rather on believers and their children — parents who for the first time in all their generations were brought into the Church along with their children.

But all of this does not mean that there is no mention of the salvation of children in the New Dispensation. There are a number of such passages.

There is, first of all, the passage in Matthew 19:13-15, a passage which is also found in Mark and Luke. The passage in Matthew reads:

Then were brought unto him little children, that he should put his hands on them, and pray: and the disciples rebuked them. But Jesus said, Suffer little children, and forbid them not, to come unto me: for of such is the kingdom of heaven. And he laid his hands on them, and departed thence.

Kingdon does not believe that this has anything to do with children who are included in the covenant and are the heirs of salvation. He writes:

... it must be pointed out that there is not a word in the passage which would oblige us to restrict our Lord's statement to "covenant" children. He does not say that to covenant children belongs the kingdom of God, but to children without distinction. If all children are in view, and if infant baptism can be got out of this passage (which it can, only if it is first read in!) then the text justifies the indiscriminate baptism of all infants, not the restriction of infant baptism to the children of believing parents.

Now in what sense are children to be regarded as belonging to the kingdom? The parallel passage in Mark 10:13-16 will help us to arrive at the answer. Verse 15 declares the necessity of receiving the good news of the kingdom of God *as a child receives it*. The previous verse provides "a supreme illustration of children receiving the good news; they come to the Saviour with a love and trust answering to his love." Here it is not the passivity of children, but their receptivity, which is in view. When Jesus called, the children came and threw themselves into his arms to be blessed. So to come in faith to him is to become an heir of the kingdom. Thus these children, and all children like them, form a picture of the ideal human response to the Lord's invitation in the Gospel. (p. 86)

Now it is apparent from the quote that Kingdon makes the text say exactly the opposite of what it actually does say. In the first place, as Kingdon also admits, while Matthew and Mark use the more general word $\pi\alpha\iota\varsigma$ which means any child whether an infant or an older child, Luke uses the word $\βρέφος$ which can only mean, infant, newborn babe, babe in arms. Apparently these mothers were bringing their children to Jesus, some of which were mere infants and others toddlers or a bit older.

In the second place, Kingdon simply states without proof that "there is not a word in the passage which would oblige us to restrict our Lord's statement to 'covenant' children"; and that the reference is to "children without distinction." But this is exactly not the case. These were Israelitish mothers, mothers of the

covenant who lived in the covenant consciousness of the pious women of the Old Dispensation. The very fact that they came to Jesus with the request that Jesus bless them and pray indicates that they themselves were believing mothers who saw the hope of their salvation and the salvation of their children in Christ. Kingdon has therefore no right to argue that "if infant baptism can be got out of this passage then the text justifies the indiscriminate baptism of all infants, not the restriction of infant baptism to children of believing parents."

In the third place, Jesus not only accedes to their request over the objection of the disciples who evidently thought the Lord was too busy to bother with children, but He adds the words, "of such is the kingdom of heaven." Kingdon himself admits that this cannot mean merely, "the kingdom of heaven is composed of those who are like children." But how is it possible then to make this mean: "Thus these children, and all children like them, form a picture of the ideal human response to the Lord's invitation in the Gospel"? There is no way the words can be twisted in this fashion. The Lord means exactly what He says: "These children too, and all children like them, born in the lines of the covenant from believing parents, are citizens in the kingdom of heaven." How appropriate then that our Baptism Form includes this passage as proof for the doctrine of infant baptism.

It is in the same way that the classical passage in Acts 2:39 must be treated. This passage reads:

For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call.

It is not surprising that Kingdon also makes an effort to escape the clear teaching of this verse. He writes:

In the first place, the promise of the Spirit includes the pledge that "your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions" (Acts 2:17), which hardly applies to infants. In the second place, the promise of verse 39 turns upon the phrase "even as many as the Lord our God shall call." Paedobaptists commonly distinguish between the children mentioned, regarding them as covenant children, and those who are afar off, i.e., born "out of the covenant." This latter group alone must, they claim, be called to repentance and faith in order to be baptised. But if one thing is clear it is this; the last phrase of the verse, concerning God's call, governs all the preceding phrases. The promise is not only to those who respond on the day of Pentecost, but also to their descendants (children) and to those who are either outside the circle of Judaism or are beyond the confines of the

land of Israel — to as many of any of these groups as God will call. What that call involves is plain to see, the inward work of the Spirit who enlightens the mind and renews the heart, and the response to that call after which one is baptized into the name of him who is freely offered in the gospel. Plainly the mention of children in this context provides no warrant whatever for infant baptism. (pp. 88, 89)

But this important passage cannot be so offhandedly dismissed. Again it must be remembered that this was spoken by the apostle Peter to an audience which was made up of Jews and proselytes. They were steeped in the Old Testament and took the same attitude towards children which the saints in the Old Testament had always taken. And when Peter spoke of the promise, they could not help but think of the promise which had been made to Abraham and his seed (especially when Peter mentioned “you and your children”), for they were people brought up and trained in these Old Testament promises. The question is: What did these words mean to the audience which listened breathlessly to Peter’s words? There can be only one answer: They interpreted these words in the consciousness that the Old Testament had always spoken of them and their children.

In the second place, there is no question about it at all that the last part of this verse, “even as many as the Lord our God shall call,” governs the entire verse, as Kingdon asserts. But this is precisely the point. In the New Dispensation when the Church is gathered from every nation and tribe and tongue, just as in the Old Dispensation, God’s promise is to all whom God sovereignly and efficaciously calls; and this calling is in the line of generations: “you and your children, and to all that are afar off.” Both to that audience and their children, and to those afar off which includes all the Gentiles to be gathered and their children comes the promise. But that promise is, though in the line of generations, strictly limited by the good pleasure of God and by His irresistible call. How much clearer the apostle could say this is difficult to see. If children of believers are also called so that they too receive the promise of the covenant, how can they be excluded from baptism?

It was precisely this truth which was a governing principle in the work of the apostles. This is plain from what Kingdon calls, the household passages. There are several such passages: Acts 16:31 is the best known, but there are also others. In Acts 16:31 we read: “And they said, Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house.” And later we read that Paul baptized this Philippian jailer and his house. In I Corinthians 1:16 Paul writes: “And I baptized also the household of Stephanas: besides, I know not whether I baptized any other.” There is also a similar passage in Joshua 24:15: “And if it seem evil

unto you to serve the Lord, choose you this day whom ye will serve; whether the gods which your fathers served that were on the other side of the flood, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land ye dwell: but as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord."

Kingdon does not treat these passages in his book. Nevertheless, in an answer to a review of his book to which we called attention a couple of issues ago, Kingdon makes two points in connection with them. One point is that in none of these passages is there any mention made of children who were baptized, and they cannot therefore, be quoted in support of infant baptism. The second point he makes is that there are many different interpretations of these passages, and these differences of interpretation prove that the difficulties are so great that it would be dangerous to hang the doctrine of infant baptism on them.

Nevertheless, these passages are important. Nor are they difficult if one only proceeds from the proper viewpoint. It is, of course, admitted readily that none of these passages speak definitely of children. There is no proof in the text that these households had children in them. But this is certainly not the point. It really makes no difference whether there were children or not. The whole point is quite different. As I pointed out in an earlier article, the point that needs to be emphasized in connection with the Philippian jailer, e.g., is that Paul was speaking to the Philippian jailer while he was still alone with him. After the earthquake and the freeing of the chains and stocks, the jailer was on the verge of killing himself. Paul prevented him from doing this by telling him that not one prisoner had escaped. It was then that the jailer came trembling into the presence of Paul and Silas and asked: Sirs, what must I do to be saved? While alone in the prison with the jailer Paul speaks of the fact that faith in Christ is the only way of salvation. But that faith of the jailer will mean not only his own salvation, but also the salvation of his house. How is it possible for Paul to assure the jailer of this? How can Paul speak so confidently of the salvation of the household of the jailer? The only answer to that question is that Paul knew the Scriptures too, and knew that it was always God's purpose to save His people in the line of continued generations. This was not, as Kingdon insists, limited to the Old Dispensation. This was true in the New as well. And because Paul knew that this was an invariable rule of the Lord, Paul could confidently speak of the salvation of the jailer's entire house. This is why it was a rule of the apostles, as is clear from I Corinthians 1:16, that they baptize households. If there were children in those households, even infants, they too were baptized. The Scriptures make no distinction here. The Scriptures do not report that households, with the exception of infants and children, were baptized; no, the rule was always entire households. And the apostles could do this on the basis of the promise of God that God saves,

not individuals, but households.

This is the basic idea also of the passage in Joshua. Joshua speaks confidently of himself and his house. With conviction he says: "But as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord." How can Joshua say that? Does he mean to express, as the Baptists would have it, "But as for me, I will serve the Lord; and I hope that my house will too?" He does not say anything like that. Does he mean that he now wants Israel to know that he dons a prophet's robe and is able to predict that his household, also in the future, will serve the Lord? This is obviously not the idea. He emphatically states: "We *will* serve the Lord." But his confidence of this is rooted only in one fundamental truth: God has promised to save him and his house! And so believers have, throughout the ages, made these words of Joshua their own. In the humble awareness of the great grace of God shown to them and their children, they too confidently say, "But as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord." No other explanation will do justice to these words.

Finally there are those passages in the epistles of Paul which are addressed to children. You may find them in Ephesians 6:1-3 and Colossians 3:20. The former reads: "Children, obey your parents in the Lord: for this is right. Honour thy father and mother; which is the first commandment with promise; That it may be well with thee, and thou mayest live long on the earth." The latter reads: "Children, obey your parents in all things: for this is well pleasing unto the Lord."

The crux of the argument here hinges upon the fact that both epistles are addressed to the "saints" both in Ephesus and Colosse. That the Holy Spirit speaks to children in these passages quoted proves that the address of the epistles to the saints in these churches includes also children. They are also numbered among the saints.

It is not surprising that Kingdon objects to this. He writes:

Much is sometimes made of the fact that Paul in his epistles, on occasions, addresses himself to children. For example, he addresses the Colossian believers as "saints and faithful brethren in Christ" (Col. 1:2), and subsequently he admonishes children to obey their parents "in all things: for this is well pleasing unto the Lord" (Col. 3:20). In Eph. 6:1 he exhorts children to obey their "parents in the Lord: for this is right." The assumption is made that, in order to be so addressed, these children must have been members of the church, baptized as infants.

Aside from the fact that no Baptist preacher would have any difficulty in so admonishing the children in his congregation, it hardly follows that a child needs to be baptized before he can be admonished! Moreover, it could

equally well be argued that the children Paul addressed had been already converted and so had been baptized as believers.

But here again Kingdon completely misses the point. The point is not, as Kingdon seems to aver, that Baptists can admonish children. I suppose they can do this, and no doubt, if they are conscientious parents, do do this. But when they admonish children, they do so in the consciousness that they are admonishing unbelievers, and they have only the hope that these admonitions will some day have the desired fruit if the Lord is pleased to convert them. But this is exactly what the text does not say. These very children who are admonished are addressed as saints and brethren. The whole point is that the admonition which comes to them comes to them as those who are already saved, who have the grace and Spirit of Christ in their hearts, who have a place in God's Church and covenant, who are saints and brethren along with adults. The admonition comes to them as those who have the power of God within them to obey this admonition. The admonition, as it were, appeals to their regenerated hearts and rouses that life of Christ within them so that they hear and obey.

Nor is it sufficient for Kingdon to say that "the children Paul addresses had been already converted and so had been baptized as believers." The whole congregations of Colosse and Ephesus were addressed. They were all called saints and brethren. There is nothing which excludes children. Paul does not say, "To the saints and faithful brethren in Christ which are at Colosse except for children who have not yet come to conscious faith and conversion." All are addressed without distinction. And if the children in these churches are included in the address, this can only be because they as well as adults are included in the Church and covenant. And as such, they must bear the sign of the covenant, the mark of baptism.

The conclusion of the matter is that both the Old and New Testaments teach that children of believers also are incorporated into the Church of God and into His covenant of grace. They also must receive the sign and seal of the covenant. To fail to do this is to live in disobedience to the Scriptures.

It is but natural that the question arises at this point: How can all the children of believers be baptized when we know also from Scripture that not all the children are actually saved? There are Esaus in the covenant. Not all that is of Israel is truly Israel. Yet we maintain that all the children of believers must be baptized. How can we do this?

This is indeed a great stumbling block to those who adopt a Baptist position. Time and time again the argument returns to this point. And we must squarely face this issue.

But with a discussion of this point will have to await our next article in the *Journal*.

PREACHING, THE CHURCH'S CHIEF TASK, III

— Prof. R.D. Decker —

In our first article on this subject we examined some of the key terms used in the New Testament for preaching. From the study of these terms in their respective contexts some general conclusions were drawn concerning preaching. Preaching is first of all *proclamation*. It is not mutual discussion or conversation among believers, or dialogue. Rather, preaching is public proclamation. Preaching declares publicly, or *heralds* the Word of God. It proclaims a message and that message is not the word of man's wisdom but it is the Word of God. And that Word of God is glad tidings, good news. In the third place, preaching is authoritative. The one who preaches is sent by Christ through the agency of the Church and charged by Christ to proclaim the message. Preaching, therefore, bears the authority of Christ Jesus. For that reason the true preaching of the Word must be obeyed. Finally, preaching always, and let that be emphasized, always evokes a response. True preaching is never without fruit. Precisely because of that truth the Apostle Paul could write: "Now thanks be to God, which always causeth us to triumph in Christ, and maketh manifest the savour of his knowledge by us in every place. For we are unto God a sweet savour of Christ, in them that are saved, and in them that perish: To the one we are the savour of death unto death; and to the other the savour of life unto life. And who is sufficient for these things? For we are not as many which corrupt the word of God: but as of sincerity, but as of God, in the sight of God speak we in Christ" (II Corinthians 2:15-17). When, therefore, we speak in Christ (preach) in sincerity, as of God and in the sight of God, we always triumph! We are pleasing to God both in them that perish and in them that are saved.

In that same article we expounded I Corinthians 1:17-25. This passage teaches that it pleases God to make of no effect the wisdom of this world and to save believers by means of preaching. To unbelievers both among the Greeks and the Jews the preaching of Christ crucified is foolishness and a stumbling block. But to them that are saved preaching is Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God. Because it pleases God to use preaching for this great purpose the Church must consider its chief task to be preaching. This same conclusion must be drawn from Ephesians 4:1-16, the passage we studied in the last article. This passage teaches that Christ upon His ascension into glory gave gifts to the Church. These gifts consist primarily in apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers.

These the ascended Christ gave for the work of the ministry, for the building up of the Body of Christ. The Church is built and ultimately reaches the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ through the office of the ministry of the Word. The chief task of the Church must be preaching. Without preaching Christ does not care for His Church. By preaching the exalted Lord builds up His Body into perfection.

In this issue we wish to continue our discussion of this subject from the point of view of Romans 10:1-17. An understanding of this passage, especially verses 14-17, is crucial for a proper understanding of what preaching is and why it must be considered the chief task of the Church. The passage reads:

Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they might be saved. For I bear them record that they have a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge. For they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God. For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone that believeth. For Moses describeth the righteousness which is of the law, that the man which doeth those things shall live by them. But the righteousness which is of faith speaketh on this wise, Say not in thine heart, Who shall ascend into heaven; (that is, to bring Christ down from above:) Or, Who shall descend into the deep? (that is, to bring up Christ again from the dead.) But what saith it? The word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth, and in thy heart: that is, the word of faith, which we preach; That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation. For the Scripture saith, Whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed. For there is no difference between the Jew and the Greek: for the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon him. For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach, except they be sent? as it is written, How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things! But they have not all obeyed the gospel. For Esaias saith, Lord, who hath believed our report? So then faith cometh by hearing and hearing by

the word of God.

The key verse in this passage is the fourth which reads: "For Christ is the end of the law into (or unto) righteousness to every one who believes." A correct understanding of this verse is crucial. One's understanding of verse four will of necessity determine his exegesis of the entire passage. Most commentators understand "end" (*telos*) here as "end" in the sense of termination or cessation. (Cf. Meyer, Godet, Murray, Robertson, *et. al.*) According to this interpretation righteousness was attained by the works of the law in the Old Dispensation, but Christ at His coming put an end to that. Now righteousness is to be attained in Christ by faith.

In spite of this impressive list of reputable New Testament scholars we reject this view on several grounds. In the first place this interpretation conflicts with the express teaching of the New Testament concerning the relationship between Christ and the law or Christ and the entire Old Testament economy. Scripture teaches that Christ is the aim or goal of the law. Galatians 3:24 states: "Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we should be justified by faith." The law, therefore, pointed the Old Testament saint to Christ in order that he might be justified, not by the works of the law, but by faith. Scripture also teaches that Christ is the fulfillment or realization of the law. Jesus Himself said: "Think not that I am come to destroy, but to fulfill (*pleeroosai*)" (Matthew 5:17). Here our Lord expressly states that He did not come to destroy or abrogate the law. He came to fulfill it. The law is realized but never terminated or destroyed in Christ. It is true that when Christ fulfilled the law much of it fell away, the ceremonial laws of sacrifice and feast, the worship of the temple. But the essence of the law as the expression of the will of God for His people remains.

In the second place, this view that Christ terminated the law is really based on the assumption that under the Old Testament economy of things righteousness was attainable by the law while in the New Testament it is attainable by faith. In the Old Testament, according to this interpretation, righteousness had to be obtained by means of obedience to the law, but Christ put an end to the law so that now righteousness is to be obtained by faith. This assumption simply is not true. Among other things it implies a separation (two contrasting ways of salvation) between the Old and the New Dispensations, a separation which just is not there. The Old Dispensation and the New may and indeed must be distinguished, but they cannot and may not be separated. This is plain from a passage such as Galatians 3:16-24:

Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made.
He saith not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one,

And to thy seed, which is Christ. And this I say, that the covenant that was confirmed before of God in Christ, the law, which was four hundred and thirty years after, cannot disannul, that it should make the promise of none effect. For if the inheritance be of the law, it is no more of promise: but God gave it to Abraham by promise. Wherefore then serveth the law? It was added because of transgressions, till the seed should come to whom the promise was made; and it was ordained by angels in the hand of a mediator. Now a mediator is not a mediator of one, but God is one. Is the law then against the promises of God? God forbid: for if there had been a law given which could have given life, verily righteousness should have been by the law. But the Scripture hath concluded all under sin, that the promise by faith of Jesus Christ might be given to them that believe. But before faith came, we were kept under the law, shut up unto the faith which should afterwards be revealed. Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster to bring us to Christ, that we might be justified by faith.

This passage teaches that there is one seed of Abraham. That seed is essentially Christ and all who are in Him by faith whether they be Jew or Greek: "There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus. And if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise" (vss. 28, 29). To this one seed in Christ is the one promise given. The law which came four hundred and thirty years after could not disannul that covenant or make that promise of no effect. God gave the inheritance (righteousness, salvation) to Abraham and his seed not by the law (which is to say righteousness cannot be obtained by the law) but by promise. What, one may ask, is the place of the law then? The answer is it was added because of transgressions, till the seed (Christ) should come to whom the promise was made. This means the law cannot be against the promise. It cannot represent another way to the attainment of righteousness. Indeed if there had been a law given which could have given life, "...verily righteousness should have been by the law" (vs. 21). Scripture has concluded all under sin, that the promise by faith of Jesus Christ might be given to them who believe. That is why the law was a schoolmaster to bring the Old Testament saint to Christ in order that he might be justified not by the works of the law, but by faith. The whole point is that righteousness *never* was by the law. It was also in the Old Dispensation and it always is only by faith in Jesus Christ.

This view is also untenable on the ground that if it be true that Christ terminated the law, then God's law no longer is in effect. This is patently false. Jesus

taught us that the sum of the law is loving God and the neighbor (Matthew 22: 37-40). Galatians 5:14 teaches that the whole law is fulfilled in one word: "thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself." And to cite no more, Romans 13:8-10 exhorts:

Owe no man anything, but to love one another: for he that loveth another hath fulfilled the law. For this, thou shalt not commit adultery, Thou shalt not steal, Thou shalt not bear false witness, Thou shalt not covet; and if there be any other commandment, it is briefly comprehended in this saying, namely, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. Love worketh no ill to his neighbor: therefore love is the fulfilling of the law.

The law holds in all its force. It is true enough, the law is no longer a schoolmaster over us for Christ its object (*telos*) has come and fulfilled the law. Now it marks the sphere of the freedom with which Christ has made us free (Galatians 5). Or, it is the rule for the Christian's life of gratitude to God for the grace shown to him in Christ Jesus. For these reasons the text cannot mean that Christ is the end of the law in the sense that He terminated or abrogated that law.

What then is the idea of the text? By "law" is meant not just the decalogue, though that is the heart and essence of it. The entire law is meant, the law with all of its commandments, with all its institutions, with all its sacrifices and ritual. That Christ is the end of that law means that He is the purposeful end or goal of the law in the sense that He is the fulfillment of that law. The law finds all of its meaning and significance only and always in relationship to Jesus Christ. The law in all of its details, in all of its commandments, in all of its prohibitions, in all of its ritual and sacrifice pointed to Jesus Christ and is, therefore, realized in Jesus Christ. That must be clearly understood. The law has no meaning apart from Christ. It's all Christ. Commenting on this verse John Calvin writes: "...nay, whatever the law teaches, whatever it commands, whatever it promises, has always a reference to Christ as its main object; and hence all its parts ought to be applied to him. But this cannot be done, except we, being stripped of all righteousness, and confounded with the knowledge of our sin, seek gratuitous righteousness from him alone. . . Thus the righteousness of faith, (as we have seen in the first chapter), receives a testimony from the law. We have here then a remarkable passage, which proves that the law in all its parts had a reference to Christ; and hence no one can rightly understand it, who does not continually level at this mark." (*Commentary On The Epistle To The Romans*)

Christ, therefore, is the goal of the law for righteousness to every one that believes. Righteousness is to be right with God. It is to measure up to God's standard of what is right and good. It is to be declared free from the guilt of sin

by God. It is to be in harmony with God according to God's own just judgment. That righteousness is only and always in Jesus Christ. There is no righteousness apart from Him. This is why Christ is the goal of the law for righteousness to everyone that believes. The law finds its fulfillment in Christ in order that believers may be righteous in Him. Righteousness is in Christ, the fulfillment of the law. That righteousness is for everyone who believes. It is for everyone who recognizes his sins, confesses them in godly sorrow and who casts himself upon Christ and trusts in Him for all his righteousness. One is righteous, therefore, only by means of faith. (From where that faith comes we shall see later.)

This is why the Jews were ignorant of God's righteousness. For all of their zeal they were ignorant of God's righteousness. They went about trying to establish their own righteousness by doing the works of the law. They could never be righteous that way. The simple fact is they were not submitting themselves to the righteousness of God. And the reason is Christ is the fulfillment of the law for righteousness to everyone that believes. This the apostle proves with a quotation from Deuteronomy 30:12-14 (cf. vss. 5-8). Moses describes the righteousness which is out of the law, "that the man which doeth those things shall live by them" (vs. 5). That is righteousness out of the law. He, in other words, who would be righteous out of the law must do those things which the law requires. Righteousness on that basis remains forever unattainable. This is true for at least two reasons. First, the law demands perfect obedience all of the time. To violate or transgress one commandment is to transgress the whole law. One little slip is sufficient to render a person inexcusable before God. Besides that, man is totally depraved. According to his nature man is hopelessly enslaved in sin, dead in trespasses and sins. And that depravity means simply this that man lacks the ability to keep the law and do the good. The Bible literally teaches this in Romans 8:7: "Because the carnal mind (the "mind of the flesh," R.D.) is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be." Not only is it true that the mind of the flesh is not subject to the law of God, it is also true that it is not able to be subject to the law. Righteousness, therefore, can never be attained out of the law. Before God's holy law no man is justified (Psalm 143:2).

The righteousness which is out of faith speaks an entirely different language (vss. 6-8). That righteousness which we need is out of faith (*ek pisteos*). This does not mean that we are righteous on the basis of faith. Faith is not a condition which we fulfill or another work which we perform in order to attain righteousness. All of our righteousness forever remains in Christ. He is our righteousness. Faith is the bond uniting us to Christ. Through the means of faith (God's gift of grace to us, Ephesians 2:8) we are made one with Christ so that His righteousness, merited at the cross, becomes ours. That righteousness of faith speaks, i.e., it bears

a testimony. And, note well, it always and forever bears this testimony. This was the testimony of the righteousness of faith also through God's prophet, Moses, in the Old Dispensation. The apostle quotes and expounds the word of Moses to Israel to prove that the Jews were ignorant of and not submitting themselves to God's righteousness which was not a righteousness on the basis of the works of the law. This testimony is a warning to God's people: "Say not in thine heart, who shall ascend into heaven?" God's people must not say that righteousness is in heaven, too high for them to reach. To say this, the apostle writes, is: "to bring Christ down from above." In other words, by this question one denies that Christ ascended and secured the righteousness of God for His people. Neither must they say: "Who shall descend into the deep?" (vs. 7). Again the inference is that righteousness is unattainable. To say this, the apostle writes, is to "...bring up Christ again from the dead." This question is tantamount to a denial that Christ descended into the deep. It is a denial of the cross which is our righteousness.

But what does the righteousness which is of faith say? "The word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth, and in thy heart: that is, the word of faith, which we preach" (vs. 8). That word proclaims that Christ did it all through His cross and in His resurrection. The righteousness which is out of faith is not far away or out of the reach of God's children for the word of faith is near them, in their hearts and in their mouths. In the Old Dispensation that was true too. The word of the law was near as a schoolmaster to lead them to Christ in Whom was all of their righteousness. Righteousness, the righteousness of God without which no man can be saved is in Christ and becomes ours only by faith and never by the works of the law. This, the apostle writes, is the word which we preach.

The content of that word of faith preached by the apostles, the content of all true preaching, therefore, is given in verse nine: "That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God has raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved." Note that the object of that believing is the fact, the historical fact of the resurrection of Christ. This is crucial to the Christian faith for: "if Christ be not raised our faith is vain and we are yet in our sins" (I Corinthians 15:17). To deny the fact of the resurrection is to deny the fact of the cross and the efficacy of the atonement. To believe the resurrection of Christ is to believe that He atoned for the sins of His people and was raised again for their justification (Romans 4:25). But note, too, this faith is not in the resurrection as such. The text does not say: "and believe in thine heart the resurrection." This faith is in God! The text reads: "and believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead." God did that! God performed the wonder of the resurrection, the wonder-work of salvation. It's entirely of God. And in so doing God placed His seal of approval upon the atoning work of Christ. The

resurrection of Christ, therefore, is God's proof that the elect are righteous in Christ, forgiven, adopted as God's children and heirs, saved.

What is believed in the heart, moreover, must be confessed with the mouth: "If thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus. . ." This does not mean merely confession with the mouth; that too, of course. But the reference is to the entire outward walk and life of the child of God. By his words, thoughts, actions, etc. the Christian confesses the Lord Jesus. He declares that Jesus is Lord, the absolute Lord over all things and in every sphere. And that's a personal confession. The Christian believes in his heart that God raised Jesus from the dead and confesses with his mouth that this resurrected Jesus is his own Lord and Savior. That one shall be saved! He shall surely be saved, saved from sin and death and raised to highest glory in Christ in the fellowship of God. That's the fact of the gospel. This is the content of the Word of faith which is preached. This is what the Church must preach if it will be true to its task and the Scriptures.

This the apostle proves from the Scriptures. The Scriptures (Isaiah 28:16) say: "Whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed." "Whosoever," that is the Word of God through the prophet Isaiah. This belongs, therefore, to the Old Testament Scriptures. The implication is clear. There is only one way of salvation, not two. Righteousness never was by the works of the law. It was, and it always remains, by faith. The conclusion is obvious. There is no difference between the Jew and the Greek (vs. 12). There is but one way of salvation for both, the way of calling upon the Lord in faith. Both are equally blessed for: "the same Lord (Christ) over all is rich unto all that call upon him."

The ground for this is found in verse thirteen: "For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved." Again it is noteworthy that the apostle quotes the Old Testament Scriptures for his proof. This time he cites Joel 2:32. "This formula 'call upon the name of the Lord' is a characteristic Old Testament way of expressing the worship that is addressed to God and applies specifically to the worship of supplication. . ." (John Murray, *The Epistle to the Romans*, vol. 3, p. 57, *The New International Commentary On The New Testament*, Eerdmans). This calling upon the name of the Lord is crying out to Him out of deep need. It is to cast oneself upon the Lord in trust. Those who do that are saved.

The all-important question now is, how is this calling upon the name of the Lord effected? How are men brought to do this? The answer is they must believe in Christ: "How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed?" (vs. 14). Faith precedes and is indispensable to calling upon the name of the Lord. Faith is the bond which unites us to Christ. Through that bond all the blessings of salvation (essentially righteousness) which are in Christ flow to us.

Through faith Christ lives in us and we live out of Him. That believing in Him is a spiritual knowledge of Christ as He is revealed in the Scriptures. It is, as well, an assured confidence in Him as Lord and Savior. Out of that faith the child of God calls upon the name of the Lord and is saved.

If this be so, the all-important question becomes, how is that living, active, conscious faith worked? From where does that believing come? The text (vs. 14) answers: “. . .how shall they believe in him whom they have not heard?” It should be noted that the text is incorrectly translated by the King James Version which has, “*of* whom they have not heard.” The verb here takes the genitive object so that the correct rendering is simply: “whom they have not heard.” There is a significant difference between hearing of or about someone and hearing someone directly, personally. One may hear all about another, but he still has not heard that person. What the text is saying then is that one must not hear merely concerning Christ, but one must hear Christ Himself! If one is to believe on Christ and out of that faith call upon His name and be saved then that one must hear the very voice of Christ. Jesus Himself spoke of this plainly several times in the course of His ministry. Those who hear the word of Christ and believe on God have everlasting life. “Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death into life” (John 5:24). In the next verse the Lord says: “Verily, verily, I say unto you, the hour is coming and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God: and they that hear shall live.” The dead shall hear the very voice of the Son of God and those hearing shall live. The Lord puts it even more strongly in John 10:3, 4: “To him the porter openeth; and the sheep hear his voice: and he calleth his own sheep by name and leadeth them out. And when he putteth forth his own sheep, he goeth before them, and the sheep follow him: for they know his voice.” This figure Jesus applies to Himself (The Good Shepherd) and His relationship to His people in verse 27: “My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me.” This is an abiding reality. The sheep of Christ hear His voice and they follow Him. They do not merely hear concerning Christ, but they hear His voice! And, apart from hearing the voice of Christ the sheep cannot follow Him! All of this comes down to the indisputable truth, if one is to believe on Christ in order to call upon His name and be saved he must hear Christ Himself!

But how is this possible? How is it possible for the sheep of Christ to hear His voice? The text answers simply: “. . .how shall they hear without a preacher?” (vs. 14). And the apostle adds immediately: “But how shall they preach except they be sent?” (vs. 15). Therefore, in order to call upon the name of the Lord one needs to believe in Him. In order to believe in Christ one must hear His voice. In

order to hear Christ one must have a preacher and in order to preach that preacher must be sent.

The preacher must be sent or he cannot preach and he may not preach. The term "sent," means: to send away, to commission or appoint. Hence preachers must be commissioned or appointed to the task. They must be given the right or authority to preach. But who, we may ask, is the sender? The answer is, the Lord Jesus Christ. How does Christ send? In the case of the apostles the answer is easy. Christ called them personally and directly. It is Christ Who commissions preachers today. He does that not personally but through the Church. The Church, as represented by the apostles, who with the prophets and Christ as the cornerstone form the foundation of the Church, is commissioned to go into all the world preaching the gospel to every creature and baptizing in the name of the triune God (Mark 16:15, 16; Matthew 28:19, 20). As we saw in the previous article, the ascended Lord Christ gave apostles, prophets, evangelists, and pastors and teachers to the Church for the work of the ministry and for the edifying of the Body of Christ (Ephesians 4:11ff.). Christ sends the preacher. Only the man commissioned by Christ through the Church has the right to preach in the name of Jesus Christ.

This has several, far-reaching and even critical implications as far as preaching is concerned. In the first place this certainly means that the preacher as sent by Christ is the official representative of Christ. The sent preacher comes with the very authority of Christ and with the very word of Christ. He speaks, does the preacher, in the name of Christ and on the behalf of Christ. So deeply conscious of this were the apostles that the Apostle Paul could write: "Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God." Notice the language of that text. The message the apostles bring is: "be ye reconciled to God." That is the imperative of the Gospel. They bring that imperative as the ambassadors of Christ, i.e., as the official representatives of Christ, as those who come with the word of Christ. They speak in the stead of Christ. And all this is the same as if God were beseeching the people by them. This is preaching! Only this is preaching. Only the one sent by Christ, commissioned by Christ Himself through His Church has the right to preach. From this it certainly follows that the hearers of such an one may not neglect or despise that preaching. To despise the preaching is to despise the Sender, the Lord Christ. It is the Word of Jesus Christ and it is the work of Jesus Christ. He is *the* office bearer in God's Church for He is the Head of the Church. Christ calls the preacher and Christ speaks His own Word through the preacher. It is Christ Who says: "be ye reconciled to God." One despises that preaching to his eternal peril!

This implies, in the second place, that the preacher must come only with

the Word of Christ, "the word of reconciliation which has been committed unto him" (II Corinthians 5:19). The preacher may not come with his own word. However gifted he may be he may not speak or offer his own opinions. The preacher is strictly limited to the Word of Jesus Christ. That Word of Christ is found in the Holy Scriptures. The Scriptures are the Word of God in Jesus Christ. The preacher, therefore, if he will be obedient to his Sender will bring nothing more and nothing less than the Scriptures. This factor determines the only proper and acceptable method of preaching. Preaching must be exegetical in method. The lack of exegetical preaching is the great and sore evil under the sun these days. The Word of Christ must be heard and, therefore, the Scriptures must be expounded in the preaching. Preaching must declare Christ crucified. That must be the heart of every sermon. If the Scriptures be faithfully exegeted that will be the heart of every sermon. God's people must hear the gospel of peace, the glad tidings of good things (vs. 15). They will hear that only when the Scriptures are expounded.

Finally, this means that when the preacher who is sent by Christ faithfully expounds the Scriptures the congregation will hear Christ Himself. The sheep will hear the voice of the Good Shepherd. They will know Him and they will follow Him. They will be given eternal life.

This is the meaning of Romans 10:1-17. In one word it means to say to us that preaching is indispensable to salvation. To be saved one must call upon the name of the Lord. To call upon the name of the Lord one must believe in Him. To believe in Him one must hear Him. To hear Christ one needs a preacher. To preach one must be sent. This must be understood in the absolute sense. This is the one way of salvation which applies in all ages for both Jew and Greek. Understand, the question is not whether or not God can save in some other way apart from the preaching of the Word by the Church. The question is, will God, is God pleased, to save some other way? The answer is no. It pleases God by the "foolishness of preaching" to save His people. Let the Church go into all the world preaching the Word of Christ in the name of Christ. Let the Church faithfully expound that Word through its preachers from its pulpits. In this way only the sheep of Christ will be gathered out of the nations into the one sheepfold of the Good Shepherd. In this way the wisdom of this world will be made of no effect. In this way the Church will be edified. In this way the whole world will be brought into judgment. In this way Christ will come to make all things new.

THE SIMPLICITY OF GOD'S WILL AND THE "FREE OFFER" (5)

— Homer C. Hoeksema —

In the third installment of this series (Vol. X, No. 2) we called attention to the fact that Professor John Murray, in his book entitled *Calvin on Scripture and Divine Sovereignty*, refers to John Calvin's explanation of Ezekiel 18:23, citing a portion of Calvin's Commentary on this passage. In connection with this quotation Prof. Murray expresses disagreement with Calvin on the subject of the simplicity of the will of God. In a footnote he states: "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 *decreatively* 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*."

At the conclusion of our brief comments concerning Prof. Murray's position we called attention to the fact that both in his *Commentary* and elsewhere Calvin has more to say about 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. We promised to refer to this later. This promise we begin to fulfill in the present installment.

First of all, we wish to quote in full what Calvin states concerning Ezekiel 18:23 in his *Commentary on Ezekiel*. Calvin writes as follows (pp. 246-249):

He confirms the same sentiment in other words, that God desires nothing more earnestly than that those who were perishing and rushing to destruction should return into the way of safety. And for this reason not only is the Gospel spread abroad in the world, but God wished to bear witness through all ages how inclined he is to pity. For although the heathen were destitute of the law and the prophets, yet they were always endued with some taste of this doctrine. Truly enough they were suffocated by many errors: but we shall always find that they were induced by a secret impulse to seek for pardon, because this sense was in some way born with them, that God is to be appeased by all who seek him. Besides, God

bore witness to it more clearly in the law and the prophets. In the Gospel we hear how familiarly he addresses us when he promises us pardon (Luke i. 78). And this is the knowledge of salvation, to embrace his mercy which he offers us in Christ. It follows, then, that what the prophet now says is very true, that God wills not the death of a sinner, because he meets him of his own accord, and is not only prepared to receive all who fly to his pity, but he calls them towards him with a loud voice, when he sees how they are alienated from all hope of safety. But the manner must be noticed in which God wishes all to be saved, namely *when they turn themselves from their ways*. God thus does not so wish all men to be saved as to renounce the difference between good and evil; but repentance, as we have said, must precede pardon. How, then, does God wish all to be saved? By the Spirit's condemning the world of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment, at this day, by the Gospel, as he did formerly by the law and the prophets (John xvi. 8). God makes manifest to mankind their great misery, that they may betake themselves to him: he wounds that he may cure, and slays that he may give life. Behold, then, that God wills not the death of a sinner, since he calls all equally to repentance, and promises himself prepared to receive them if they only seriously repent. If anyone should object — then there is no election of God, by which he has predestinated a fixed number to salvation, the answer is at hand: the Prophet does not here speak of God's secret counsel, but only recalls miserable men from despair, that they may apprehend the hope of pardon, and repent and embrace the offered salvation. If any one 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 (I Cor. xiii. 12). When we shall be like God, and see him face to face, then what is now obscure will then become plain. But since captious men torture this and similar passages, it will be needful to refute them shortly,

since it can be done without trouble.

God is said *not to wish the death of a sinner*. How so? since he wishes all to be converted. Now we must see how God wishes all to be converted; for repentance is surely his peculiar gift: as it is his office to create men, so it is his province to renew them, and restore his image within them. For this reason we are said to be his workmanship, that is, his fashioning (Eph. ii. 10). Since, therefore, repentance is a kind of second creation, it follows that it is not in man's power; and if it is equally in God's power to convert men as well as to create them, it follows that the reprobate are not converted, because God does not wish their conversion; for if he wished it he could do it: and hence it appears that he does not wish it. But again they argue foolishly, since God does not wish all to be converted, he is himself deceptive, and nothing can be certainly stated concerning his paternal benevolence. But this knot is easily untied; for he does not leave us in suspense when he says, that he wishes all to be saved. Why so? for if no one repents without finding God propitious, then this sentence is filled up. But we must remark that God puts on a twofold character: for he here wishes to be taken at his word. As I have already said, the Prophet does not here dispute with subtlety about his incomprehensible plans, but wishes to keep our attention close to God's word. Now, what are the contents of this Word? The law, the prophets, and the gospel. Now all are called to repentance, and the hope of salvation is promised them when they repent: this is true, since God rejects no returning sinner: he pardons all without exception; meanwhile, this will of God which he sets forth in his word does not prevent him from decreeing before the world was created what he would do with every individual: and as I have now said, the Prophet only shows here, that when we have been converted we need not doubt that God immediately meets us and shows himself propitious.

It becomes very plain when we read the entire commentary of Calvin on this verse, that Calvin does not find what Prof. Murray calls a "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." If there were indeed such a discrepancy, Calvin could not possibly maintain the simplicity of the will of God, even as Prof. Murray finds it impossible to do so. However, Calvin does not understand Ezekiel 18:23 as teaching a universal salvation, but rather as teaching a particular salvation, that is, a salvation which is only for those who repent. This

is already plain from the small portion of Calvin's Commentary which Prof. Murray quoted. For there Calvin already states "that God always wishes the same thing, though by different ways, and in a manner inscrutable to us." If words have meaning, this statement can only mean that God always wishes the salvation of the elect and the damnation of the reprobate, also when He says in Ezekiel 18: 23: "Have I any pleasure at all that the wicked should die? saith the Lord God; and not that he should return from his ways, and live?" That this is Calvin's position is abundantly plain when we read his complete commentary on this passage.

Calvin also touches on this subject in his *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, Book III, Chapter XXIV, Section XV (Allen Translation, II, 236-237). There he writes concerning Ezekiel 33:11 as follows:

But as objections are frequently raised from some passages of Scripture, in which God seems to deny that the destruction of the wicked is caused by his decree, but that, in opposition to his remonstrances, they voluntarily bring ruin upon themselves, — let us show by a brief explication that they are not at all inconsistent with the foregoing doctrine. A passage is produced from Ezekiel, where God says, "I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live." If this is to be extended to all mankind, why does he not urge many to repentance, whose minds are more flexible to obedience than those of others, who grow more and more callous to his daily invitations? Among the inhabitants of Nineveh and Sodom, Christ himself declares that his evangelical preaching and miracles would have brought forth more fruit than in Judea. How is it, then, if God will have all men to be saved, that he opens not the gate of repentance to those miserable men who would be more ready to receive the favour? Hence we perceive it to be a violent perversion of the passage, if the will of God, mentioned by the prophet, be set in opposition to his eternal counsel, by which he has distinguished the elect from the reprobate. Now, if we inquire the genuine sense of the prophet, his only meaning is to inspire the penitent with hopes of pardon. And this is the sum, that it is beyond a doubt that God is ready to pardon sinners immediately on their conversion. Therefore he wills not their death, inasmuch as he wills their repentance. But experience teaches, that he does not will the repentance of those whom he externally calls, in such a manner as to affect all their hearts. Nor should he on this account be charged with acting deceitfully; for, though his external call only

renders those who hear without obeying it inexcusable, yet it is justly esteemed the testimony of God's grace, by which he reconciles men to himself. Let us observe, therefore, the design of the prophet in saying that God has no pleasure in the death of a sinner; it is to assure the pious of God's readiness to pardon them immediately on their repentance, and to show the impious the aggravation of their sin in rejecting such great compassion and kindness of God. Repentance, therefore, will always be met by Divine mercy; but on whom repentance is bestowed, we are clearly taught by Ezekiel himself, as well as by all the prophets and apostles.

Here again it is plain that Calvin maintains the doctrine of the simplicity of the will of God. He considers it a violent perversion of the passage in Ezekiel 33 "if the will of God, mentioned by the prophet, be set in opposition to his eternal counsel, by which he has distinguished the elect from the reprobate." And he insists that Ezekiel 33:11 must not be understood as a general, well-meant offer of salvation, but as teaching a particular promise of mercy and pardon for all who repent.

There is one more significant passage in Calvin's writings in which he speaks again of the same words from Ezekiel and again insists on the truth of the simplicity of the will of God in unmistakable language. In *Calvin's Calvinism*, in his treatise on "The Eternal Predestination of God," Calvin writes as follows (pp. 98-101):

All this Pighius loudly denies, adducing that passage of the apostle (I Tim. ii. 4): "Who will have all men to be saved," and, referring also to Ezek. xviii. 23, he argues thus, "That God willeth not the death of a sinner," may be taken upon His own oath, where He says by that prophet, "As I live, saith the Lord, I have no pleasure in the wicked that dieth; but rather that he should return from his ways and live." Now we reply, that as the language of the prophet here is an exhortation to repentance, it is not at all marvellous in him to declare that God will-eth all men to be saved. For the mutual relation between threats and promises shows that such forms of speaking are *conditional*. In this same manner God declared to the Ninevites, and to the kings of Gerar and Egypt, that He would do that, which, in reality, He did not intend to do, for their repentance averted the punishment which He had threatened to inflict upon them. Whence it is evident that the punishment was denounced on condition of their remaining obstinate and impenitent. And yet, the denun-

ciation of the punishment was positive, as if it had been an irrevocable decree. But after God had terrified them with the apprehension of His wrath, and had duly humbled them as not being utterly desperate, He encourages them with the hope of pardon, that they might feel that there was yet left open a space for remedy. Just so it is with respect to the *conditional promises* of God, which invite all men to salvation. They do not positively prove that which God has decreed in His secret counsel, but *declare only* what God is *ready to do* to all those who are brought to faith and repentance.

But men untaught of God, not understanding these things, allege that we hereby attribute to God a twofold or double will. Whereas God is so far from being variable, that no shadow of such variableness appertains to Him, even in the most remote degree. Hence Pighius, ignorant of the Divine nature of these deep things, thus argues: "What else is this but making God a mocker of men, if God is represented as really not willing that which He professes to will, and as not having pleasure in that in which He in reality has pleasure?" But if these two members of the sentence be read *in conjunction*, as they ever ought to be — "*I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked;*" and, "*But that the wicked turn from his way and live*" — read these two propositions *in connection* with each other, and the calumny is washed off at once. God requires of us this conversion, or "turning away from our iniquity," and in whomsoever He finds it He disappoints not such an one of the promised reward of eternal life. Wherefore, God is as much said to have pleasure in, and to will, this eternal life, as to have pleasure in the repentance; and He has pleasure in the latter, because He invites all men to it by His Word. Now all this is in perfect harmony with His secret and eternal counsel, by which He decreed to convert none but His own elect. None but God's elect, therefore, ever do turn from their wickedness. And yet, the adorable God is not, on these accounts, to be considered variable or capable of change, because, as a Law-giver, He enlightens all men with the external doctrine of *conditional* life. In this primary manner He calls, or invites, *all men* unto eternal life. But, in the latter case, He brings unto eternal life those whom He willed according to His eternal purpose, *regenerating* by His Spirit, as an eternal Father, *His own children* only.

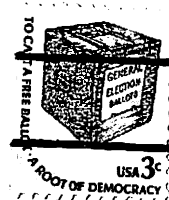
It is quite certain that men do not "turn from their evil ways" to the Lord of their own accord, nor by any

instinct of nature. Equally certain is it that the gift of conversion is not common to all men; because this is that one of the two covenants which God promises that He will not make with any but with His own children and His own elect people, concerning whom He has recorded His promise that “He will *write* His law in *their hearts*” (Jer. xxxi. 33). Now, a man must be utterly beside himself to assert that this promise is made to all men generally and indiscriminately. God says expressly by Paul, who refers to the prophet Jeremiah, “For this is the covenant that I will make *with them*. Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers: but I will put My laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts” (Heb. viii. 9, 10). Surely, to apply this promise to those who were worthy of this new covenant, or to such as had prepared *themselves* by their *own* merits or endeavours to receive it, must be worse than the grossest ignorance and folly; and the more so, as the Lord is speaking by the prophet to those who had before “stony hearts.” All this is plainly stated also, and fully explained, by the prophet Ezekiel (chap. xxxvi. 26).

From all of these passages from Calvin’s writings it is abundantly plain that Calvin had no problem in connection with the passages in Ezekiel concerning the truth of the simplicity of the will of God. Why did he not have a problem? It is because Calvin did not seek to maintain both a doctrine of a will of God to the salvation of all men and the doctrine of election, by which God predestinates only a fixed number to salvation. Because Calvin did not seek to maintain both, he was not confronted by a discrepancy or contradiction between the two. Calvin always teaches that salvation is particular, for the elect alone. He always teaches that the promise is particular, for the elect alone. He always teaches that the gospel, though generally proclaimed, is a particular gospel, for the elect alone. Those who try to maintain both a doctrine of a general, well-meant offer and the doctrine of predestination are confronted, as Prof. Murray admits, by an evident contradiction. They have no solution for this contradiction. If they are consistent, they must sacrifice the important truth of the simplicity of God and His will, a truth which the church has always confessed. And to say as Prof. Murray says, that “We must maintain that it is perfectly consistent with God’s perfection that this contradiction should obtain,” not only does not offer a satisfactory and rational solution to the problem, but is really itself a contradiction of God’s perfection, even as it is a denial of His simplicity.

Calvin has much more to say on this subject, but to this we shall call attention in the next installment of this series.

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